

THE
 HISTORY
 OF THE
 ANGLO-SAXONS.

BOOK III.

INTRODUCTION.

THE preceding volume commenced the history of the Anglo-Saxons with the first appearance of their ancestors above the Elbe, and conducted it to the death of Egbert, in 836. The two volumes now submitted to the Public, continue it to the Norman conquest. That event ended the Anglo-Saxon dynasty; a new race of sovereigns then seized the English sceptre, and consequently with the battle of Hastings this composition naturally terminates in its political history.

The Anglo-Saxon history, from the death of Egbert to the death of Harold, the son of Earl

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Godwin,

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Godwin, is not only interesting, because great characters adorned it, but because during this period our laws acquired precision, system, and a regular administration. The English monarchy arose, and the other orders of our constitution began to appear in that arrangement, connection, and determinate shape, which have so powerfully contributed to our national prosperity. In this interval our amazing commerce and our maritime greatness were visibly and vigorously budding. Our language began its revolutions, and the mind of our ancestors received that peculiar cultivation, and those literary accessions, which exalted their national character from war like barbarians, to moral, reflective, and improving men.

From these circumstances, as well as from their personal qualities, and successful government, Alfred, and most of his successors, claim a veneration that will augment with their antiquity. We owe to the institutions, the bravery, and the virtues of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, so much of that glory and happiness, which for ages have been naturalized among us, that it is a reasonable tribute of our gratitude, to consecrate their memory with renewed admiration.

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But during this period, a new people force themselves upon our attention, and connect themselves so perpetually and so essentially with the history of the Anglo-Saxons, that we are compelled to admit them to a share of the composition. It was in the ninth century, that, under the name of Northmen, the Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians first became the scourges of Europe. In England they produced changes and consequences, which were only exceeded by the effects of the Anglo-Saxon settlements. By their destructive swords, the last remnants of the ðtarchy were abolished, and the English monarchy was established. Their aggressions from the ocean, compelled the rise of the British navy. They poured into the island a new population, with new dialects, and new manners. They dethroned, for a while, the ever-memorable Alfred, and erected in Northumbria and East Anglia a Danish sovereignty, which the following kings after many struggles overthrew. Within half a century afterwards, they again filled the nation with universal calamity; they humbled its aristocracy, changed the regal succession, and usurped the sceptre of the whole island for three generations.

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These important events were achieved by warriors who sailed immediately from Denmark, and the regions adjacent. One reign only followed before the descendants of the Norwegian colony which had settled in France, effected a new invasion, and completed the conquest of the Anglo-Saxon race.

From these circumstances, the history of the Anglo-Saxons becomes so intimately combined with the history of the Northmen, that the transactions of either people can be but imperfectly apprehended, unless the annals and monuments of both be consulted. The writers of the General History of England have overlooked the importance of the northern literature to the Saxon history, and this omission first suggested the necessity of the present undertaking.

On the antiquities of the north.


It would gratify an innocent curiosity, if an authentic account of the first population of the north could be obtained; but the wild theories of Scandinavian erudition are most persuasive evidences, that the antiquities of the north are involved in clouds which no labour can remove. It is our ignorance which gives birth to conjecture, and seduces our reason to license
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its fantastic excursions. No one disputes upon the colonization of Normandy, on the founders of Carthage, or the settlers in the Americas. On these, as our knowledge is accurate, our history is reasonable; but in the antiquities of the north, where every point is uncertain, every supposition is delusion, imagination arrogates to itself the privilege of divining what history has not recorded, and no delirium ever framed an extravagance, which has exceeded some of the speculations of the learned on the first population of the north.

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Innumerable are the hours which inquisitive students have lost in tracing and comparing these theories. As it may not be unprofitable to many if the fallacy of the subject be fairly exhibited, a few pages of Introduction will be devoted to present a specimen of the success with which this knight errantry of erudition has been usually rewarded.

