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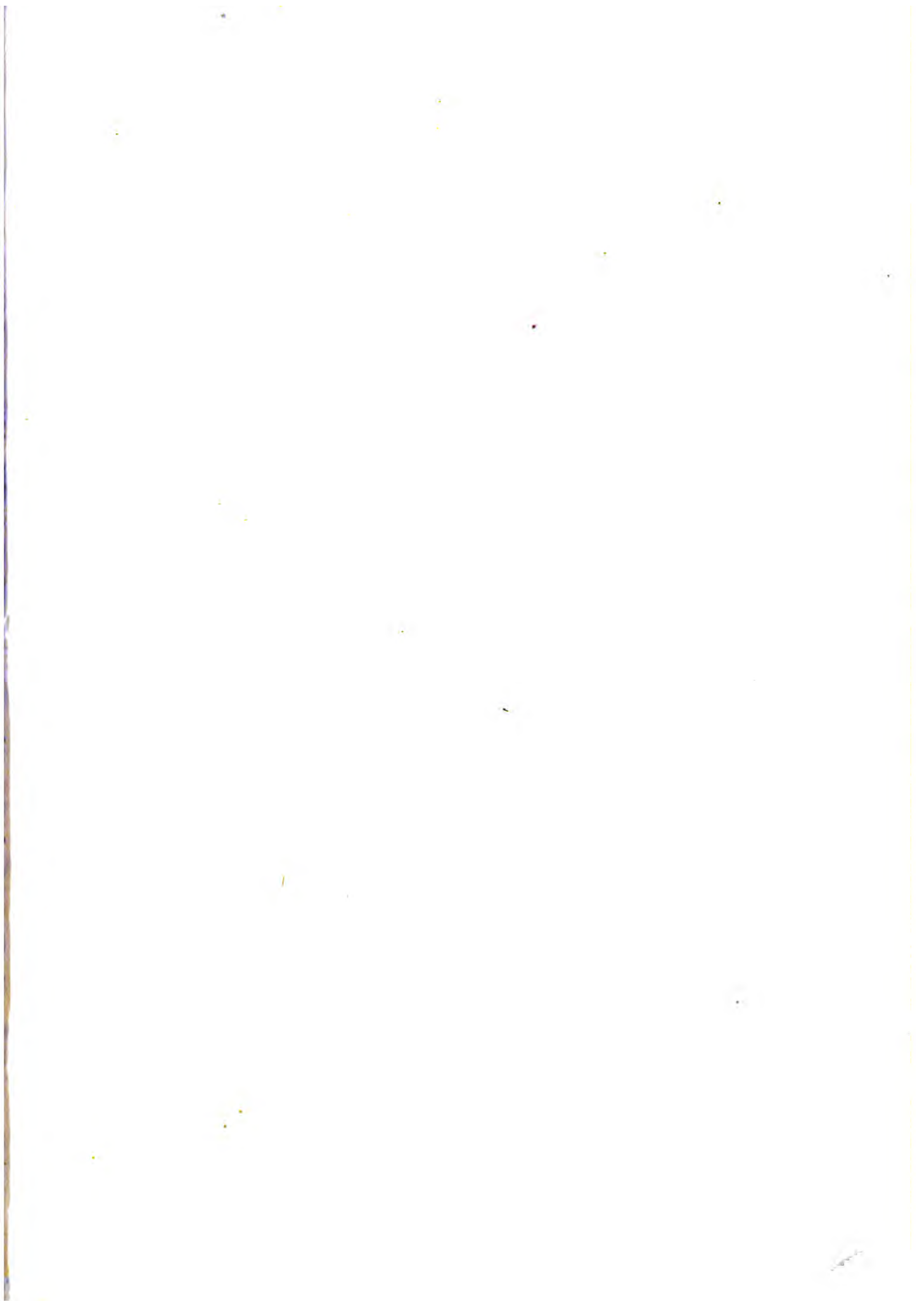
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From the Translators
Mother
to
her kind friend,

Madame Bischoff.

1840
ms



ALEX

BY

ESAIAS TEGNÉR.

Translated from the Swedish

by

A. DOBRÉE.

GOTHENBURG.

PRINTED BY C. F. ARWIDSSON.

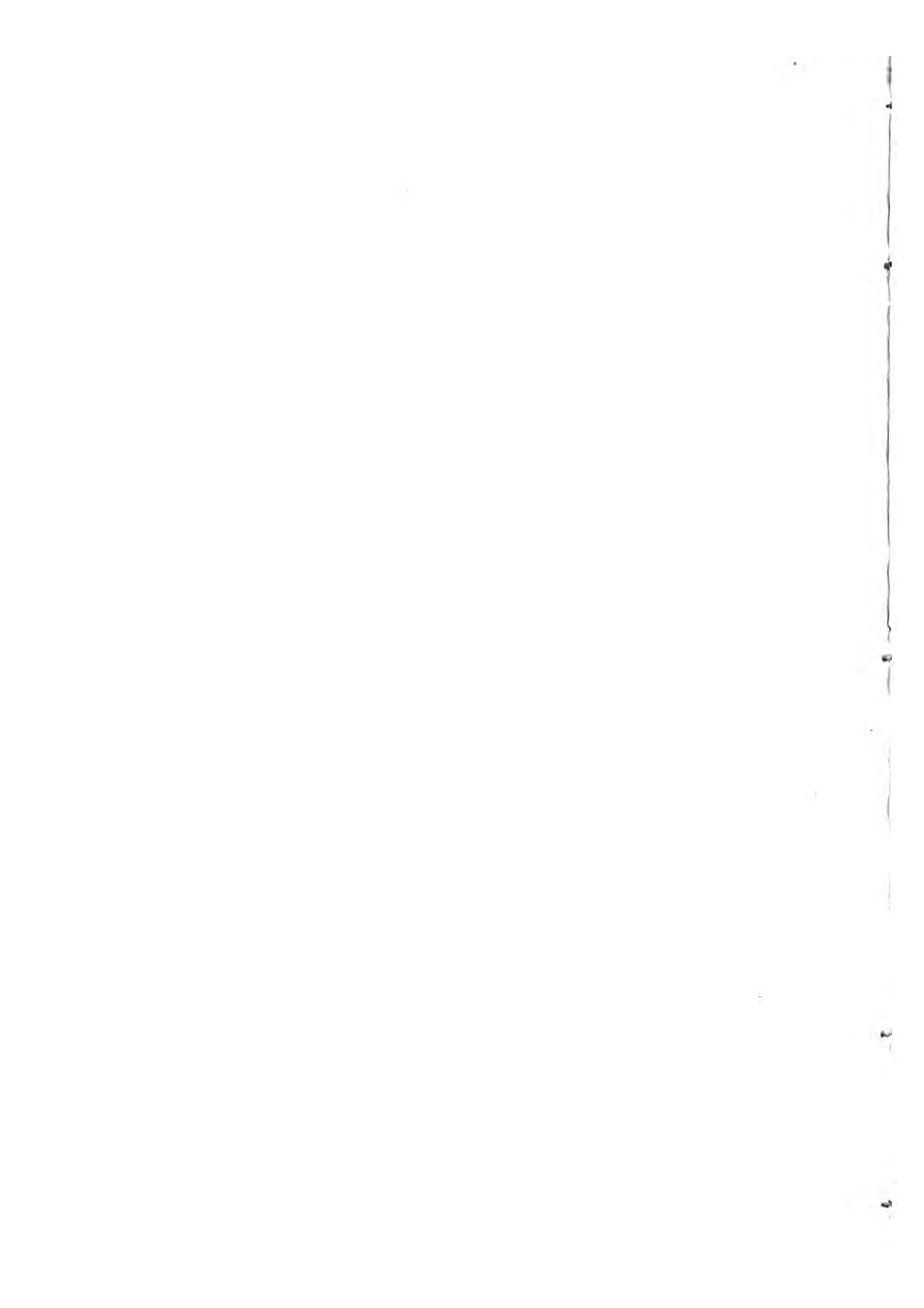
1866.



*Ej Döden **stora** män ifrån oss tar,
Blott hyddan gömmer han för våra sinnen,
Ty deras själar hos oss dröja kvar
I snillets alster och i bragders minnen:*

*TEGNÉR, ej död, men än och alltid ung
För alla hjertan som det Sköna ära,
Inför Din thron, Du Svenska skalders Kung,
Jag vågar denna ringa hyllning bära!*





The present translation was considerably advanced when my misgivings of having been preceded by others were verified by the version published in Blackwood's Magazine (February 1826) and that of Mr Bethune (in his Specimens of Swedish and German Poetry; London 1848) falling into my hands, while about the same time I noticed an article in the Foreign & Colonial Review, (July 1843) alluding to a translation by Dr Latham and giving some extracts of the same.

