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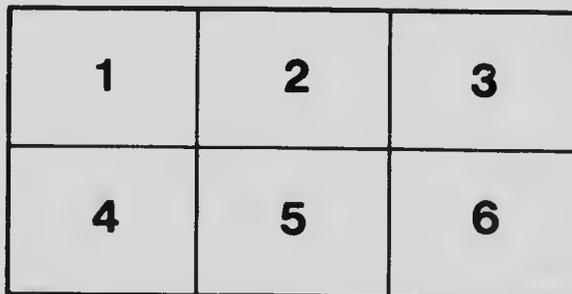
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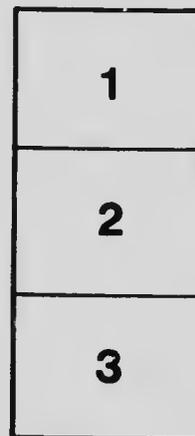
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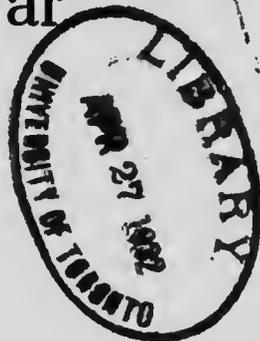


The Scandinavian Nations and the War

FIRST PART

BY

James Cappon, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Queen's University.
Canada





THE SCANDINAVIAN NATIONS

THE SCANDINAVIAN NATIONS AND THE WAR.

First Part: The Past.

THE attitude and opinions of the small neutral nations during this war are well worth studying for the light they cast on the influences that have been moulding the European mind during the last thirty or forty years. This is particularly true in the case of the three Scandinavian nations, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. They are, all three, important centres of culture, quite on a level with the most progressive States of the world in their general development. They are besides in very close contact with German thought and are kept very well informed as to the international situation by their publicists who, whether they are conservative or radical in tendency, all recognize that it is a question of life and death for them to know the real situation and estimate it rightly; the great democracies on both sides of the Atlantic have been in comparison quite careless and anything but well informed till very recently. It is true there is often a certain reserve in the expression of Scandinavian opinion. Readers of their periodical literature can hardly fail to notice the very cautious, half apologetic tone in most of their writers when they venture upon any criticism of Germany's doings. There is no such hesitation or timidity in their way of referring to spots on the history of Russia, or Britain, or France, but they are obviously afraid of the terrible vindictiveness of the German towards the small peoples that cross his path. Menaces from the German papers seem to mean something different to them, from the momentary ebullitions of the French or British press. During the early period of the war, a distinguished Norwegian publicist, Chr. Collin, felt himself compelled to remonstrate mildly—oh, so very mildly—against the violent threats the German press was addressing to Norway on account of Norwegian sympathy with Belgium's plight. "Let those," he writes in the *Samtiden*, who threaten us with punishment, if we venture to show the smallest sympathy with any others than Germany, remember that during the Boer war, when the Englishmen had to exert themselves to the uttermost, our

sympathy with the Boers was general. . . . Björnsterne Björnson expressed his sympathy openly and publicly, but I did not see that the British press banned him on that account or threatened the whole Norwegian people with punishment . . . and when Björnson died I saw nothing else but high esteem for him expressed by the great British newspapers, *The Times* at their head."

Collin's voice is not that of a partisan, the tone of his articles on the war in general is impartial and detached. He speaks of opinion in Norway—at that time—as "much divided," and also as if its character depended more on the political ideals and tendencies of the individual than on any opinion about the rights or wrongs of the conflict. That is very significant and it agrees with the impression one gets from reading Scandinavian publications, especially at the beginning of the war. But as Norway is predominantly democratic in sentiment there is little doubt that the general sympathy of the people is with the Entente Allies. But the necessary condition of Norway is weak both on land and sea. Within recent years an optimistic pacificism, the pious contentment of a people who were conscious of having no warlike designs on themselves, made Norway neglect national defence. For long it has been a sure means for politicians and journalists seeking favour with a Radical ministry to make light of the need of defensive preparation and to preach the sufficiency of inviolable neutrality as a safeguard. Björnsterne Björnson gave the weight of his great name to this policy and contributed not a little as Hjalmar Christensen remarks in a recent article to the prevalence of the ideas of weaker heads on this subject. The resolution of the constitutional conflict with Sweden in 1905 had the effect of awakening the Norse people to the need of natural defence, especially as the growth of German naval power and the opening of the Kiel Canal had still further shaken Norway's sense of security. But there is still a socialistic party that advocates complete disarmament for Norway and the abandonment of any attempt to defend even the country's neutrality against a Great Power by force of arms. Norway is to trust to *Kulturæret*, the defence which high culture may give. Edvard Bull, for example, points to the fate of Belgium as a warning and sees

nothing but "a mistaken policy" in Belgium's heroic attempt to defend its independence and integrity as a State.* Hr. Bull indeed seems almost more angry with Belgium for defending its neutrality than with Germany for violating it, perhaps because Belgium's fate has been such a painful demonstration of the little reliance there is to be placed on neutrality and *Kulturvaernet* as a safeguard. A well organized army of 300,000 men would certainly have been more effective. No nation, however powerful, would wish to bring that into the scale against itself. In any case Hr. Bull's policy would mean that the world had a new and rather embarrassing class of States on its hands, States which did not undertake to defend their integrity and citizenship.