Some of the Swedish antiquaries have limited their ancestry to the family of Noah; but they reward themselves for their forbearance, by boundless excursions afterwards. They force from the diluvian patriarch his grandson Magog, and hurrying him across the globe with the rapidity, not mortal, of their northern witches,

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they fettle him in Sweden, within 88 years after the destruction of mankind. After a journey so immense, he was not suffered to be indolent. They compelled from him a population so vigorous, that it filled Sweden, founded Upsal¹, and established the Swedish monarchy, within a century and an half after his miraculous transportation². One hundred and eleven years after their monarch Ubbo, they produce their champion Eric³, who colonized the Danish isles,

¹ This was done by Ubbo, the son of Magog, who, a diluvisio universalis anni circiter 246, principatum super Sueones adeptus est. Ab hoc Ubbone ante tempora Abrahæ edificata est urbs Upsalia. Joan. Magnus, *Historia Gothorum*, l. i. c. 6. p. 23. Rom. 1554. Olaus Magnus knew Ubbo to have been an excellentissimus rex. He even insinuates, that the indelibilis memoria of him, and some others, is authenticated by inscriptions and songs, de Gent. Septent. l. ii. c. 32. p. 98.

² Joannes Magnus was the great hero of Swedish antiquities, l. i. c. 4, 5. He is quoted and countenanced by Olaus Magnus, p. 90, and by Loccenius in his *Historiæ Suecicæ*, l. i. p. 1 ed. Frank. 1676. The celebrated Verelius also states the derivation from Magog, *Hist. Suio-Goth.* l. i. p. 1, and the industrious Messenius befriends it in his *Scondia illustrata*, though he rather prefers his son Gogo, tom. xi. p. 4, 5. ed. Stockholm, 1700. The learned Peringskiöld even identifies Magog with the Aunus of Snorre. *Monum. Upland.* p. 20. This last opinion is very perplexing; because as Snorre places twenty Swedish kings before Aunus, eighteen of these, according to Peringskiöld's system, must have been antediluvians!

³ Upon Eric, even a Verelius has rested with certain confidence: "Regum nostrorum primus vel inter primos illustrissimos Ericus fuit post diluvisio 357; legum hic conditor," &c. *Hist.*

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illes⁴, and 660 years afterwards, they con-
 descendingly permit the nominal founders
 of Denmark and England, Dan and Angul,
 to issue from their tribes⁵. They guard this
 matchless antiquity by denouncing the igno-
 rance, or pitying the envy of the sceptics who
 dispute it!

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Some gentlemen, dissatisfied with having
 Magog only at the head of their genealo-
 gy, have exiled the Canaanitish giants to
 Sweden, who polluted it with idolatry⁶. Even
 this addition was fame too scanty. A part,
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Suio-G. c. iv. p. 16. Loccenius says, that however the *Veteres
 annalium svecicorum scriptores* differ on the more ancient kings,
 yet they all agree in supporting Eric, p. 1.

⁴ Verelius Hist. p. 16. Messenius Scand. tom. i. p. 2, and
 Joan. Mag. c. viii. p. 26, who annexes a translation of some very
 ancient Swedish verses, in which Eric says :

Daniæ regnum caruit colonis
 Donec illius regionis agros
 Gothicas gentes habitare iussi.

But the last verse betrays the origin and the nature of this
 old authority :

Hinc satis iusta est ratio, coarctans
 Danicos reges, quod in omne tempus
 Gotthico regi referant tributa.

Collaque subdant, p. 28.

⁵ Joan. Magnus, p. 26.

⁶ Besides talking of Thuifco, who came to Scandinavia 193
 years after the flood, tom. i. p. 1, and of Gogo, the son of Magog,
 to whom he is partial, tom. xi. p. 5—11, Messenius dates the ar-
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and no small one, of the Trojans has been therefore hurried to it<sup>7</sup>; and yet Magog, Canaanites, and Trojans have not satisfied National vanity is a giant whose magnitude, however enormous, enlarges by gratification. Hence Odin, and his contemporary Asiatics, have been also invoked, that by this eclectic system of vagrant ancestry, the Scandinavian glory might never die.