On comparison of these with the original, I was induced nevertheless to continue the present version, chiefly by finding that none had adhered to the very characteristic metre of the Swedish. Tegnér's poem is written in iambic tetrameters, half of which have amphibrachic, or double, endings; these amphibrachs do not however recur at perfectly regular intervals, but are introduced

with great taste in different combinations. The preservation of this feature seemed to me an essential element in faithfully rendering the harmonious flow of the original, and I have *precisely* followed the Swedish metre throughout. This circumstance, it may be stated, has added considerably to the difficulties of the task, as the language of the original adapts itself by its articles, the inflections of its verbs, its plurals and other characteristics, far more readily than the English to the use of the amphibrach, where the employment of the latter — as our chief poems shew — is not frequent. Mr Bethune has adopted the iambic tetrameters, with occasional amphibrachs, but the latter are far less abundant than in the original, and no attempt has been made to conform with the Swedish in their arrangement. Dr Latham's translation, judging from the extracts, is in composite metre, embracing both iambs and trochees, in tetrameters and pentameters, and departs therefore widely from the original rhythm. That in Blackwood is in trochaic pentameters, and being a 'free' translation does not pretend to any close approximation.

I was further influenced by the belief that a much nearer adherence than in the previous

translations to the peculiarities in the style and details of the original — as close a rendering in fact as was at all compatible with good taste — would best illustrate the spirit of Tegnér's production. I have endeavored therefore to 'carry over' the text in its characteristic simplicity, and only in a few instances conceded to the exigencies of the metre some trifling transposition or amplification, and I have not hesitated to retain the occasional homely expressions, though they might at first fall unwonted on an English ear. A Translator, while avoiding the harsh identities of the Photographer, should yet, in my opinion, be an ardent Pre-Raffaelite.

The name of the heroine, in the original Maria, — varied occasionally to Marie, — has been changed in Dr Latham's version to Thecla, in Blackwood's to Linda; alterations hardly justifiable, and I have adhered to the name of Tegnér's choice, even though to the English reader it might not perhaps bear with it the same foreign or romantic associations as to the Swede.

I may be allowed here to quote the following extracts from an able article in the *Foreign and Colonial Review* (July 1843): „Tegnér is difficult to translate and especially into English . . .

„he abounds in allusions which are unfamiliar, in
„idioms which are harsh to our ears; and he often
„writes in metres difficult to imitate and yet far
„too characteristic to change. When, therefore, we
„consider that one of the greatest niceties in poetical
„translation is to adjust the balance between the
„pleasing and the true, when these come into
„competition; to preserve what is essential in the
„archetype, and yet to reject what is harsh and
„revolting; to introduce modes of expressions and
„thoughts which ought to be English and are not,
„and to exclude those which could not or should
„not be naturalized among us, — we may form
„some faint estimate of the taste and judgement
„which a translator of Tegnér is called upon to
„exercise and of one of the main difficulties with
„which he has to grapple . . . Metres which are
„not arbitrarily chosen should not be arbitrarily
„rejected; and those of Tegnér are in general
„adopted with great care to the prevailing senti-
„ment or subject in hand . . . Undoubtedly, under
„such circumstances, a translator has a right to
„expect a more than ordinary share of that indul-
„gence which is justly granted to the poet in consi-
„deration of the charm there is in metre . . . he
„may well expect us to tolerate now and then

„inverted constructions . . . 'imperfect' rhymes . . .
„may be even considered as chromatic notes which
„often enhance the beauty of the melody: at any
„rate they should be most indulgently treated when
„they occur in difficult metres, chosen not because
„they are difficult, but because they are suitable
„expressions of the action or sentiment described.“

In carrying out the present translation, the previous ones could afford but little assistance; the occasional resemblances (many occurring in parts written previous to seeing the other renderings) are such as would inevitably arise from a common original in a language bearing considerable affinity to the English. The notes appended, which embody those of the original, will I trust, prove of some interest to the reader.

ESAIAS TEGNÉR, bishop of Wexiö, is justly considered the greatest of Swedish poets and his 'Axel' — published in 1821 — although not of the imposing character of his world-famed 'Frithiof's Saga', has attained a widespread popularity in

Scandinavia; there are few Swedes who cannot repeat the most beautiful of its passages by heart.

The story has been laid by the poet in a time still endeared to the memory of every Swede, by the halo of glory it cast around the national name. Charles XII was indeed an embodiment of that bold and adventurous spirit, inherent in Northern character since olden days and notwithstanding his reverses and the ruin his wars ultimately brought on the country, his name remains honored and beloved by the people to this day — not unlike that of the First Napoleon under somewhat similar circumstances. The daring expedition of the youthful monarch, which led him away from his Northern home far into the territories of Czar and Sultan, — his personal bravery and the hardy mode of life in which he set the example to his followers — his remarkable adversaries: the great Czar Peter, and King Augustus of Poland, the latter renowned for his prodigious personal strength — all these might well lead the popular opinion to look upon these times as almost

a return to the heroic age*) and we can readily conceive with what 'awe befitting' the 'vet'ran of King Charles' legions', from whom the poet professes to have heard his story, would be looked up to by the succeeding generation, amidst whom

„he still remain'd erect,

A trophy amidst ruin'd regions.“

The tale,

... „in simple verses told“

has not been highly elaborated in its construction, but its details bear evidence of a masterhand and the freshness of many of the similes cannot fail to be noticed.

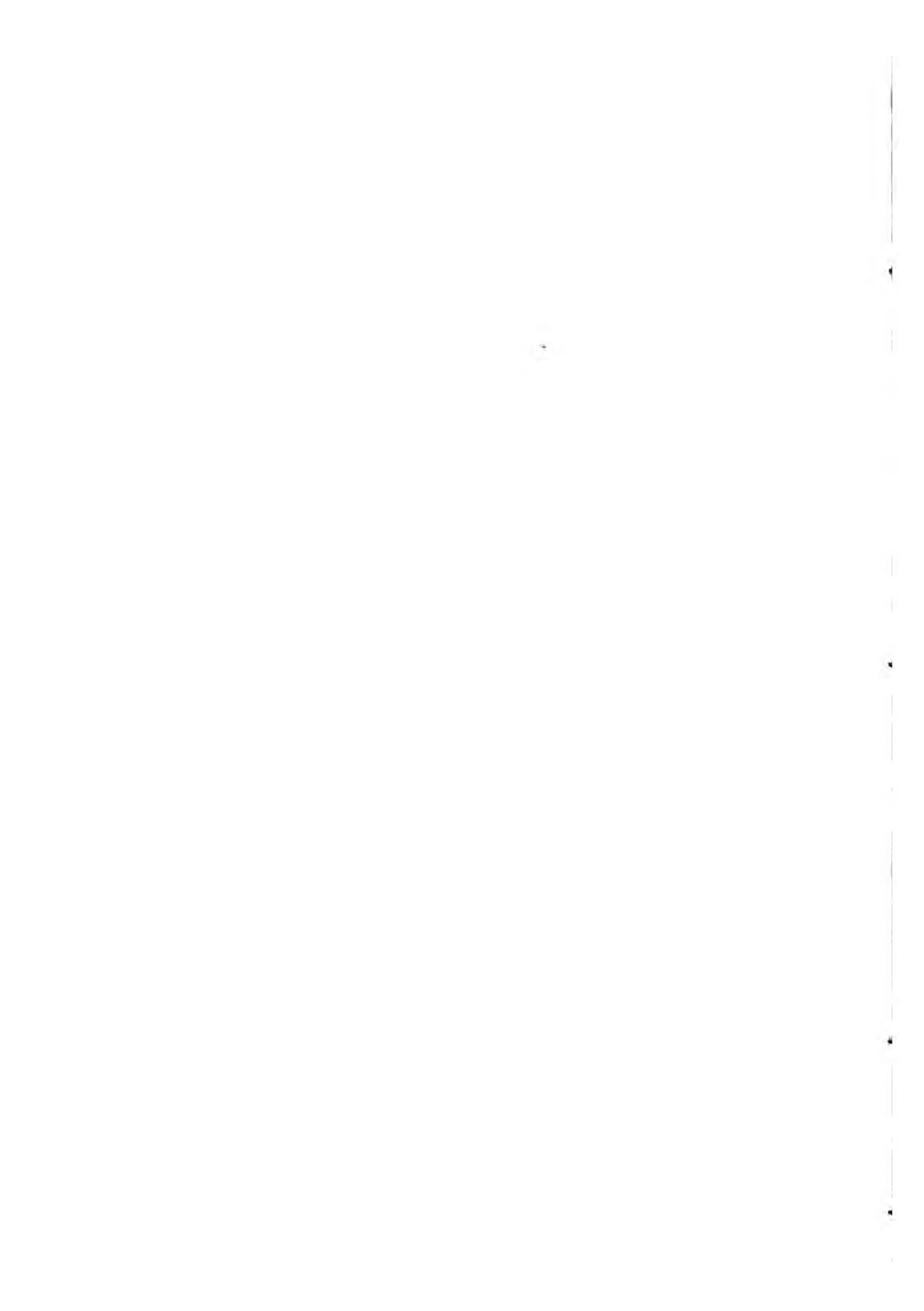
Here and there may be traced some slight resemblances to other authors, but the treatment is too original to admit any idea of imitation.

