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## A Swedish Poem: Review of The Saga of Frithiof

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## A SWEDISH POEM.

The *Saga* [or *Legend*] of *Frithiof*: By Esaias Tegner. Translated from the Swedish. London: 1835. pp. 222.\*

The first sensation which three-fourths of our readers will experience, upon seeing the caption of this article, will probably be surprise, at the novelty of a poem from the neighborhood of the Arctic zone. They will find it somewhat hard to realize the idea of an epic, in twenty-four cantos, coming from furry, frozen Finland—the climate of the white bear and the reindeer. The common thought among us—if perchance that out-of-the-way region occurs to our thoughts at all—is, that imagination there, like the waters and mountains, is ice-bound for more than nine months in the year; that amid such snowy wastes, the streams of Castalia cannot flow freely enough for deep or lengthened inspiration; and that the utmost effort of any muse in that dense atmosphere, is to flutter through a few quatrains on the subject of love, or drink, or war—such as the Laplander's Ode to his Mistress, which we read, of yore, in *The Spectator*. Vine-covered hills, and vallies laughing with luscious fruits and waving with plenteous harvests, are the abodes we habitually allot to poetic genius: and though Burns, Campbell, Beattie, Scott, Home, and Allan Ramsay—to say nothing of Ossian—have tuned the lyre at the foot of Scotland's bare, brown mountains, to strains such as Greece or Italy might not disdain; yet we are accustomed to explain this away by referring to the insular position of Britain, as mitigating the effect of her far northern latitude,—and to the influence of civilization, still further assuaging the natural rigors of her sky. The fantasy, that in climes so much 'beyond the solar road,' genius must sicken and fancy must die,—despite both examples and reasonings to the contrary—remains

\* For a copy of this work, we are indebted to one of Virginia's fairest and most accomplished daughters,—wife to him, whose bravery and military skill are the most distinguished among her living sons.

[Since this article was committed to the printer, we have seen a notice of *Frithiof's Saga* in the *North American Review*; written, apparently, by one familiar with the language of Sweden, and even personally with her cities, woods, and hills.—He awards much less merit to the present translation than we do: condemning it as *free*—nay, even *licentiously paraphrastical*. One who well understands the original of a foreign poem, always thus differs from one who does not understand it, with respect to a translation. The former prefers a *literal* version; the latter a *spirited*—that is to say a *free*—one. Thus a friend of ours who has the Greek Homer at his finger's ends, extols Cowper's translation above Pope's:—a judgment refuted by the fact, that Pope is in every library of a hundred volumes, while Cowper can rarely be found in those of five thousand,—or in any bookstore. Thus, too, *Don Quixote*, recently done into English by Jarvis, is preferred by Spanish scholars to Smollet's version—which, to our poor English mind, is as far before the other, as life and wit excel dulness. Thus, again, the *North American Review* appears to deem certain renderings given by itself, of passages in Tegner's Poem, superior in merit to those given by the London translators: while we are quite sure that 99 out of every hundred English readers—and tasteful ones too—would prefer the latter no less decidedly, than they would prefer Murphy's flowing and elegant (though too free) translation of *Tactus*, to the butchery perpetrated on him by a common schoolboy.

The Review informs us, that Tegner is a Bishop—now somewhat aged, but still retaining his faculties of body and mind, and enjoying the name which this work has gained him,—of "the Swedish Homer."]

rooted in our minds: nor shall we be disabused of the prejudice, till oft-repeated instances shall have demonstrated its groundlessness. The effusion now before us, is one of these instances—is one of the most powerful, practical evidences, that GENIUS, like JUSTICE and COURAGE, has no climate—no country; or if any, that she must find it where the free-spirited exile of old found *his* country;—

“*Ubi Libertas, ibi Patria!*”

“Where thou art, oh *Liberty!* there is my home!”

“THE SAGA OF FRITHIOF” does indeed embody unquestionable proofs of great poetical talent. Even under the disadvantage of a translation—and that, by three different hands—a disadvantage heightened perhaps by its being the first English version ever made—this poem displays a richness and beauty of thought in its detail, and an originality in its general conformation, such as mark it for the work of no common mind. The versification too—judging from what the translator’s preface tells us of the singular resemblance between the two languages, rendering it easy to translate *literally* without dulness—and judging, too, from the prevalent vigor and harmony of numbers in this English version—the versification too, of the original, must abound in melody and power.

“TEGNER,” says the preface, is “one of the most distinguished poets of Sweden. This work was published at Stockholm in 1825; and so rapid was its success, that in 1831, it had already gone through as many as five editions. Its celebrity was not long confined to Sweden. Shortly after its appearance, Miller gave an elegant and faithful Danish version of it: and in Germany it received the unusual honor of being translated by three different persons; viz.—the baroness de Helwig, Dr. Mohmike, and M. Rudolph Schley. Each of these versions enjoys a high reputation, and has passed through three or four editions. It seems high time, therefore, that a poem so popular, and admired in the countries where its merits could be best appreciated, should receive the homage of the English reader. \* \* \* The legend on which the poem is founded, and to which the author has adhered pretty closely, is of great antiquity. Frithiof, the Viking, must have flourished in the eighth or ninth century, a considerable time before the introduction of Christianity into Scandinavia. The author has taken this occasion to interweave various interesting allusions to the Gothic mythology, and to introduce many striking examples of its operation and influence. Of supernatural agency he has, with great good taste, been sparing. The 24th canto contains a short but clear analysis of the Edda doctrine; there is also a touching allusion to the future appearance of the Christian religion in Scandinavia, in a prophetic strain, and in a style worthy of Virgil. The monotony incident to most poems has been ingeniously avoided, by each canto being written in a different metre, the result of which is an uninterrupted freshness, variety, and spirit.”

We shall present the reader of the Messenger with an outline of the story contained in the poem; and then add some extracts, to give him an idea of its poetical quality.