The attitude of the Dane, though he has assuredly not forgotten Prussia's raid on his country in 1864, is in general still more diplomatic and cautious than that of the Norwegian. There is no doubt about it, he is genuinely afraid of the big neighbour that has twice swooped down on him and finally rent South Jutland and its Danes from his little land. But when a Danish writer does take up the pen against Germany, his intimate knowledge of Germans and German ways, and a deep feeling too that Germany is just repeating on a great scale the tactics that overwhelmed Denmark and also obfuscated her cause before the world, make him a formidable critic. There is no more biting exposure of German duplicity, nor any written in deeper tones, than the *Klokke Roland* of the Dane, Johannes Jørgensen or Chr. Nyrops *Er Krig Kultur*.

Sweden's Great Period.

Sweden's position is very different from that of Norway or Denmark, not only or mainly because of her superior resources and military organization, but still more because of her historic traditions and her political relations both past and present to Russia. Without some knowledge of Swedish history for the last two centuries, it is impossible to appreciate Swedish sentiment on this war. For good or ill, Sweden has the heritage of a great past, in a period, not yet very remote,

**en feilagtig politik*, says Bull. See his articles in *Samtiden* for 1914 and 1916.

when she was one of the Great Powers of Europe. At the death of Charles XI in 1697 Sweden possessed all Finland and most of the East Sea provinces, besides Pomerania and some territories of the old German Empire, almost turning the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia into a Swedish lake. In Finland, which had been Swedish since the thirteenth century, the Swedish language and culture had taken deep root amongst the population; and though there is now a specifically Finnish literature, the best known writers of Finland, Runeberg and Topelius, are still Swedish classics. There had been centuries of warfare over the Baltic provinces between Poles, Danes, Germans, Russians and Swedes, but it seemed to have ended in the definite establishment of Sweden as the Great Power of the North. Her soldiers were amongst the best trained of Europe and had the inspiring traditions of Gustavus Adolphus and the famous campaigns of the Thirty Years War behind them. Her navy was equal to the best of that time.

Then came the tragedy of Swedish history with that heroic madman Charles XII, who after nine years of wasting warfare lost the empire of the north for Sweden at Pultawa. Yet his early campaigns in this war are counted amongst the most glorious pages in their history by the Swedes. Turning on the treacherous combination which had been formed against him the young king, he was only 18 years old, forced Frederick of Denmark into an ignominious peace, beat Peter the Great soundly at the battle of Narva, and then turned into Saxony and Poland to punish Augustus the Strong; and there he stayed till he had uncrowned him, refusing all other terms however advantageous; six years of victorious but wasting warfare during which the sagacious Peter was collecting and training his Russians, overrunning the Baltic provinces of Sweden and founding the new capital of St. Petersburg on their borders (1703) as a sign that he meant to stay there. Charles had said he would drive Augustus from the throne of Poland if he should have to stay there thirty years to do it; and he had that half fantastic heroism of the old Vikings in him which would never go back on a boast however rashly uttered. When at last he turned his attention to the really dangerous enemy, it was almost too late and in trying to make up for lost time by the heroic strategy of a march on Moscow, he found himself