Whilst craving indulgence for the many imperfections of the present translation, I may yet be permitted to assure the reader in the words of one

*) Il faut avouer qu'en considérant de telles aventures, la force prodigieuse du roi Auguste et les voyages „du Czar, on croirait être au temps des Hercules et des „Thésée.“
Voltaire. Hist. de Charles XII.

of my predecessors, that I have employed on my task 'more pains and care, perhaps, than were altogether justified by the nature of it'; but if this result of some leisure hours contribute one single leaf more to the wreath which an admiring World has laid on the tomb of the great Swedish Scald, my endeavours will be richly rewarded.

AXEL.



AXEL.

The olden times are dear to me,
King Charles' times, now long departed,
For both as peace of mind lighthearted,
And brave were they as Victory.
Round verge of Northland's skies is glowing
A reflex, still their lustre showing,
And mighty Shapes in mantles blue,
With yellow belts, amidst the hue
Of ev'ning, yet are oft seen flitting.
I look to you with awe befitting,
Ye Hero-Shades from better lands,
With mail of buff and pond'rous brands!

A vet'ran of King Charles' legions
From childhood's days I recollect.
On earth he still remain'd erect,
A trophy amidst ruin'd regions.
Upon his aged head there shone
The silver all that he had hoarded,
And scars upon his brow recorded
Their tale, like Runes on Bauta-stone.
Tho' poor, he'd long known Want, and treated
It as a plaything void of dread;
And still his life of camps he led
In simple cot, midst woodlands seated.
Yet jewels twain he own'd, that more
He valued than all earthly chattel:
His bible and his sword of battle
That Charles the Twelfth's inscription bore.
The mighty monarch's deeds of glory,
Sought now in hundred books of story,

— For far yon eagle flew around —
Enduring still his mem'ry crowded
Like ancient warrior-urns stand shrouded
Within a greenclad barrow-mound.
Oh! when some venture he related
Of Charles and of his gallant Blues,
What lustre would his eyes diffuse,
How high he bore his head elated,
And vig'rous like a swordstroke rang
Each word, as from his lips it sprang.
Thus late at night he often tarried
And told of bygone days of fame,
And each time at King Charles' name
His hand to bare-worn hat he carried.
Beside his knees, with wond'ring gaze,
I stood, — for then I reach'd no higher —
And hero-forms like yon old sire,
Still haunt my soul from youthful days.

And deep since then in mem'ry seated,
Dim legends many dwell secreted,
Sword-lilies like, that in their sheath
Repose the wintersnow beneath.

The vet'ran with the dead is sleeping.
Peace to his dust! To him I owe
This legend. North, thine ear bestowe,
With me o'er fate of AXEL weeping!
Beside the old man's words, seems cold
My song, in simple verses told.

The mighty King lay camp'd at Bender.
Wars did his countries desert render,
Dimm'd was his fame, of late so bright.
His people, like a wounded knight,
The chill of death already feeling,

Behind their shield still fought on kneeling,
And Hope, abandon'd by the rest,
Dwelt but in his undaunted breast.
Tho' raging storms the leaves were turning
Of Fate's great book, tho' Earth did quake,
He stood, as vault that naught can shake
Stands bombproof in the city burning,
Like rock that braves the wild seawave,
Like Fortitude upon a grave.

One even' he to AXEL handed
A missive. "Axel" — he commanded —
„Ride now apace by night and day,
And make with this in haste thy way
To Sweden: nor when landed tarry,
But safely to the Council carry.
Start off this night, — God speed with thee, —
And greet the olden cliffs from me!" —

Young Axel loved to ride. The writing
Rejoiced he took, and stitch'd it in
Within his belt. At Holofzin
His father near the King fell fighting,
And thus bereft, the son of arms
Grew up in camps midst war's alarms.
His was a graceful form, as nourish
At times our Northern regions yet,
Fresh as a rose, but stately set
As pines in Swedish soil that flourish.
Like heaven's vault on cloudless day
Clear was his brow and nobly rounded,
And truth, and honesty unbounded
In ev'ry feature written lay.
His beaming eye proclaim'd the tiding
That upwards, to the Source of Light,
T'was framed to raise its glances bright
With trust unfeign'd and hope confiding,

And without fear to cast them down
On him, round whom but shadows frown. —
In Charles' own band he was instated
Midst those in soul to him related:
Their number — small the company —
To sev'n, like Charleswain's stars amounted,
Or nine at most, like Muses counted
And hardy was their choice, tho' free.
With sword and flame their mission proving,
A christen'd race of Vikings bold,
They liken'd those that went of old
In prows o'er darkblue billows roving.
Of couch they never stood in need,
But on the earth their mantle spreading,
Nor Northern storms nor snowdrifts dreading,
Slept sweetly as on flow'ry mead.
Their grasp a horseshoe bent together,
And ne'er thou'dst see, in bitt'rest weather,

Them round the hearthflame sparkling bright;
They loved of cannonballs the heating,
As red as setting sun retreating
In blood, before a wintry night.
Their rule in battle was that never
To less than sev'n might *one* give way,
Still fronting them with breast at bay,
For none should see their back turn'd ever.
And lastly there was this command,
Severe, of all perchance severest:
No maiden must their heart hold dearest,
Till Charles himself bestowed his hand.
How bright two heav'n-blue eyes were glancing,
How smiled two rosy lips entrancing,
How high the swans on bosom fair
Swam o'er their lake — another pair, —
They must not gaze — else flee affrighted:
For to their swords their troth was plighted.

Young Axel saddles gay his steed
And night and day rides on with speed.
Thus Ukraine's borders he was nearing,
When lo! on ev'ry side appearing,
Gleam'd lance and sword the forest thro'.
The glitt'ring ring they quickly drew
Around. „Thou bearest news from Bender,
Alight, the scroll to me surrender,
Obey or die!“ A swordcut bold
His plain, his Swedish answer told,
And sudden taugt more humble pleading,
Bows to the ground the speaker bleeding.
His back against an oak as stay,
The warrior now pursues his play.
Where-e'er the heavy falchion rushes,
A knee there bends, and blood there gushes,
And bravely he his vow did hold;

Not one to sev'n, t'were easy ended,
But one to twenty be contended:
He battled like Rolf Krake of old.
No longer now on hope relying,
He sought but fellowship in dying;
And many wound, in whispers fell,
With purple lips his hour doth tell,
And round his heart the blood stops flowing,
And faint the hiltbound hand is growing:
His vision darkens. Spent his strength,
He in the long Night sinks at length.

Hurrah! rings thro' the forest lusty,
And falcon dashing, staghound trusty,
Their prey pursue. A party gay
Of hunters canter up this way.
In front, on tiger'd steed appearing,
With habit green, with rosy hue,

Like rushing whirlwind onwards flew
A maiden, fair as daybeam peering.
The robberband affrighted flies,
But at the slain her courser shies,
And with a bound she's now descending.
There lay he, as an oak might fall
In woody dell o'er saplings small,
When Northern storms their rage are spending.
How fair he lay there in his blood!
And bending anxious o'er him stood
MARIA, ancient mem'ries waking
Of Latmos, when the heav'ns forsaking,
Diana, distant from the chase,
Bent o'er Endymion's slumb'ring face.
No fairer youth her heart inspired,
Than now the huntress here admired.
Within his shatter'd breast is found
A spark of life, tho' wellnigh flitted,

And on a litter, quickly knitted
Of leafy boughs from trees around,
They gently bear his form halfdying
To her abode, not distant lying.