FRITHIOF, the son of a rich landed proprietor named *Thorsten*, and INGEBORGA, the daughter of *Bele* king of

*Sogn*,\* were brought up together in the house and under the care of *Hilding*, a trusty subject, to whom king *Bele* and his friend *Thorsten* had confided their offspring in childhood. Frithiof grew up, accomplished in every manly exercise; Ingeborga ripened into womanhood, graced with all the charms which even a princess need desire. From the tenderest years, they played together: roamed the wood, climbed the mountain, and forded the torrent. A passionate attachment necessarily ensued between them. Frithiof encountered the fiercest wild beasts, to present Ingeborg with their spoils. He carved her name on trees; he composed songs, in which she was likened to the rosy-winged and golden-haired beings, that adorn the palace of *Freyja*,†—and her beauty made to surpass that of *Odin*’s‡ own consort. Ingeborg, in return, dreamed of Frithiof. He, or one modelled after him, was the hero of her songs: and she embroidered his image as foremost in all the hunting matches and battle-scenes wrought by her needle. Hilding saw the trouble his wards were preparing for themselves, and warned Frithiof to shun the hope of so unequal an alliance. “She is the daughter of a king, and a descendant of *Odin*,”—said the prudent and good old man: “let not the son of a mere *bonde*§ aspire to the hand of a royal and heaven-descended maiden.” But his counsels were laughed to scorn.

At length King *Bele* lay upon his death-bed. His two sons and fair daughter, with *Thorsten* and Frithiof, are summoned to attend him. He appoints both sons to succeed him on the throne; entrusting, however, to *Helge* the elder, a superior authority, and especially delegating to him paternal power over *Ingeborga*. He gives them much good advice, commends to them the studious cultivation of Frithiof’s friendship, and bids them farewell. *Thorsten* then declared his resolution not to outlive his friend the King. He gave his son, too, a long and earnest exhortation to faith, valor, and loyalty: and soon afterwards, the aged heroes were borne together to the tomb.

*Helge* and *Halfdan* ascended the throne. *Helge* was gloomy, superstitious, haughty and cruel. *Halfdan* was a blooming boy, light-minded and effeminate, yet kind-hearted and brave.

Frithiof also succeeds to his father *Thorsten*’s wealth—his palace and domain of *Framnæs*, with herds, flocks, and treasures vast and rare. The banquet hall in the palace could with ease contain five hundred guests. Its ceiling was of strongest fir, its walls of firmest oak: the table, of oak, polished and shining like a hero’s sword, extended nearly from end to end; surmounted, at its head, by a throne for the chief, placed between two stately columns, on which stood the images of *Frey*|| and *ODIN*. Here *Thorsten* had been used to sit, on the spoils of a vanquished bear, quaffing mead, and recounting to the joyous partakers of his hospitality the achievements of his prime, when,

\* A country probably coinciding with a part of modern Sweden.

† The Scandinavian Venus.

‡ *Odin* was the Jupiter, and *Frigga* was the Juno, of Scandinavian mythology.

§ *Bonde*—cultivator. It is a word of two syllables. So is *Bele*.

|| *Frey* seems to have been, in Scandinavia, what *Apollo* and *Bacchus* were with the heathen of Greece and Italy.

as a *Viking*,\* he had borne his conquering flag through the Baltic and around the Western islands. While they silently watched his lips—as the bee fondly clings to the fragrant rose—a fire blazing on a stone pavement in the centre, diffused warmth and light throughout the hall. The rest of the floor was covered with straw. The walls were hung with casques, corslets, gleaming swords, and bucklers so bright that the maiden who bore around the cup of hydromel,† blushed and threw down her laughing eyes, to see her form reflected a hundred fold. The larders were filled with viands, the vaults with rare liquors, the granaries with corn, and the more secret repositories with gold and jewels. But there were three things, more precious than all other treasures. The first was a sword called *Angurvadel*, or “The Lightning’s Brother;” made in the far East, by the Gnomes; of steel so firm and sharp, that nothing could resist its edge. At fifteen years of age, Thorsten’s father with this sword had delivered a beautiful princess from a hideous giant whom he slew. The blade alone sufficed to illumine the hall, like lightning, or a meteor, flashing through the midnight sky; and was engraved with many *runes*, or mystic letters, which none in those northern regions could understand. The second was a bracelet, wrought of chisselled gold, and graved with devices as varied and curious as those upon the shield of Achilles; being made, indeed by *Vaulunder*, the deity answering to *Vulcan*. A robber and magician named *Soté* had once stolen this bracelet from Thorsten; who prevailed upon King Bele to aid him in recovering it. They sail to an insular rock, where, in a vast cavern, dwelt the robber. They cast lots for the honor of going in to battle with him: it falls upon Thorsten. He enters—bursts open a bolted iron gate—and holds a combat, the particulars of which he never would relate. To all inquiries, he would answer only with silent trembling. Bele heard first from within a wild, demoniac song; then the sudden clashing of bucklers and swords: anon a loud, fearful shriek; and then, profound silence. Next, Thorsten rushed pale and haggard from the cave, displaying in triumph the bracelet which he had won by a struggle with the DEAD-FIEND—with a SPECTRE OF FLAME!—The third treasure of Frithiof’s inheriting, was a wonderful ship, named *Ellida*; a gift of *Agir*‡ to Thorsten’s father, in requital of hospitality. The hull was formed of a single trunk, without seam or nail—its color green and blue—its shape and length like those of a dragon—the prow, of gold—the poop, a serpent’s tail with white scales—the sails black, and bound with scarlet. She outstripped the eagle, nay even the lightning, in speed; and without pilot or crew, the self-directed helm and rigging took, ever, the course her master chose. Frithiof, besides, had living treasures, in twelve sage warriors, the friends and comrades of his father; and in many a stout arm and brave heart, nearer to himself in age, and ready to do all his behests. Foremost of these last, was *Biorn*;§ who shone amongst the veterans, like a fresh rose amidst faded leaves in Autumn—

gay as a boy, yet firm and bold as becomes the prime of manhood, and sage as he upon whose brow many winters had written the traces of thought. From childhood, he had been as a brother to Frithiof: they had quaffed together the cup of blood; and over that surest pledge of Northern faith, had sworn mutual and inextinguishable friendship.