at Pultawa with much thinned battalions in one of those desperate situations where he had to fight and win a victory or lose not only a whole army, but a whole campaign, and with it the over-sea empire the Vasas had built up for Sweden. When peace was made in 1721 Russia got a large part of Finland and all the Baltic provinces and took Sweden's place as the great power of the north. The memory of that tragedy has mostly grown faint for us now, though it has been preserved in literature that is still classic like Voltaire's *Charles XII* and Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*; to us at any rate it is more the personal tragedy of Charles, but to the Swedes it is still a burning memory of the fall of an empire, the end of what they call their "great period"—*stormaktstid*. It is quite recently, in the nineties, that Von Heidenstam's brilliant work, *Karolinerna*, (the Carolinians or men of Charles' time) has given a thrillingly imaginative expression to the national feeling on this disaster. The ordinary Swedish historian generally consoles himself and his countrymen with the philosophic reflection that the Swedish empire was too extended for the resources of a small State, but there is no mistaking the bitterness of scorn and regret which lives in those pages of Heidenstam. And it is all turned on Charles. Swedish soldiery, Swedish generals and statesmen, Swedish people, they were all ready to face any sacrifice for their country's cause and did so with wonderful fortitude—never was a leader more devotedly followed; but he with his mad adventurer's romanticism wasted it all in maintaining fancied points of honour in never altering the royal will once it was expressed, in never turning back on the road he had once taken, and in striving heroically to achieve the impossible. And yet this man was of fundamentally heroic temper and character, who never spared himself any more than others, and who put all minor passions and indulgences below his feet from the day he set out at the head of his armies till his death before the fortress of Fredericksten. He was Sweden's last great war-lord and hero and, in spite of all, the Swedish people felt for the first time that when he was lost all was lost. It needs all that new art of Heidenstam's with its strong alloy of fantasy, yet penetrating with curious impressiveness to the magic of life and personality, to give us a picture of that man and his time. It is the

romanticism of our time, a stern kind of romanticism with a bitter element of realism in it.

But the tragedy of Sweden really dragged itself out for a whole century afterwards with a kind of interlude in the Gustavian period when Swedish learning and literature had a flowering period with Linnaeus and the unique muse of Carl Michael Bellman. But the vigour and organizing power of Sweden had somehow received a death-wound. She failed to find the right path for the new time, and internal strife, treachery and a sullen apathy on the part of the nobles lamed the energy of a nation that had once been famous for its statesmen and warriors. The end came in 1809 when all that was left of Finland was lost to Russia under circumstances which were worse than grievous. The surrender of the fortress of Sveaborg is the most notable of the treacheries of that time, but it is only one of many.

Runeberg and the last struggle of the Finns.

The small Finnish army however fought some hard battles against the invader for the old blue and yellow flag with the Finnish bear on it, and even won some victories. The memory of that struggle will never be forgotten by Swede or Finn, for it has been made immortal in the poetry of the great poet of Finland, Runeberg. *Fänrik Staal's Stories* is a collection of stories of that war supposed to be told by a Finnish veteran, a typical figure from the wars of those days, a hardy, modest old soldier, so poor that he must eat the bread of charity but with the dignity of one who has played his part out in great things. But except in the first poem, which comes after the famous song, "*Vaart land, vaart land,*" we hear little of the old ensign, the rest being really independent poems describing notable, sometimes historic episodes and personal heroisms in the war, the story of Sven Dufva, the slow-witted but strong and true-hearted, who held the bridge till Sandels and his cavalry came up. The epitaph spoken over his dead body by the general was a tradition in the Finnish army: "Not much of a head had Dufva, but his heart was of the best." That kind of trait is very characteristic of Runeberg; he is a master in that style. Or it is old Hurtig, a veteran of the better Gustavian days, who gets tired of this continual stra-

tegic retreating which so fatally distinguished the Swedish high command, and standing fast dies on the field of Oravais. Or it is Döbeln, a name dear to the Finns, rising from a sick bed to lead the fight at Juutas, or Adlercreutz, "bravest amongst the brave," at Siikajoki. One of the best poems, *Molnets Broder*, is that which tells how father and daughter found the youth, his foster-son and her lover, dead on the battle-field and hear how bravely he fell. It has some fine lines in Runeberg's simple style of pathos. "Now the roof-tree of my dwelling is broken," cries the old man; but the daughter's mood is higher:

To love was more to me than living,
And more than loving is it thus his dying.

But that rough translation will not carry home to any one the sweet simplicity of Runeberg's unrhymed trochaics.

Runeberg's poem is an unforgettable record of a small people's heroic struggle against fate, for the stars in their courses seemed to fight against Sweden then. Everywhere mistrust, apathy, corruption, and treacheries which even to-day, it seems, have not been fully explained. Runeberg just touches on this side, but the blackest spot of all, the surrender of Sveaborg, the Gibraltar of the north, has a whole poem to itself and a bitter one. "Never to be forgotten in any tide of times," sings the poet, "that day when the news came like a terrible thunderbolt that Sveaborg was Swedish no more" . . . "The fatherland died then." . . . "Hide *his* name in night, like me (Runeberg does not mention the traitor's name), keep silence as to his family and race. He that betrays his country, he has neither family, nor race, nor son, nor father more." His name, if I may defy Runeberg's ban, was K. O. Cronstedt; he came of a noble Swedish family and as commander of a squadron had helped to win the great naval battle of Svenskund for Sweden. But the time was confused and corrupt, all things tending to a catastrophe. Even the struggle of the Finlanders ended a little ambiguously. Partly in indignation at Sweden's inability to defend them against Russia, they came to terms with the latter power on their own account. The terms they got were very good—independent or semi-independent duchy of Finland under the Czar as Grand Duke—and there is a Fin-

nish or Fennomannish party which chooses to date Finland's freedom and independence from its connection with Russia. But the measures of Russification which began in the nineties may have altered their view of history a little. One must know such situations very well and very closely to judge them, and not listen merely to the loud talkers.*

The Union of Sweden and Norway.