Beside his pillow'd head she staid,
Her grief with tender pity mixing,
And on his pallid features fixing
A glance, a kingdom had repaid.
E'en thus in Grecian grove stands blooming,
— Fair land, where darkness now is looming —
A rose in wildborn loveliness,
Near statue prone of Hercules.
At length the deathlike trance is waning,
He looks around, his voice regaining.
But ah! his eye, before so mild,
Now fixedly it stares, and wild.
„Where am I? maid, what dost thou by me?

No woman's glances e'er must eye me.
King Charles owns me. No tear of thine
Must ever fall in wound of mine.
Midst stars above abides my father,
He frons, my vow he heard full well.
And yet, how sweet th'enchantress fell!
How tempting! Satan, flee me rather!
My belt, my scroll, — where hast thou placed?
King Charles' own hand the missive traced.
Good is my father's brand for smiting,
On Muscovites the keenest biting.
Right merry seem'd the fray to me,
Had but the King been there to see:
They fell like ripe ears to the sickle!
Methought my own lifesblood did trickle.
And now to Stockholm will I take
The scroll, my honor is at stake.
Up! moments dear I must be saving."

Thus feverstricken he is raving,
And pale, the friend of battle dread
Sinks down again on peaceful bed.

And Life and Death were both contesting
For victory; Life gain'd at last,
And danger by degrees fled past,
And Axel's gaze could now be resting
With sober'd glance, tho' faint and dim,
Upon the angel watching him.
She was not like the beauties sighing
Of Idyls old, for ever dying
Of languor deep in rural spots,
With locks like e'en the sun's own shining,
And cheeks like pallid vi'lets pining,
And eyes like blue forget-me-nots.
She was an Eastern child: her flowing,
Her raven locks hung richly growing,

Like midnight round a rosebed laid;
And Joy's, the only trueborn Vigor
Crown'd proud her brow, like Vict'ry's figure
Upon the shield-maid's tomb display'd.
Fresh was her hue, as painters render
Aurora's, in a wreath of splendor.
In form she vied with Oread,
Her footsteps dancing fell and glad,
And high upon her bosom flowing
The waves of youth and health arose:
A frame of lily and of rose,
A soul of fire intensely glowing,
A southern summer-sky, replete
With golden rays and fragrance sweet.
Her dark eye beam'd with fires contending
Of earthly and ethereal climes:
Jove's eagle she would match at times,
Its glances proud from heaven sending;

At times the doves, that thro' the sky
With Aphrodite's cloud-car fly.

O Axel! soon thy pains are wearing
Away, the scars alone remain;
Thy breast outside is heal'd again,
But ah! thy heart, how is it faring?
Let not thy gaze so fondly rest
On yon kind hand, thy wounds that dress'd;
That marble hand, with taper finger,
Within thine own it must not linger.
More dang'rous t'is to the by far,
Than in the strife last year at Bender,
Hard Ottman's hands, that bade surrender
With pistol and with scimitar.
Those ruddy lips, like freshborn roses,
Whose ev'ry parting but discloses
Of soothing hope a fairy-song:

T'were better in thine ear were sounding
Again Czar Peter's thunders, bounding
The field of Pultava along.
And when in summ'ry warmth thou farther
Thy steps would'st try, still pale and wan,
Then, Axel, lean as stay upon
Thy sword, and not that round arm rather,
Prepared at Cupid's own behest
As pillow where his head to rest!

O Love! In earth and heaven ruling
A wonder vast! Thou lifesbreath soft
Of bliss supreme! Celestial waft,
Life's sultry groves serenely cooling!
Thou beating heart in Nature's breast,
Thou men's and gods' consoler blest!
Drop seeks for drop amidst the ocean,
And all yon stars above in motion,

From pole to pole they ever run
In bridal dance around their sun.
With thee man's soul is still pervaded,
An ev'ning tinge, a mem'ry faded
Of fairer, better days, when yet
As children we in heaven met,
And there in azure hall delighted
Would dance, by silver lustres lighted,
And slumber, when with frolic warm,
Each ev'ning on our father's arm.
Like Genius, richly we were gifted,
Our only language then was pray'r,
And brother fair was to us there
Each angel-child, on wings uplifted.
But ah! we fell, and since, our love
No more is pure like once above.
Yet in th' adored One mem'ry traces
Some feature still of heavn'ly faces,

Hears wellknown voices once again
In springtide's, or in poet's strain.
Then gladness on the heart comes falling,
As when the Swiss that far doth roam,
In distant lands hears sounds of home,
His Alps and childhood's scenes recalling.

T'was ev'ning. The departed day
Upon its western couch lay dreaming,
And stars set out, in silence beaming,
Like Epypt's priests, upon their way.
And Earth stood there with bliss o'ergushing
In starlit eve, as when with wreath
In sable locks, a bride beneath
The pall, both smiling stands and blushing.
From day's warm sports now seeking rest,
The laughing najad was reclining,
And sunset's crimson hue lay shining,

A gorgeous rose, upon her breast.
Each little Love-god, that was bidding
In fetters bound, while sun held sway,
With bow and arrow now away
On moonbeams thro' the grove was riding,
That festal arch of deephued green,
Where lately Spring had enter'd in.
Of nightingale in oak-copse singing,
The music thro' the vale was ringing,
In tender, soft, and pure a strain,
Like some sweet stanza of Franzén.
T'was as if Nature in her bower,
Proclaim'd this as her past'ral hour,
So full of life, tho' nothing stirr'd,
Her beating heart thou could'st have heard. —
With souls by happiness elated,
The youthful twain together range:
And e'en as bridepair rings exchange,

So childhood's mem'ries each related.
Of all the happy days he told,
E'er from his mother's roof of old,
From ruddy, pinebuilt cot he parted,
'Midst firtrees far on Northern strand,
And of his well-loved fatherland,
And sisters dear, now all departed.
He told, how he would ofttimes long
When ancient, deeptoned battlesong,
And leathern tomes of Saga-story
First roused his love for deeds of glory,
And how full oft in nightly dream,
A steel-clad warrior he would seem
On twelve-feet-lofty warsteed Granè,
And, e'en like Sigurd Fofnisbanè,
Thro' flames of Vafur onwards strove
To Saga's Maid, whose castle shining
On distant cliff was seen reclining

In moonlight, 'midst a laurel-grove.
Too narrow grew his breast, his chamber,
Out to the woods he'd flee, and clamber
In boyhood's unrestrain'd delight,
Up to the ern on pinetree's height,
And rock there in the Northstorm blowing;
It cools the cheek, the bosom glowing.
Ah! happy in the car to fly
Of yonder clouds that hurry by,
And far o'er distant waters wander,
To mingle with the fair world yonder,
Where Vict'ry beckons, and Renown
Waits with her wreath the brave to crown,
And where King CHARLES — he numbers barely
Some seven summers more than thou —
Reaps sceptres with his falchion now
And — gives away at once so fairly!
„My mother could at fifteen years

Hold me no more; I clasp'd with tears
Her neck, my steps to Poland turning.
Since then in camps has sped my life,
Like watchfire on the field of strife
'Midst steel and cannon steadfast burning.
But when at times my glances met
The birds, that fed their young and courted,
Or infant, as it lay and sported
Beside some flow'ry rivulet;
Then empty warfare's thunder sounded,
And in my soul fast made their way
Fair scenes of peace, where children gay,
Green woods, and golden fields abounded.
And at a peaceful cottage-door
A maiden stood, with sunset stealing
Her features o'er, the same revealing
I'd seen at times in dreams before.
Of late these visions crowding o'er me,

In ceaseless whirl my spirit fill:
I close mine eyes, yet see them still
Full clear and life-like e'er before me,
And in the midst the maid I see,
The image is of thee, Marie!" —

Confused made answer thus Maria:

„— Yet happy man his lot must find!
No irksome chains the strong one bind,
He freedom doth by birth acquire,
And danger's 'lurement, glory bright,
And Earth and Heav'n are his by right.
But woman's fate, t'is e'er intended
To be to man's thro' life appended,
The bandage on his wounds to lie,
Remember'd, when they're heal'd, no longer:
The off'ring she, while he the stronger,
The splendid flame, soars to the sky. —

My father fell, the Czar defending,
My mother's image scarce I knew,
And wild the desert's daughter grew
Within these halls, where caitiffs bending
To lordly whims, with meekness base,
Pay homage to their own disgrace.
A noble soul must turn dejected
From souls thus willingly subjected.
Did'st on the boundless plain thou see
Our native steeds, the fair, the free?
Like hinds so fleet, like heroes daring,
They're subject to no lord's command;
With pointed ear they windwards stand
And scent th'alarm the breeze is bearing,
And sudden in a dust-cloud high
Away across the plains they fly,
In selfsought wars unshod contending,
And life 'midst joys and suff'ring spending.