After a brief time of mourning, Frithiof was invited by *Helge* and *Halfdan* into the royal park. There, he saw *Ingeborg*: they exchanged the pressure of hands, and recollections of their childhood, and whispers of mutual affection. Too soon, however, they were obliged to part: and, in his palace, Frithiof relapsed into sadness. *Biorn* strove to rouse him from lethargy:

“Why doth our eaglet idly rest?  
Are his proud wings and talons torn?  
What wounds now rankle in his breast?”

‘Say, what canst thou, my friend, desire?  
Hast thou not viands—mead at will?  
And scalds\* enow, who never tire  
Thy praise to sing with accents shrill?’

‘Thy eager courser neighs in vain;  
Thy falcons now impatient rise:  
Will Frithiof never hunt again?  
What mean those stifled, deep-drawn sighs?’

‘*Ellida* sleeps not on the wave;  
She heaves incessant on her side:  
Oh noble bark! why vainly rave?  
Quench’d is the gallant Frithiof’s pride!’

‘On straw I will not basely die;  
To Odin I my blood can drain,—  
And thus avoid stern *Hela*’s† eye,  
Her pale, blue cheek, and icy reign.’”

Animated by this expostulation, or prompted by love, Frithiof mounted *Ellida*, and steered to the court of Bele’s sons. He found them holding a council of their people, by Bele’s tomb; and without preface, asked *Ingeborga* in marriage. *Helge*, with stern pride, refused the proposal; telling the bold suitor that a maiden descended from *Odin* should be bride only to a monarch; and offering him a vassal’s place in the royal train. In a transport of indignation, Frithiof drew his good sword, flashed it before the king’s daunted eyes, and cleft his golden shield at a blow; but forbore further violence, through reverence for the place. He then returned home.

King *RING* at that time reigned in Norway: a wise, virtuous and powerful, though an aged monarch. Under his sway of thirty years, his kingdom had prospered in peace, justice and liberty. Having lost his queen, he announces to the assembled nobles, his resolve to claim the hand of King Bele’s daughter. Envoys are accordingly despatched, bearing costly presents, and attended by bards, whose harps were to sound the glories of their venerable master. Arrived,—they keep watch for three days; on the fourth, they declare the object of their mission. *Helge*, whose “joy was priestly craft alone,” slays victims, and consults their entrails. The signs prove unfavorable. He therefore rejects *Ring*’s offer: and *Halfdan* adds words of contumely. The King of Norway instantly takes fire at the insult—

\* *Viking*, means the chieftain of sea adventurers. The venerable Thorsten, it is to be feared, had been little better than a pirate.

† Mead.

‡ God of the sea, answering to *Neptune*.

§ *Biorn* is of one syllable.

\* Bards.

† *Hela*, the goddess of Death and of the Shades.

ing refusal; he vows vengeance, and prepares for war. A hundred ships, with copper keels, laden with helmeted and lance-armed warriors, bound over the waves. Helge also makes preparation; and places his sister in the temple of *Balder*.<sup>\*</sup> There she is sought and found by Frithiof, who enjoys a prolonged and rapturous interview,—no less pure than rapturous—resulting in a repetition of the most ardent vows of attachment. He had meantime sent word to Helge, that the only price for which *his* assistance in the coming war could be obtained, was the hand of Ingeborg. He now goes in person, to learn the king's determination.

Helge was throned in solemn state, amidst his council. His brow was black and fierce; his gaze cold and scornful. Halfdan sat beside him, decked in jewels, and playing childishly with the handle of his sword. To Frithiof's frank offer of help and deliverance if Ingeborg might be his wife, a thousand swords of the surrounding warriors flashed consent; a thousand voices wished him success. Hilding reared his white locks, and in accents gentle yet earnest and persuasive, seconded the suit: Halfdan, too, implored his brother to yield. But Helge remained dark and cold. Not deigning a look at Frithiof, he repulsed him harshly, with reproaches for having profaned the sacred grove of Balder, by there talking of earthly love. When they heard this imputation, undenied by Frithiof,—the warriors were seized with superstitious horror: they started aghast from him, as if he wore a plague-spot on his brow. Helge, with insolent clemency, announced to him that although the just punishment of sacrilege was death, yet his might be commuted to an expedition against a *jarl* (or *earl*) in one of the Western Islands, who had long withheld a tribute which he owed to Belc. "Obtain that tribute," said the tyrant, "and you are pardoned. The jarl doats like a miser upon his gold, and guards it like a dragon. Wrest it from him, and it will be a nobler feat than discoursing of love in Balder's grove. Fail,—and you are banished forever from your country."

Full of rage, Frithiof returned to Ingeborg; imparted to her the sentence of her brother; and besought her to flee with him over the sea, to some more friendly realm. He glowingly described the sea and Islands of Greece, of which tradition had informed him; and in those laurelled arbors, beneath a balmy sky, where the grape and orange grow untended,—he offered her a life of peace and joy. But his reasonings and persuasions were vain. She declared her penitence for having violated the sanctity of Balder's grove, and her resolution to atone for the offence by a life of devotion. In a long address, full of pathetic tenderness, she soothed his anger; and they parted with protestations of perpetual fidelity.