It was obvious to the patrons of such theories, that the jealous rivalry of other nations would assail this pyramid of their fame, around whose exalted summit the first vapours of the reviving world were directed to float. It might be inquired, why the eldest son of an antediluvian should have traversed the ruined world to enjoy, in preference, the chilling heaths, the benumbing frosts, and the furious tempests of the north; or why the expatriated warriors of Syria and Ilium, should have select-

rival of these giants 844 years after the deluge, tom. i. p. 4. So far are they from being creatures of fancy, that their wonderful works are beheld by natives and strangers; Non citra stuporem nostro tempore passim Ib.

<sup>7</sup> Deinde Trojanarum pars non modica reliquiarum. These Trojans travelled first to the Palus Meotis, then to Germany, Holland, and from Jutland got into Sweden. Meffen. t. xi. p. 4. This work of Meffenius was first published by Peringskiöld, observationibus aucta, in 1700.

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ed for their residence that portion of the globe which ancient prejudice scarcely believed to be habitable<sup>8</sup>.

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Among those who have struggled to defend the antiquities of Sweden, was a man whose anatomical discoveries rank him among those distinguished characters who have augmented the science of mankind<sup>9</sup>, and whose erudition has seldom in quantity been exceeded. That Sweden was peopled in the first æras after the confusion at Babel, was his decided belief<sup>10</sup>; and to seduce the consent of others to his system, he details the superior temptations by which the north attracted the earliest men to exchange the sunny banks of the Eu-

Rudbeck's  
 system.

<sup>8</sup> Let me however do justice to Versalius. In his more reflective moments, he fairly says, neque enim credibile primis a diluvio annis hæc loca ab illis ubi reparari genus humanam cæpit longe diffusa inhabitata statim fuisse. *Hervarar Saga*, notes p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Rudbeck declares, that on the 27th Jan. 1651, he first observed the lymphatics, and the thoracic duct on the 8th of February, in the same year. *Exercit. Anatom. ap. Manget's Biblioth. Anatom. v. ii. p. 705.* Bartholin, who also claimed the discovery of the lymphatics, states, that he saw them on the 15th December, 1651; but took them for the lacteals, (which Asellius had discovered in 1622), until the 28th of February, 1652, when he distinguished them to be different vessels. *Ib. p. 692.* The priority of Rudbeck's discovery is therefore clear.

<sup>10</sup> He thinks that this fact is by his authorities *ostensum et confirmatum.* *Atlantica*, p. 80. ed. Upsal, 1679. He says, at least, *aliquos sine mora incolas accepisse*, p. 87.

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phrates for the more rigorous climate of the Baltic<sup>11</sup>.

The first inhabitants of a reviving world would probably live on fish, because beasts were as yet few; and corn, perhaps, had not yet vegetated. But what place can hope to excel the north in its profusion of those animals who take the lead upon our festive table. Surely the epicures of the south would have crowded into Sweden for the enjoyment of this delicious dainty<sup>12</sup>!

What though the taste of luxury should have preferred the feathered to the scaly brood! Sweden, with her geese and swans, her storks and cranes, her countless others, and her endless rivers, lakes, ponds, marshes, bays, and islands, to attract and nourish them, can be transcended

<sup>11</sup> His fourth chapter is intitled: de Septentrionalium orbis partium invitamentis, quibus homines ad sedes in eo capiendas allesti sunt, p. 80. He says, facile apparet, it easily appears that the north was destined for the habitation and support of men and animals: magis quam australem, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> This is his sixth invitamentum: Quemadmodum, pisces, primis a diluvio temporibus, precipuam opsonii partem hominibus suppeditasse jam ante ostendimus; ita septentrionem, *præ aliis locis omnibus*, ad sobolem propagandam eis arrisisse, et adhuc arridere, partim immensus ille, et omnem fidem humanam superans halecum, salmonum, halcularum, luciorum, asellorum, &c. &c. p. 82.

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