„Ye children of the desert free,
How glad, how blest your life must be!“
Thus would I cry, and bid them tarry
When-e'er my neighing Tartar-steed,
A bridled slave, with docile speed
Me to his brethren free would carry;
But they unheeding pass'd us twain,
And gazed upon us with disdain.
My freeborn soul soon loathed the tameness
Of this lone castle's ceaseless sameness;
And unto war myself I've train'd
'Gainst wolf's, 'gainst vulture's savage races,
And oft bought from the bear's embraces
A life, that then some value gain'd.
But Nature! we in vain endeavour
To conquer thee: in cot, on throne,
As sempstress or as amazon,
Thy woman, woman still is ever,

A vine that fades, if left forlorn,
A being, that its halfpart misses:
In sharing, she feels all her blisses,
And twin her pleasures all are born.
Across my throbbing side is stealing
A restless and yet happy feeling,
A longing, I can scarce explain,
So full of joy, 'spite all its pain.
No bounds, no goal knows its dominion;
T'is e'en as if on airy pinion
I far o'er dust of earth did fly,
To stars, where Gods abide on high;
And then as if again descending,
O'er you, ye dear ones, I were bending,
Ye trees, that by my side have grown,
Thou hillock with thy flow'ry crown,
Thou rill, in loving murmurs fleeing!
Tho' erst oft hearing you, oft seeing,

T'was but as statue sees, unmoved, —
Ne'er, ne'er till now I felt I loved.
Tis t'wards myself my love is alter'd,
More pure, more high I feel it soar,
E'er since“... A blush came flitting o'er
The maiden's cheeks, as here she falter'd,
And in a sigh, tho' half repress'd,
The untold meaning was express'd. —

And nightingale in grove sings hiding,
And moon 'neath cloud o'erhears their bliss;
And in a long, an endless kiss,
As warm as Life, as Death abiding,
United now their souls combine
In one blest harmony divine.
On altar lit, two flames thus even
Embrace eachother; they unite
In one, that beams with brighter light
And reaches nearer unto heaven.

For them the world had pass'd away
And Time upon its flight did stay.
For in this mortal life each second
By Time is measured, and its space
Defined, but Death's and Love's embrace
Eternal offspring they are reckon'd.
The happy pair! Unseen the flash,
Had all the earth in smoke been scatter'd,
And had the firmament been shatter'd,
They never would have heard its crash.
Still had they stood there, aptly fitted
For Genii of North and South,
Nor ever known that mouth to mouth,
From Earth's to Heaven's bliss they'd flitted.

Back from his journey heavenward
Came Axel first. „Now, by my sword,
By northern faith, by stars that gleaming

Above our bridesmaids white are seeming,
As thro' the grove they on us shine,
Now before earth and heav'n thou'rt mine!
Oh! far, right far, from strife's intrusion
Within some friendly vale's seclusion,
The home of peace 'midst mountains high,
With thee to live, with thee to die!
But ah! a vow, a vow I've taken:
With features grim and life-forsaken,
It silent rises up and parts
With icy hand our burning hearts.
Fear not: all may be changed I've spoken,
Released must be that vow, not broken.
Now must I hence. But when next May
Bids to its feast of flowers gay,
Then hither I'll return and claim thee,
My bride, my spouse, I then may name thee.
Farewell, my soul's own half, again
Farewell! a long farewell till then!"

Away, as thus his last words greet her,
He turns, takes belt, takes sword once more,
And dauntless starts on journey o'er
The hundred countries of Czar Peter.
In forest gloom he hides by day,
But all night long he shapes his way,
Now by the firmament's bright kernel,
Our North-star, fix'd by law eternal,
Now by the Charleswain's friendly light,
The sign, that knows of no declining,
The wain, with leading-pole so shining,
And axles forged of gold so bright.
Thro' thousand perils thus he passes,
And comes, thro' midst of hostile masses,
To Mälarn's regal town, where all
With wonder learn that safe he's landed,
And scroll and greeting as commanded,
Delivers in the Council-hall.

Meanwhile in halls deserted yearning,
Maria sighs her Axel's name.
She sighs on woodland's breast the same
And hill and dale its sound are learning.
„What was that vow upon him laid?
Far in his fatherland a maid,
A former love? Can more there ever
Exist than one? my heart says never.
Thou snowclad maid 'neath Northern sky,
One of us twain must surely die!
Thou little know'st South's fiery daughters:
Far, far beyond thy frozen waters,
Beyond thy snows on mountains high
I'll search thee out, for thou must die.
Yet — did not Axel early wander
From home? Nor since, his Northland yonder
He saw, and timid Love is wont
To shun the din of warfare's haunt.

Ah! brow like his no guile possesses,

Faith there and honor only dwell.

By his bright glances' light full well

I gazed into his heart's recesses,

Like daybeam peering down into

A fountain fresh and silver-blue.

Why dost thou flee then? what imposes

Thy vow? must thus this heart be crush'd?

What — but in space my voice is hush'd,

Like widow that midst tombs discloses

Her grief, like plaintive dove that flies

Without response round earth and skies.

Ah! forests rustle, waves are streaming

'Tween us, he hears not what I say.

What if I follow'd him? but nay,

That for a woman were not seeming.

A woman? who can tell? I bear

A sword, and soon a man stands there.

With danger oft I've learnt to trifle,
For life or death a dice-throw cast.
Upon my steed I'm rooted fast,
And never yet has miss'd my rifle.
That thought is sent from source divine,
Now Axel, Axel, art thou mine!
I'll search thee high as Northland trendeth,
I'll search thee far as Earth extendeth,
From vale to vale, from strand to strand,
And from thy lips that vow I'll tear me.
O warfare, on thy pinions bear me
And set me down in Axel's land!"

So said, so done. Thought and fulfilment
Are one in woman. Her habil'ment
Is quickly changed. A warrior's casque
Her raven tresses' night doth mask.
Her bosom rich in buff she laces,

In sidepouch lead and powder places,
And o'er her fair, soft shoulder's slope
A carbine hangs, Death's telescope.
The zone, in Grecian fable noted,
To flashing scim'tar is devoted,
And next she traces all around
Her lips a shade that beard supposes:
T'was e'en as if to deck two roses,
The pair in mourning-crape thou'dst bound.
With sword and belt, she e'en resembled
God Cupido himself, dissembled
To warrior, as his form on sheen
Of Klinia's son's bright shield was seen.

„Farewell to thee, thou fost'ring dwelling!
When love and peace my breast are swelling
I once again may greet thee here.
But now must I no longer tarry,

O night, spread out thy veil and carry
Me unto him my heart holds dear! —
E'en then on seastrand's conquer'd edges,
In eye-nook of North's slumb'ring brow,
Lay Peter's city, whither now
A world sends forth its crowns as pledges.
T'was then but small. Within its bay
A newborn dragon like, it lay.
But well its kind can be detected,
As in the sand it basks its coils;
Deep in its tooth the venom boils,
Its fork'd tongue hissing is projected.
There lay equipp'd 'gainst Swedish strand
A fleet with sword and firebrand.
Marie her steps is thither bending,
And amidst arms and banners wending
Her way, stands forth and craves a post
Upon the fleet 'gainst Northland's coast.