Frithiof once more embarked in Ellida: but scarcely had he left the shore when a furious storm arose—excited by the prayers of Helge, to the fiends with whom he was allied. Two of them ride before the good ship, on the flapping winds of the tempest: HAM arouses the wind: HEID calls down the snow. The sea-bird flies to land, with screams of affright; the lightning, for

<sup>\*</sup> *Balder* was the god of piety, warmth, and light; the son of Odin, and the most benevolent of the Scandinavian deities. The legend of his character, struggles, death, and resurrection, bears a faint analogy to the christian history of the Messiah.

a moment, illumines the lurid darkness, with a fitful glare; the demons of terror, with fantastic visages, horribly yell as with fiendish delight they course it on the billows, and play with the sparkling foam. Undismayed, Frithiof holds the rudder firm, tightens the sail, and defies the storm. It waxes more fierce. The planks groan and strain: Ellida is now deep engulfed between the waves—now, raised as if to the clouds, upon a watery mountain. Snow fills the air: hail clatters upon deck and armor: the top-mast is hardly visible in the darkened sky. Thither he mounts, to see if he can discern the foes that are assailing him: and lo! a whale, like a loosened island, rushes by! On its broad back are seen the two demons—Heid in the shape of an ice-bear, shaking snows from his shaggy hair; Ham in the form of a huge eagle, heightening the tempest with his flapping wings. At Frithiof's command, the ship darts over the whale, and cleaves him in twain! Then, quick as thought, with two successive arrows he pierces the bear and eagle. Instantly, the storm ceases—the billows subside—the blue sky and the sun appear—and close at hand, an island is in view; the very island to which our voyagers were bound. Most of the crew being stiffened with cold and fatigue, Biorn bears four of them on his shoulders ashore; and Frithiof, eight. A fire is kindled,—the mead-horn is drained,—and their numbed senses return.

The jarl Argantyr, meanwhile, was carousing in his banquet hall. Suddenly a sentinel proclaimed "a sail! no friendly banner flying—and two gigantic warriors bearing to the strand many faint shivering men!" The jarl, at a glance, recognized the ship as Ellida, and the chieftain as Frithiof; for, said he,

"In all the north there is but one  
Of that proud height, and martial tread,  
And Thorsten, 'tis thy son alone:  
Upon his brow his name we read."

The Viking Atle, a warrior-comrade of the jarl, instantly sprang from the table, declaring that he would put Frithiof's far-famed prowess in arms to the test. His twelve companions at the word arose, armed each with a heavy club and spear: And all sped with wild cries to the beach, where the stranger chief watched over his weary crew sleeping around him upon the ground. "My arm could strike thee down"—began Atle; "but I give thee choice, of combat or flight. Pray me for quarter, and I will befriend thee, and lead thee to Argantyr's hall." "I am wearied indeed with our watery fray," replied Frithiof; "but ere I say those words, we will try our weapons:" and he drew his flashing sword. A terrific combat ensued: the shields of both were soon rent into fragments; and in a moment after, Atle's sword was cloven in two. His adversary immediately threw down his own sword; and they closed. Victory at length declared for Frithiof. He threw the Viking, placed his knee upon his breast, and exclaimed, "Now, had I my sword, thy temerity should have its reward!"—"Go, fetch thy sword," said Atle; "here is my breast; I shall not fly." Taking him at his word, Frithiof rushed to snatch his sword and end the strife effectually: but when he saw his foe prostrate, calmly awaiting the blow, his heart was touched, and he extended his hand. A truce took place; Frithiof and his comrades repaired to the jarl's

palace, where they were entertained in princely state for several months. At a favorable moment, he explained to his host the object of his visit. Argantyr disdainfully repelled the claim of tribute; but he presented to his guest, in token of personal regard, a costly purse, filled with gold.

In the spring, Frithiof returned home. On the seventh day of the voyage, his native hills reappeared to his view. He entered the bay, whereon Balder's temple stood: but no friendly step met—no fond visage greeted him. His own falcon alighted on his arm, and flapped his wings as if in terror: but no tongue explained what grief awaited him. Gliding at length around the promontory behind which his home had stood, he beheld that home no longer! Instead of his palace, a murky pile of ruins met his eye: a pile cheerless and dismal, as the skeleton in a warrior's tomb. His blooming gardens and fertile fields, were a dreary waste, sprinkled over with ashes! From Hilding he learned, that Ring with numerous forces had invaded the country—defeated the two brother-kings—compelled them to give him their sister as his bride—and borne her away to Norway. With speechless grief, she had submitted to her fate.

“No smile betrayed the royal consort's pride:  
Pale was her cheek, and deadly white her brow;  
E'en as we see the lightning's vivid glow  
Cast a pale glimmer o'er a midnight cloud,  
While echoes thro' the sky the thunder's accent loud.”

At the altar, Helge had beheld, on her arm, the mysterious bracelet, given her by Frithiof. He tore it from her, and placed it on the wrist of Balder's image. He it was, who in his flight from the battle, had burned Framnæs to the ground.

The anger and grief of Frithiof at this recital may well be imagined: he set forth, in quest of vengeance; and found Helge sacrificing amidst a throng of priests in the temple of Balder. Leaving Biorn to guard the gate, he entered alone. With soul on fire, and voice like an autumn storm, he challenged the pale trembling king to mortal combat: offering him the advantage of the first blow. At the same time he contemptuously dashed in his face, the purse of gold which Argantyr had given him—dashed it, with a force that brought a stream of blood from his mouth, and laid him prostrate before the altar. Scorning to use his sword against so feeble a coward, he turned to the god's image, and seeing his bracelet on its arm, tore it violently away. The statue fell into the fire which blazed on the altar. Instantly the flames arose to the cornice and roof: and before effective help could be applied, the Temple of Balder was in ashes. Horror-struck at his involuntary sacrilege, Frithiof went on board his vessel, resolving to spend his life in roaming, as a Viking, over the seas. At that moment, Helge with a fleet was seen pressing on, to intercept and capture him. But Biorn, anticipating such a movement, had secretly bored a hole in the keel of every ship; so that just as the king thought himself bearing down victoriously upon his adversary, his whole fleet foundered, and he with difficulty clambered to the summit of a rock amid the waves.

Frithiof and his comrades now put forth into the broad sea, bidding their home and the North a sad, long farewell. Far and wide they roved. His first care

was to frame a code of laws for their enterprise—the Viking's code.

There was to be no tent on deck: the warrior's buckler was to be his only bed,—the sky his only roof. His sword was to be short, like the hammer of Thor. The sails were to be spread in the tempest as well as in the calm: and all were to sink, rather than strike their flag. No woman was to be taken on board; she being a jewel indeed on land, but a dangerous commodity at sea. Merchants were to be protected—but must pay a tribute in return. Ships of war were always to be attacked: to shrink from the contest was infamy. All prizes were to be shared by lot among the crew: as to the Viking, his only gains were to be wounds—his only prize, honor. None was to bind up a wound, till the battle was over: the life of a disarmed or prostrate foe was always to be spared.

They roamed over every sea—fought many a fierce battle—and captured many a rich prize. While inactive, Frithiof was a prey to gloom: but when danger and strife impended, his eagle eye kindled, his front became serene, and his clear, loud voice, was as a trumpet-call to victory. After three years of wandering, in the course of which the sea and isles of Greece were visited—he turned his face homewards once more; and concerted a visit in disguise to the court of Norway, that he might behold again the face of Ingeborg. Disregarding Biorn's remonstrances, he repaired thither alone.

On a festal day, King Ring and his Queen sat together in state,—like autumn and spring conjoined. An old man knocked and entered; bent and tottering with age, leaning on a staff, and clad from head to foot in bearskins. Seating himself upon a bench, near the door, he became an object of derision to the courtiers. One of them even pointed his finger with a scornful laugh, at the old man's shaggy vestments. His eyes flashed—he sprang up—seized the coxcomb by the waist—and twirled him round like a toy. All the bystanders owned the retribution just. But the uproar reaching the King's ears, he summoned the stranger before him; angrily demanding his origin, name, and errand? “My name, O King!” (said the old man) “I will not reveal. My nurse was Sorrow;—my heritage is Want; I come from the wolf's abode, where I have dwelt with Famine. Once I proudly bestrode my dragon, riding the waves with gilded crest and sable wings: but now, wrecked, it lies half-buried on the strand. My errand was to behold thy wisdom, so far renowned: I met contempt, and punished it:—pardon my freedom, O King!” The King of Norway commended his discourse, and bade him sit by his side—but prayed him to doff his disguise. Immediately the bearskin robes fall; and a majestic young man appears. We must quote the lines which describe him:

“Over his shoulders broad, and eke around his forehead high  
His flowing locks of gold fall down in graceful symmetry.

With gallant mien erect he stood, in velvet mantle blue:  
His loins were girded by a belt of silver, bright to view.  
Boars, deer and foxes were engrav'd with wondrous skill thereon,  
And round the hero's waist they seem'd in eager haste to run.

Like harden'd lightning by his side his trusty sword  
hangs down,  
And glitt'ring on his brawny arm the golden bracelet  
shone:  
Around the hall his eyes he cast with stern majestic  
air,  
As tall as Asa\*-Thor in size; as Asa-Balder, fair.

How swift on Ingeborga's cheek the roses come and go,  
Changing its hue like northern light, reflected on the  
snow!  
As water-lilies up and down are mov'd on troubled  
wave,  
Thus did the bosom of the queen with strong pulsa-  
tions heave."

Ring, apparently unsuspecting that his guest is Frithiof, welcomes him to the coming feast. A roasted boar is served up, holding an apple in his mouth, and crowned with garlands. Shaking aside his snowy locks, the aged king touches the boar's head, and vows to seek and vanquish Frithiof. A sneering laugh burst from the young hero: a gleam of anger flashed across his brow; and the pommel of his sword struck the table with a noise that made each champion present start up in alarm. "Oh King!" said he, "hear now MY vow. I know Frithiof well: he is my friend: and I swear to fight in his behalf against a world in arms!"—The entertainment sped on, harmoniously, with wine and music, till the crowing of the cock told the approach of morning.—Frithiof staid long at Ring's palace. One day, the king and queen drove in a sledge over the frozen lake. Their guest attended them on foot, with skates—passing and flying round them at pleasure, and graving on the ice a thousand *runes*, which often expressed the name of *Ingeborg*. Suddenly the ice breaks beneath the sledge: but just as it is sinking, Frithiof snatches it and its burthen from peril.—Soon afterwards, a royal hunting-match takes place. The queen is of the party. He has self-command enough to shun her side, while, lance in hand, on her white courser, she leads the chase. The old king lags behind: beside him, Frithiof stays,—silent, thoughtful, and sad. At length they reached a secluded and shady vale, where Ring proposed to lie down and refresh himself with slumber. Frithiof dissuaded him: but he persisted, and lay down on Frithiof's mantle, his head resting on Frithiof's knees. While he slept, Frithiof heard the voice of a sable bird, advising him to slay the dotard king, and reclaim his lost bride. Instantly a white bird replied—"whatever thou winnest, thy bright honor will be lost. Wouldst thou murder sleep—kill a defenceless old man? Odin's eye beholds thee, though no mortal eye can." Frithiof hurled his sword from him, far away into the forest. The king started up. He had only feigned sleep; and had perceived the struggle between good and evil in his young friend's mind. He informed Frithiof that he had known him from the first; but had dissembled the knowledge, to try his honor. "Old and feeble," said he, "I must soon descend to the tomb: have thou then my queen and kingdom."—Frithiof said he had remained already too long exposed to the flames of love:—"The wrath of Heaven lowers over me. Balder, whose temple I burned, pursues me with vengeance. Earth spurns me with hor-

ror from her bosom: the dry land burns my feet—the trees refuse me their shade—my sun of life is burned out—night, guilt, and gloom surround me. Once more, my noble bark! bathe thy pitch-clad bosom in the briny wave! with thy keel, furrow the ocean; let thy pinions cleave the air!"

Before he could depart, however, the venerable Ring announced his resolve to die, after the manner of Northern heroes,—by opening his own veins, in order to anticipate the slow, painful hand of age and disease. He executed this purpose; bequeathing his queen, and the guardianship of his young son, to Frithiof, who was to be regent of the kingdom till the prince attained manhood.—The funeral over,—a council of the nation was called. The whole people repaired thither, in arms. Frithiof held aloft their young king. "That boy is too young to lead an army or decide the law!"—cried the multitude. But Frithiof, planting the child upon his shield, and raising it on high, exclaimed, "Norsemen, behold your King—a scion of Odin's race! Him I have vowed to protect, and to place on his brow his father's crown. May I perish, if I swerve from that vow!"—The boy, who had sat firm on the shield like a king on his throne, with an eye dauntless as that of an eaglet gazing upon the sun,—now, with a spring, stood upright. Instantly a shout of applause burst from the throng: and with loud acclamations, he was hailed as a king, worthy to succeed his father. Frithiof was at the same time unanimously invited to lead Ingeborg to the altar. But he had first an expiation to make, for the burning of Balder's temple. Bidding the newly chosen king and brave people a hasty adieu, he departed.