A chieftain of the rude mass jesting
Cries, with his keen eye on her resting:
„More dang'rous seem'st thou, stripling swain,
For Northland's maids, than for its men.
Where-e'er 'gainst them we may dispatch thee,
They never by thy beard will catch thee!
But warfare canst thou learn aright
From them: for life or death the fight
Is waged; the issue's but in heaven
To God and Holy Nick'las given!“ —

Now swell the sails, darts on the keel,
In foam o'er eastern billows rushing,
And soon 'midst fires of sunset blushing,
Stand Scandia's cliffs: they stand there still
On time's and ocean's turmoil gazing,
The giantmounds of Nature's raising.
At Sotaskär th' invaders land,

To faithful hearts a wellknown strand.
Of old, there for the last time parted
Young Hjalmar from his Ing'borg fair;
And when he'd soar'd to Odin, there
The sorr'wing maid died brokenhearted,
And seated still upon the steep,
Her spirit doth the lover weep.
Thou North's Leucadia, North lets perish
Thy name, in Saga's days wellknown,
But Hjalmar's deathsong thee doth own,
And breast of Scald thee e'er shall cherish. —

But flames from cot to cot now reach,
And women fly, and children screech,
Full well they know their Russian foemen;
And tocsinbells peal round their omen
Both night and day with ceaseless boom;
But ah! the dead they cannot waken.

Woe unto thee, poor land forsaken,
Thy warriors dwell within the tomb!
Yet in their country's need a cluster
Of aged men and children muster
With swords, that erst on German shore
Made Gustaf Adolf's banner glorious,
And halberts, used to be victorious,
When o'er the Belt they cross'd of yore,
And here and there some arquebuses
With rusty locks and halfburnt fuses.
No more own'd then our Swedish land,
A handful mere, and ill-provided,
Yet undismay'd with mien decided,
March'd on the foe that gallant band.
But t'is not man to man he wages
The strife; wide round his stormcloud rages,
And from the cliffs his lightnings play,
Where courage ne'er can make its way,

And unavenged from thence proceeding,
Death thro' the scanty ranks is speeding.

But now, e'en as the belted Thor
With hammer arm'd, with anger flashing,
Thus Axel o'er the field comes dashing,
Where terror reigns and flight spreads o'er,
A saviour, sent in danger's hour:

His breast is steel, his arm is power.

He calls back order. To and fro

He flies on courser white as snow.

„Stand, Swedes, close up your ranks disbanded!

King CHARLES hath hither me commanded,

His greeting unto you I bring,

Our cry is 'God and Charles the king'!“

„God and king Charles!“ around t'is shouted:

The brave one's voice arrests the routed,

And in a moment's time the rock

That dealt out death, yields to their shock.
Then all th'infernal craters slumber,
And arms and slain the field encumber,
And blindly, but with trusty blow,
The sword pursues the flying foe,
And soon, in haste their cables cleaving,
Th' affrighted bands the strand are leaving.

Like sated beast of prey, the fight
Now on the battlefield lay sleeping,
And moonbeams from on high were steeping
The scene of ravage in their light.
Beside the dark sea Axel wanders
And sighing o'er the corpses ponders.
They lie there man by man, in pairs,
Oh, what a hardclos'd clasp is their's!
Seek not the truest of embraces
In love's, where both with smiling faces

In mutual arms lie fondly bound:
Go, see upon a battleground
How in the pangs of death's caresses,
Hate to its heart a foeman presses.
Ah! love's and pleasure's wild delight
Like springtide's fitful breeze take flight,
But we remain till life is ended,
By hatred, cares, and want attended.
Thus sighs he, when a plaintive cry
Across the night comes sudden bursting:
„Oh, Axel, water! I am thirsting,
And take my farewell ere I die!“
He hears that voice, so wellknown sounding,
And onwards midst the steep craigs bounding,
He sees, against the cliffside leant, —
An unknown youth, his lifesblood spent.
But as the moon, the clouds dispelling,
Now on the pallid face in dwelling,

He shudders, and in agony

He shrieks forth: „O my God, t'is she!“

Alas! t'was she. Her anguish hiding,

She whispers in a voice so slight:

— „Good even', Axel, nay good night,

For death beside my heart is bidding.

Ask not why thus I hither sped,

My love alone hath me misled.

Ah! when the long Night closes o'er us,

And we are standing at grave's door,

How diff'rent then from times of yore

Stands life and its small cares before us,

And only love as pure as our's

We with us take to heaven's bowers.

Thy vow to learn, I here did wander,

Now amidst stars I'll seek it yonder,

It there stands written, I shall see

As clear as they thy constancy. —
I know, t'is rashness hither drove me,
I know, how truly thou dost love me;
Oh, let my love atone for all
Thy tears, as o'er my dust they fall.
I have no brother, father, mother,
Thou wast my father, mother, brother,
Thou wast my all, — o Axell, vow
That e'en in death thou lov'st me now!
Thou swear'st: — why should I then deplore me?
Life's Saga hath unfolded for me
Its brightest page. Here on thy breast
May not thy maiden sink to rest?
And will not now her dust be blended
With that same soil, thou'st just defended?
See, Axell, o'er the moon doth stray
A cloud; when that has pass'd away,
Then am I dead, my spirit fled

Shall blest on yon far strand be seated,
And pray for thee, and from the skies
Gaze on thee with all heaven's eyes.
But on my grave by thee be cherish'd
A rose, and when 'midst snows t'is perish'd,
The sunborn child, think of thy maid
That sleeps 'neath Northern snowdrifts laid.
To bloom t'was but few days permitted; —
See, Axel, past the cloud has flitted,
Farewell, farewell!" — Once more she sigh'd,
And gently press'd his hand and died.

Then forth from floods of hell there sallied
Not Death itself, but Madness pallid,
Death's younger brother, he that stalks
With poppy-wreath round scatter'd locks,
And vacant stare by turns directed
On high, by turns towards the deep,

With leer upon distorted lip
And tears in halfquenched eye collected.
Its hand on Axel's brow it lays,
And e'er since then he restless strays
Around her grave, as spirit bided
Round hidden gold in tale of yore,
And day and night is to the shore
His strange, his touching wail confided:

„Be still, be still, thou darkblue wave!
Thou must not thus the seastrand lave.
Thou dost but interrupt my dreaming;
I bear not with thy waters streaming,
The foaming ones, all tinged with gore;
Thou bringest death unto my shore.
A youth's form here just now lay shatter'd,
I roses o'er his grave have scatter'd,
For he was like, I well know whom:

Next spring with me I lead her home.
They tell me that 'neath earthy cover
Lies hush'd my bride, and grass grows over
The faithful breast, t'is false: last night
She sat here on the rocky height.
Pale was her hue like death's complexion,
T'was but of moonbeams the reflexion,
And cold her lips, and cold her cheek,
T'was nothing but the Northwind bleak.
I bade the loved one near me linger,
Across my brow she drew her finger,
So dark it seem'd, so heavy there:
Then all again grew bright and fair.
And distant in the East appearing,
Those days, alas! now fled, are clearing,
Those days so fair, like heaven's blue:
How blest, poor Axel, then were you!
There stood, where woodlands green are swelling,

A castle, t'was the fair one's dwelling.
I lay there murder'd in the strife,
She with a kiss gave back my life,
She unto me, so poor, devoted
Her rich heart, ah! how warm it doated!
Now chill'd it lies by wintry frost
In wither'd bosom — all is lost!
Ye stars, above in heaven beaming,
I pray ye, quench your fiery gleaming!
I know a morning-star full good,
It sank into a sea of blood.
Still on the shore the blood is reeking,
And blood my own hand still is streaking.“ — —

Thus he laments on Sotaskär.
When daylight kindles, he is there,
When night descends, his watch he's keeping:
Incessantly he sits there weeping.

One morn he by the sea sat dead,
With hands in pray'r together laid,
And tears o'er pallid cheeks distilling,
Halfharden'd in the morn-breeze chilling;
And t'wards the grave where she lay, gazed
E'en yet the eye that death had glazed.

Thus ran the tale related for me.
How deep, how soft its spell crept o'er me!
Tho' twenty winters since have snow'd,
Still in my heart is its abode.
For deep in poet's soul are seated
Youth's scenes, in outline clear and sharp:
Like Aslög in King Heimer's harp,
The tiny ones dwell there secreted,
Till forth they step, like she of old,
With vesture rich, with locks of gold,

And queenly eye, and lofty bearing,
At once their birth divine declaring.
Ah! lyres of ruddy gold are hung
Around the heaven of the young,
And all man sings in days maturer,
As heroes grand, as flowrets small,
Across his childhood's vision all
Has pass'd before in shapes far purer.
At times yet, when in verdant spring
The quail's melodious call doth ring,
And soars the moon from eastern surges,
As spectre from the tomb emerges,
And over hill and dale doth spread
The mournful pallor of the dead;
Then murm'ring sounds seem round me falling,
And on mine ear, the past recalling,
The wellknown tale seems still to glide
Of Axel and his Russian bride.