A touching lamentation at his father's tomb,—a rebuilding of the burned Temple, far more sumptuously than ever,—his reconciliation with the offended Deity,—and his union with Ingeborg,—are the chief remaining incidents of the poem; conveyed in strains so rich, musical, and powerful, that no abridgment or paraphrase could do them justice. We are half doubtful, whether our whole narrative had not been better omitted, or greatly curtailed,—as affording a most inadequate idea of our author's varied merits. It is, after all, but a skeleton we have given: as gaunt, nerveless, and spiritless, when compared with the poem itself, as a human skeleton is to a perfect human form, instinct with life and grace, corded with strong muscles, and rounded into complete symmetry. We beseech the reader, therefore, to make allowances accordingly, in his judgment of the work before us.

In assigning that work its place in the world of letters,—considering the languages into which it has been rendered, the favor it has experienced in them all, and the merits which in its English dress are manifest to our view,—we have no hesitation in ranking it above *Marmion*, or any other of Sir Walter's poems except the *Lady of the Lake*: and even above that we rank it, though hesitatingly. Let us not be understood as saying that we—Virginia born and English-speaking—derive more pleasure from reading this Swedish poem than from reading the master-pieces of Scott. On the contrary, there is no one of his five longest poems which does not both afford us more pleasure and excite in us higher admiration, than Bishop Tegner's does. But (our meaning is) if we had no vernacular language,

\* *Asa* is a general name for any one of the higher deities of Scandinavia.

and no country with its host of associations to prepossess our minds,—but understood equally well, all the languages in which ‘The Saga of Frithiof’ has appeared,—we believe that it would claim in our unbiassed judgment, the place we have designated.

We said, the translation was by three different hands. We know not their names;—only the initials being given, at the end of their several cantos. They are W. E. F.,—H. G.,—and R. C. They are names, which ought to be known: for very few translations have done their authors so much credit—judging merely from the strength and beauty of the English itself, without reference to the original, of which we are wholly ignorant. Not to be very exact, we think there are eight or ten different metres in the version; some of them calculated peculiarly to try the skill of a versifier: yet the instances of ruggedness or of clumsiness—when we remember how *literal* the translators aimed to be—are extremely few; and frequently, the numbers are spirited, smooth, and strong, as those of Pope. To illustrate this, and convey a better idea of the work, we proceed to give a few more extracts.

The poem thus opens:

#### FRITHIOF AND INGEBOURG.

‘There grew, in Hilding’s garden fair,  
Two plants beneath his fostering care;  
Such plants the North had never seen;  
How gloriously they deck the green!

One like the oak-tree soars on high,  
Whose trunk all proudly greets the sky;  
While bending still, by winds caress’d  
Its branches wave like warrior’s crest.

The other blossoms like the rose,  
Ere yet the vernal suns disclose  
The charms that in the chalice\* dawn,  
Though winter hath its breath withdrawn.

But storms arise and shake the earth;  
The oak must struggle from its birth;  
And the bright sun, with rays of gold,  
The rose’s bud will soon unfold.

In peace and joy, ’neath Hilding’s view,  
These lovely plants together grew;  
And Frithiof † was the oak-tree hight;  
The rose was Ingeborga bright.

Didst thou behold them during day,—  
In Freya’s palace, thou wouldst say,  
Are only found such beings fair,  
With rosy wings and golden hair.

But when they dance in hour of night,  
Beneath the moon’s transparent light,~  
Sure ’tis the Elfin king and queen,  
Thus dancing on the meadow green!

He cons his task with eager joy,—  
For he can now—that smiling boy—  
To Ingeborg ‡ the runes impart,  
And lessons that he learnt by heart.

She loves to skim the dark blue sea  
In Frithiof’s bark; and oft as he

Or reefs the sail, or now expands,  
She claps with joy her small white hands. \*

No tree too high, no rock too bold,  
When she a bird’s nest would behold:  
The eagle’s eggs and young he laid,  
With joyful pride, before the maid.

No torrent could his path arrest;  
How sweet to be more closely prest  
By the fair maiden in his arms,  
When foaming waters rous’d alarms!

The first bright rose that spring unfolds,  
The first red cherry he beholds,  
The first ripe ear that autumn yields,  
For her he gathers from the fields.

But hours of childhood quickly fly;  
A blooming youth, with flashing eye,  
Now gazes on the maiden bright,  
Whose charms full blossom to the sight.

He seeks no longer childish sport;  
Unarmed the hardy youth resorts  
To the dark forest, where the bear  
Lies growling in his gloomy lair:

And breast oppos’d to breast they fight;  
And Frithiof conquers; with delight  
To Ingeborg he bears the spoil;  
Forgotten are his wounds and toil;—

For woman loveth danger’s task;  
As plumes hang fondly o’er the casque,  
When no light zephyrs rouse their pride,  
Thus beauty clings to valor’s side.

When during the long winter’s night,  
In the vast hall, while flames shine bright,  
He sings a lay, or reads a story  
Of Asas † and Valhalla’s ‡ glory.

‘Of gold,’ he says, ‘is Freya’s hair,—  
It waves like wheat-sheaf in the air:  
But I know locks of brighter gold  
That a more polish’d brow enfold.

‘Iduna’s breast is soft and fair;  
It pants beneath a tissue rare:  
I know a verdant silken vest  
That covers a far whiter breast.

‘And Frigga’s eyes are deepest blue;  
Like heaven their soft and brilliant hue:  
But I know eyes whose dazzling ray  
Rivals the brightest vernal day.

‘A sun-beam on new fallen snow  
Is Gerda’s cheek: a maid I know,  
And she, though but a mortal meek,  
Can boast a far more glowing cheek.

‘I know a heart as pure as thine,  
Fair Nanna! poet’s bliss assign  
To thee, oh Balder! ’twas thy pride  
That tender Nanna was thy bride.

‘And if belov’d in death like thee,  
One faithful maiden, true to me,  
Would weep like Nanna o’er my grave,  
Stern Hela’s terrors I would brave.’

\* Calyx.

† Frithiof, this word is either of two or three syllables.

‡ Ingeborg— the final *g* is not pronounced.

\* Original—*smaa hvita hænder*.

† *Asas*, the chief deities of Scandinavia.

‡ *Valhalla*,—Heaven.

But Ingeborg the child of kings,  
Sitting alone a ditty sings,  
Or weaves a woof of warlike scene,  
Of ocean's waves, and arbors green.

On wool as white as drifted snow,  
Woven in gold, the bucklers glow;  
While red as blood the lances stream,  
The coats of mail in silver gleam.

The tales oft change at her command;  
But, as they grow beneath her hand,  
Her heroes all bear Frithiof's mien;  
She blushes, but is pleased, I ween.

And Frithiof in the forest roves,  
And carves the name of her he loves  
On many a tree; those runes proclaim  
Their plighted troth and mutual flame.

When nature stirs, and men arise,—  
When day first treads the azure skies,—  
(The world's bright king with hair of gold,)  
'They still in thought communion hold.

When night rides o'er the fields of air,—  
(Earth's mother with her ebon hair,)  
And stars shine bright, and planets rove,—  
They sleep, but dream of nought but love.

'Oh earth! in spring 'tis thy delight  
To deck thy locks with flow'rets bright;  
Oh give me those that bloom most fair,  
To twine a wreath for Frithiof's hair!

'Ocean! beneath thy waves profound,  
In thy vast halls rich pearls are found;  
Give me the fairest now to deck  
My Ingeborg's still fairer neck.'

Frithiof, standing between Helge and Halfdan, beside their father's death-bed,—

"Between the brothers there he stood, with proud, majestic mien,  
As still, between the morn and eve, the brighter day is seen."

The dying king thus advises his elder son :

"Be firm, but never harsh, my son!—inlict not useless pains;  
The steel that strikes the surest blow, still flexible remains:  
Compassion suits a monarch's heart, as flowers adorn the shield;  
Say, is it spring, or winter's cold, that fructifies the field?"

The friendless man, whate'er his rank, is wretched and forlorn;  
He's like the pine-tree in the waste, from which the bark is torn:  
But like a tree within a grove the man befriended stands;  
It's root the purling streamlets feed; all tempests it withstands."

The human treasures of Frithiof, to which we before alluded, are thus described:

"Twelve aged men were ever found by the young hero's side;  
Their silver locks command respect, and who would not confide

In their sage mien, their princely air, their stately martial tread?

Yes! they have noble warriors been; and plainly may be read

The story of their battles fierce, on each deep furrow'd brow.

Why are their breasts incas'd in steel? they cannot combat now:

Oh! it was thus on battle field, by Thorsten's side they mov'd,

They will not cast away the arms their honor'd chieftain lov'd.

Close to these aged warriors sat a gallant, blooming youth,

'Bjorn' was his name, of Frithiof's age; and there he shone, in truth,

Like the fresh rose 'midst faded leaves, in autumn's stormy time;

Gay as a boy, yet firm and bold, as suiteth manhood's prime,

And sage as he whose thoughtful eye hath many winters seen."

King Ring, from hearsay, gives to his council the following account of Ingeborg, when he announces his design to ask her hand:

"King Bele, who, when summer breezes play'd,  
Came often to this land,

Hath, dying, left a daughter: will that maid  
Accept my proffer'd hand?

She like the lily blooms, that decks the flow'ry glade:

Yes! she is young, and flowers alone delight  
The jocund mind of youth;

My leaf is scar'd, alas! and in his flight  
Relentless Time, forsooth,

Hath strew'd my head with snow, and dim becomes my sight.

But can she love a man whose heart is true,  
Although his head be grey?

And will she deign my infant blossom too  
To warm with genial ray?

Then autumn's hand shall crown spring's brow of rose-ate hue."

The soliloquy of Ingeborg, while awaiting Frithiof, who is gone to make his last appeal to Helge and his council:

"The morning breaks, and Frithiof comes not yet;  
'Twas yesternorn the royal council met

By Bele's sepulchre; well chosen spot!  
For there, I ween, was seal'd his daughter's lot.

Ah! I have shed full many bitter tears,  
And offer'd up to Freya earnest prayers,

To melt the hate that burns in Frithiof's breast,  
And from him a reluctant promise wrest,

To give his hand to Helge once again,  
In sign of peace; but man is proud and vain;—

And for his honor (thus he calls his pride)  
A woman's grief he ever would deride:

Why should she cling so fondly to his breast?  
Go ask the moss, on which thy foot is press'd,

Why it adheres so closely to the rock,  
Whose iron surface but appears to mock

The feeble efforts by those tendrils shown,  
To fix their roots within a barren stone,—

While all their food is drawn from night's cold tears alone."

And—

"I Frithiof love,—nor can my thoughts recall  
The hour or day when first I felt this flame;

I know not how, nor whence this feeling came,  
 And almost fancy it was born with me.  
 As we the fruit each year successive see  
 Form round the nut, and swell, and gather force  
 From each bright ray the sun throws in his course—  
 (Its golden food!) thus I can also prove  
 I grew and ripen'd round the nut of love.  
 'Tis for this love I now exist alone,—  
 What would the fruit be, if the core were gone?  
 Balder! great god! receive this vow of mine!  
 My heart was pure when I approach'd thy shrine,  
 And I will leave it with as pure a flame.  
 I'll fearless pass, Bifrost, thy bridge of fame;  
 With my fond love before the gods appear,  
 And in Valhalla it shall shine as clear  
 As any child of Asas there in view,  
 Whose golden buckler may reflect its hue:  
 With pure and dove-like wings it then shall fly  
 Across the blue empyreal vault on high,  
 To seek for refuge in Alfader's breast;  
 From thence it sprang, and there should ever rest."