NOTES.

- P. 15. — „*mighty Shapes in mantles blue,
With yellow belts,*“ — —
Swedish uniform in the days of Charles XII.
- P. 16. — „*like Runes on Bauta-stone.*“
Bautastones: monumental stones raised in the
early ages of the North and often inscribed
with *Runes*, the figurative characters then in use.
- P. 17. „*Within a greenclad barrow-mound.*“
Burial-mound of the ancient Northern warriors.
- „ „ „*Of Charles and of his gallant Blues,*“
Literally: „blue lads;“ a familiar term of the
Swedes for their troops, in allusion to the
uniform.
- P. 18. *The mighty King lay camp'd at Bender.*“
A town in Bessarabia. Charles having pene-

trated across the Polish provinces in the prosecution of his war against Czar Peter, was defeated at Pultava (1709) and compelled to take refuge with a small remnant of troops at Bender, in the Turkish territory, where he was hospitably treated and established himself in a military camp.

- P. 20. — — — — „*At Holofzin*
His father near the King fell fighting,“
 Town in Lithuania, where Charles defeated the Russians (1708).
- P. 21. „*Their number* — — — —
To sev'n, like Charleswain's stars amounted,“
 This allusion to the constellation Ursa major, bearing the same name as the king, is happily chosen by the poet. The derivation of 'Charles-wain' (similar to the Swedish name) is by some supposed to be from Charlemagne, by others from the ancient celtic word 'Karl:' a man, a brave man.
- ” ” — — — — „*race of Vikings bold,*“
 The ancient sea-kings of the North.
- ” ” „*Of couch they never stood in need,*“ etc.
 These details of the hardy life of Charles' followers are mainly grounded on historical facts; the king himself setting his soldiers the example in all privations.

- P. 23. „*Thus Ukraine's borders he was nearing,*“
A province in the S. E. of Russia, according to the former division of that empire.
- P. 24. „*He battled like Rolf Krake of old.*“
A Northern warrior, celebrated in ancient Sagas, eventually king of Leire in Seeland.
- P. 25. „*Of Latmos, when the heav'ns forsaking,*“
Mountain in Asia minor, where the Goddess Diana is said to have descended to visit the beautiful youth Endymion.
- P. 29. „*Upon the shield-maid's tomb display'd.*“
Shield-maids are mentioned in old Sagas as maidens who followed the warriors into battle: they were the amazons of the North.
- P. 30. „*Than in the strife last year at Bender,*“
The sultan, eventually desirous of ridding himself of his guest Charles XII and his followers, who had established a military camp at Varnitza near Bender, requested him to withdraw from the Turkish territory; and on the king's refusal, ordered the advance of a large force on the entrenchments (1713). Charles made a desperate resistance with a mere handful of men, but was at length overpowered and taken prisoner. He did not return to Sweden till three years later.

- P. 31. „*The field of Pultava along.*“
 Russian town in Ukraine, the scene of Charles XII's memorable defeat by Peter the Great (1709).
- P. 33. — — — — „*a bride beneath*
 „*The pall, both smiling stands and blushing.*“
 The custom prevails in many parts of Sweden of holding a bridal pall over the couple during the marriage ceremony.
- P. 34. „*Like some sweet stanza of Franzén.*“
 A cotemporary Swedish poet, and friend of Tegnér's.
- P. 35. „*From ruddy, pinebuilt cot he parted,*“
 The logbuilt cottages in Sweden are generally painted dark-red, which has a striking effect, whether seen in contrast with the white snow or the deep-green firtrees.
- ” ” „*On twelve-feet-lofty warsteed Granè,*
 „*And, e'en like Sigurd Fofnisbanè,*“
 The Volsunga-Saga relates how the famous hero Sigurd, surnamed „Fofnisbane,“ *i. e.* the killer of the Dragon Fofner, rode on his celebrated steed Grane, through the enchanted flames of Vafur, that protected the castle of the fair Brynhilda.
- P. 36. „*Reaps sceptres with his falchion now*
 „*And — gives away at once so fairly!*“
 Charles, after defeating king Augustus, entered

Warsaw, and was asked by his minister Count Piper, whether he would place the crown of Poland on his own head? the monarch replied that „he preferred giving away kingdoms to taking „them for himself“ — and through his influence Stanislaus Lesczinsky was elected by the Diet (1704). *Voltaire: Hist. de Charles XII.*

- P. 40. „*A life, that then some value gain'd.*“
 „L'émotion du danger . . . réconcilie un moment avec cette vie qu'on a reconquise, et qu'il „est si facile de perdre.“ *M:de de Staël. Corinne.*
- P. 43. „*For them the world had pass'd away*“ etc.
 This passage recalls the following lines in Byron's '*Parisina*' (published 1816).
 „And what unto them is the world beside
 „With all its change of time and tide?
 „Its living things — its earth and sky
 „Are nothing to their mind and eye.
 „And heedless as the dead are they
 „Of aught around, above, beneath;
 „As if all else had pass'd away
 „They only for each other breathe.“
- P. 45. — „*Mälarn's regal town,*“ — —
 Stockholm, the seat of the Swedish Government, situated on the lake Mälarn.
- P. 49. — — — „*as his form on sheen
 Of Klinia's son's bright shield was seen.*“
 Plutarch records that Alcibiades, the son of

Klinia, bore on his shield the image of the God of Love, in the guise of the Thunderer.

- P. 50. „*In eye-nook of North's slumb'ring brow,*“
 There is a good deal of suggestive meaning in this description of the Czar's city, situated in the extreme *nook* of the *eye-shaped* Gulf of Finland, on marshy lands *conquered* from the sea, and whose great destinies were then little dreamt of by the „*slumb'ring North.*“

- ” ” — — — — — „*whither now*“
 „*A world sends forth its crowns as pledges.*“
 The bitterness of the poet's remark is probably in some degree traceable to the suspicion (at one time popular) of Russian intrigue at the Swedish Court, and the national antipathy between Swede and Russian.

- P. 51. „*At Sota-skär th' invaders land,*“
 Situated on the Swedish Coast in Sotholm's Härad, Södermanland.

- P. 52. — — — — — „*parted*
Young Hjalmar from his Ing'borg fair;“
 The adventures of the famous Northern warrior Hjalmar, are described in the Hervara Saga, which also contains (chap. v) his celebrated deathsong. Ingeborg, his bride, was the daughter of Ane the old, king of Upsala.

P. 52. *Thou North's Leucadia,*“ — — —

Leukadia or Leukas, (the modern Cape Ducato on Santa Maura, in the Ionian sea) the famous cliff whence in ancient days disconsolate lovers were wont to precipitate themselves into the ocean to seek a relief for their pains. Venus, inconsolable at the death of Adonis, is said to have first ventured the leap, and to have thus rid herself of her passion, though being a Goddess she did not perish. The famous Sapho, enamoured of Phaon, threw herself off this fatal rock.

P. 53. „*No more own'd then our Swedish land,*“

Voltaire, describing the state of Sweden about this time, says:

„Il ne resta dans plusieurs villages que des viellards, des enfants et des femmes.“

Hist. de Charles XII.

P. 54. — — — — „*the belted Thor*

With hammer arm'd,“ — — —

Amongst the most precious things possessed by Thor, were the hammer Mjölner, wellknown to the Giants, and his Belt of Manhood, when girded with which his strength was doubled.

P. 58. „*See, Axel, o'er the moon doth stray*

A cloud; when that has pass'd away,

Then am I dead,“ — — — —

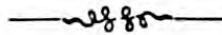
There is a resemblance here to an episode in

M:de de Staël's *Corinne*: — Liv. XI ch. I. „hélas! (reprit Corinne) la lune que je contemplais, s'est couverte d'un nuage, and l'aspect „de ce nuage était funeste.“ — Liv. XV ch. II. „n'oubliez pas, Oswald, de remarquer si ce „même nuage ne passera pas sur la lune quand „je mourrai.“ Liv. XX ch. v. „alors elle, (Corinne) lui montra le nuage de sa main mourante.“

P. 63. „*Like Aslög in King Heimer's harp,*
The tiny ones dwell there secreted,“

When Heimer of Heindal was informed of the death of Sigurd and Brynhilda, and that it was intended to destroy their daughter Aslög, who had been reared by him, he caused a large harp to be made in which he concealed the child, together with many jewels, and wandered forth with her towards the North . . . a peasant Aki, was finally induced by his wife Grime, who had observed a piece of costly garment protruding from the harp, to murder Heimer in his sleep; when on opening the harp, the little Aslög stepped forth with so captivating a countenance, that her life was spared.

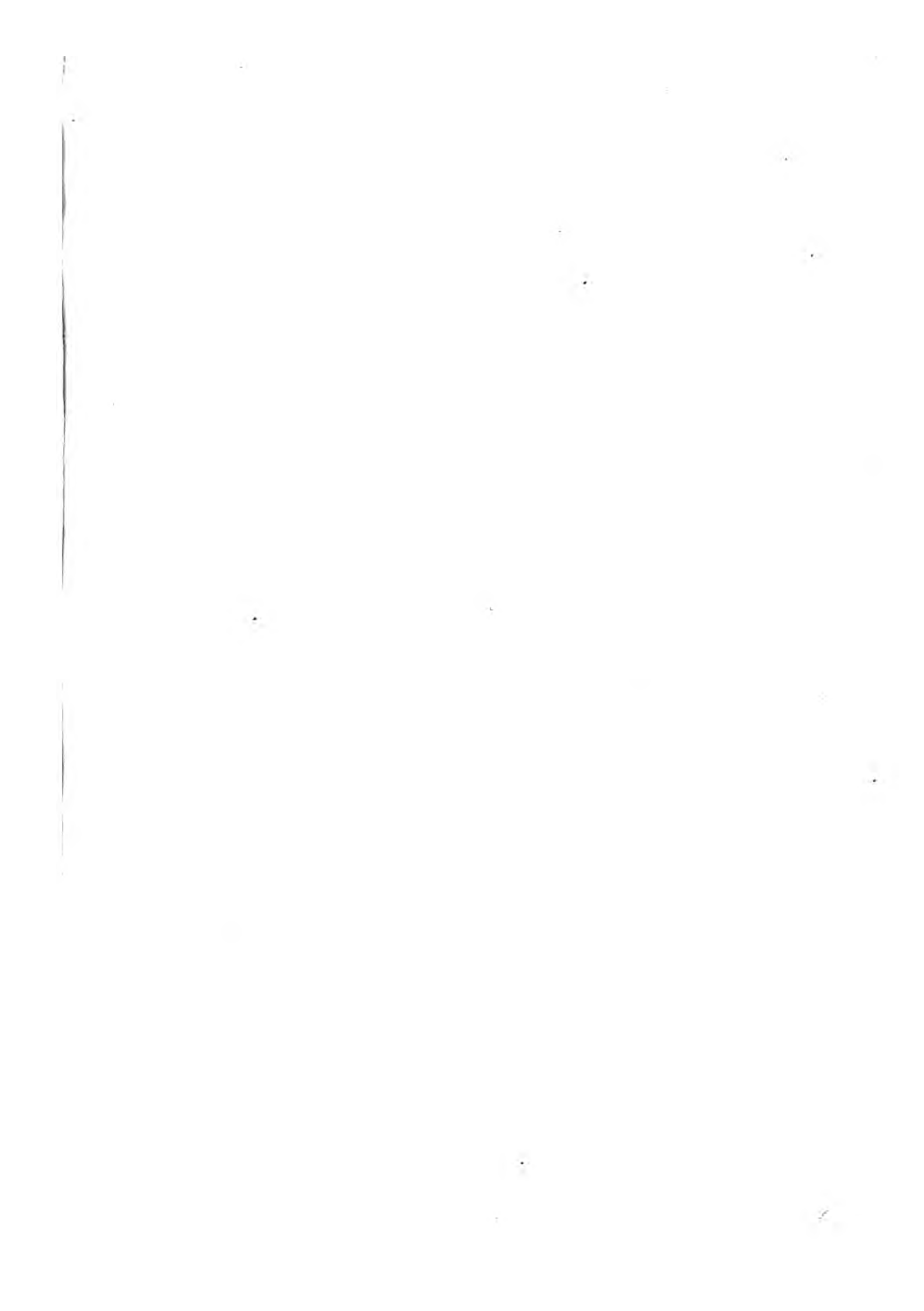
Volsunga Saga.

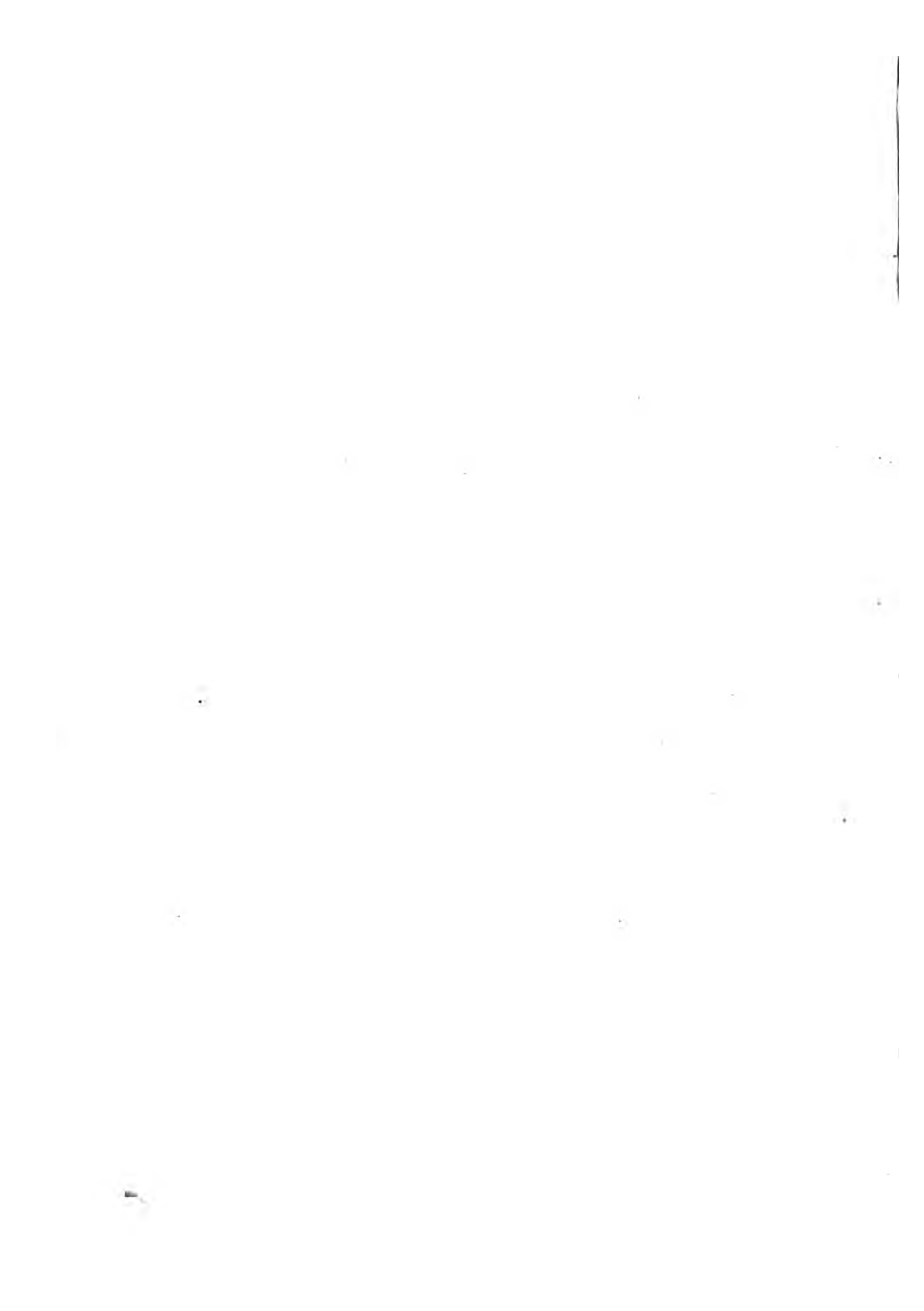


Errata:

P. 11	line 22	for „Hercules“	read „Hercule“
„ 27	„ 5	„ „frons“	„ „frowns“
„ 30	„ 11	„ „the“	„ „thee“
„ 32	„ 8	„ „Would“	„ „Would“







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M. ✓