In rejecting Frithiof's entreaty that she would fly with him to Greece, she contrasts his free condition with her own dependence upon the tyrannical brother to whose guardianship she had been committed; illustrating it as follows:

"Say, what would woman be, if, in her pride  
 She dared the ties Alfader form'd, deride?  
 Ties that unite her to a firmer hand,  
 And lend the strength her weakness must demand.  
 She's like a lily of the water still,  
 That sinks or rises with the current's will:  
 While thus it floats, in pure and snowy vest,  
 The passing boatman wounds its tender breast;  
 He heeds it not; the vessel hastens on;  
 The lily fades: but should its root alone  
 Cling fast to earth, that drooping flower again  
 May lift its head, and all its bloom regain  
 From the bright stars, its sisters of the sky,  
 And like a star itself on liquid azure lie.  
 But should it loose its hold, and far from home  
 Be tost by billows, it will soon become  
 A dry and wither'd leaf, and unregarded roam."

Irritated by her refusal, Frithiof is breaking abruptly away; when she utters a remonstrance, to which we scarcely know any superior in pathos and eloquence:

"Oh Frithiof! is it thus that we must part?  
 Canst thou thus wound thy Ingeborga's heart?  
 Oh Frithiof! can thy brow so sternly lower  
 On her, the friend of thy first childhood's hour?  
 Canst thou no glance of tenderness bestow  
 On her whose tears for thee must ever flow?  
 And can no pressure of thy hand now tell  
 The full—deep meaning of the word *farewell*?  
 Or dost thou fancy I shall now repose,  
 Where blushing roses all their sweets disclose?  
 That I can with indifference see depart  
 The fond and treasur'd idol of my heart?  
 Thou wert my thought by day, my dream by night;  
 'Twas Frithiof's name bore all that gave delight;  
 And all that great or good in life I saw,  
 Resembled him: his accents were my law.  
 Let not that image, once so fair and bright,  
 Assume a frown to terrify my sight!  
 Oh, be not harsh! I now must bid adieu  
 To all the bliss I ever had in view;  
 To all that I more dearly even lov'd,  
 Than the pure joys no mortal yet has prov'd,  
 The joys that in Valhalla we shall taste;  
 This world to me is now a dreary waste:  
 Say! must this sacrifice be all in vain?  
 And can it not one friendly word obtain?" &c.

The storm is thus described:

"How black and how low'ring the once azure sky!  
 And loud bursts the thunder-peal rolling on high!  
 How roughly and fiercely the wild ocean raves!  
 Why rises he thus, with his white foaming waves?  
 The lightning's keen dart, with its bright flashing  
 glare,  
 For a moment illumines the dark lurid air!  
 Hark! the scream that announces the sea bird's affright,  
 As he hastens to shore—and how rapid his flight!

Frithiof.—"Hard must we combat, friends!  
 Its force the tempest sends;  
 Its flapping wings we hear;  
 But warriors know not fear.  
 My love, in thy lone bower,  
 Dost weep for me this hour?  
 Thy tears, thy fond alarms  
 Do but augment thy charms."

'Fore the bark now glide  
 Two fiends, Ham and Heid!  
 Ham the storm excites;  
 Heid in snow delights.

"The tempest begins its dark wings to display,—  
 Oh, summon your strength for this terrible fray!  
 Now plunges the bark; oh, how deep is that cave!  
 But still she remounts on the high swelling wave.  
 All the demons of terror more horribly yell,  
 And grin with their visage fantastic and fell!  
 They ride on the billows with fiendish delight,  
 And play with the foam ever sparkling and white!

\* \* \* \* \*

The waves rise more high!  
 More black grows the sky!  
 The masts and yards reel,  
 And loud groans the keel.

Now all's well again, and each furious wave  
 Thus fiercely may roll, and thus loudly may rave:  
 Ellida obeys the proud chieftain's command;  
 The tempest's wild ravings she now may withstand.  
 The shooting star thus, through the blue vault of night,  
 Speeds swift in its path so unerring and bright;  
 She bounds o'er the billows,—untam'd is her pride;  
 The chamois thus leaps on the high mountain's side."

The following allusion to Christianity and its founder, is made in the last canto. It is a priest of Balder who speaks:

"Rumor hath reach'd me of a southern Balder,  
 Son of a virgin, by Alfader sent  
 'T' expound the runes mysterious, that are graven  
 On the fates' sable buckler, yet unravell'd.  
 Peace was his end and aim; his falchion, love;  
 And like a dove, sat innocence upon  
 His silver helmet: piously he lived,  
 And pious taught; but preach'd forgiveness too:  
 And under distant palm trees lies his tomb,  
 His doctrine, so 'tis said, from vale to vale  
 Wanders triumphant; melteth stony hearts;  
 Joins hands together; and constructs on earth  
 A realm of peace and charity and love.  
 I do not rightly comprehend his law,  
 But in my better hours, methinks, I feel  
 A distant glimmering of its holy fire;  
 And at such times all hearts must feel like mine.  
 The day will come, and I foresee it clear,  
 When o'er the rugged mountains of the North  
 'Twill spread its dove-like pinions, and on high  
 Will wave victoriously its sacred banner.  
 But ere that day arrives, the North will be  
 For us no more; and oft the oak shall wave

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Its branches o'er our long forgotten graves.  
All hail, ye generations yet unborn !  
Than us far happier, ye shall one day drink  
That cup of consolation, and behold  
The torch of truth illuminate the world !  
This will disperse each murky vaporous cloud,  
Which threat'ning o'er the sun of life impends,  
Yet do not us despise, for we have sought  
With earnest zeal, and unaverted eye,  
To catch one ray of that ethereal light,  
Alfader still is one, and still the same ;  
But many are his messengers divine."

The extracts we had marked for insertion are not yet exhausted : some others are so fine, that we shall probably present them in a future number. We take leave of this valuable addition to our literature, with a hope that publishers on this side the Atlantic will soon favor *their* world with an American edition.