The loss of Finland was a deep wound to Sweden's pride. "Weep, Svea, for what thou hast lost," sang her greatest poet, Tegner, and Geijer spoke of "the shining height from which we have fallen but shall yet regain." For at this very time there was a new spring of hope for Sweden in the fact that the Allies in recompense for the assistance of the Swedish army in the last campaign against Napoleon had decreed that Norway, hitherto subject to Denmark, should be transferred to Sweden. This was an accession of strength to Sweden which seemed at first as if it would more than compensate for the loss of oversea territory. The exchange was a gain to Norway also, transferring it from subjection to an absolute monarchy to a constitutional position in the new union. But the Norsemen were not content to be disposed of in this manner, a national assembly met at Eidsvold, drew up a free and very democratic constitution for the country and elected a Danish prince as their king. Sweden indignant at the prospect of losing on all sides, marched an army on Norway. Both sides felt, however, that it was an unfortunate strife and a compromise was made by which Norway entered into the union under the Swedish crown but with her own constitution. For a time there was high expectation in all the Scandinavian countries over this event, their poets celebrating in moving verse this "union of the North," of powers, as the Danish poet, Carl Ploug, sang twenty years later, "that could have ruled the world" had they been united. The ideal of Scandinavian unity began to take form. Karl Johan (Bernadotte) and the Swedes had their hopes also, never doubting but that with time the union

*Articles and booklets on the Finnish question have been numerous of course since the outbreak of the war, most of the latter obviously of German inspiration.

would become closer. But never did a more uneasy couple go in leash than Norway and Sweden. There was trouble from the beginning. The Norwegians were then a primitive people of farmers, sailors and fishermen with an official or bureaucratic class of comparatively simple habits and manners. For 400 years Norway had had practically no history, political or literary, to speak of. With a poor soil and a hard climate the old gentry or nobility had sunk into the *storbonde* or big farmer class and their place had been taken by Danish officials. Travel was difficult and the population of the rural districts lived in a kind of isolation. The peasant farmers were a rough but hardy and independent race. Although they had lived in official subjection to the Danes they were accustomed to a good deal of local liberty under the leadership of the parish clergy. Sweden, on the other hand, was a country in which many aristocratic and military traditions had maintained themselves in vigour. It had been one of the Great Powers of Europe almost since Gustavus Vasa's time and had played a decisive part in European history under his grandson, Gustavus Adolphus. Naturally if the Scandinavian ideal of a united North was to be realized, it looked upon itself as the centre of such a movement. It should be the leading power in a federation which would make the future of the North secure. There was a time when with some patience and moderation that ideal might have been realized in spite of the centuries of wars and jealousies which had divided the Scandinavian countries. But patience and moderation are things which come to a democracy only by long political experience. And Norway was a very young democracy just beginning its career of self-government after centuries during which it could hardly be said to have any collective existence. It cannot be said to have been a very tractable partner. The union had hardly begun to exist when Norway, in spite of Karl Johan's opposition, abolished nobility within its borders, an ungracious way of warding off Swedish influences. Partly also it was the effect of the new French doctrines of liberty and equality, of the sovereignty and rights of the people, for the political gospel of Rousseau found a favourable soil in Norway. Everything in the shape of national life was new in Norway, the Parliament, the university, the national bank, the High Court. In a few years also

a strong literary fermentation—it was the day of such—had arisen amongst the younger generation, the vigour of which you can judge by its matured products in Wergeland, Welhaven, and a little later Björnson, Ibsen and Vinje, besides a dozen others of lesser note. Strong currents of enthusiasm and excitement were set flowing in a people who had regained after hundreds of years a self-government which reminded them of the far back years when the fame of Norse kings and jarls went through every European land. It takes an effort for us to realize the feeling of a Norwegian when a Norse assembly met once again. The joy and enthusiasm were without limits, and the expectations as well. For the next half century Norwegian poetry resounds with patriotic songs asserting the warlike spirit (*Kjaempeand*) of the Norsemen and with never failing references to these old Hakons and Olafs of the Viking period. Every writer considers it a sacred duty to add his variation to old Nordahl Brun's *For Norge Kjaempers Födeland*. Wergeland, the most national of the poets of that time, sang with his usual vigour and verve that Norway's high time had now come:

“Now is Norway's high hour come; her ancient Ting meets once more and the voice of every Norse vale is heard high and clear in solemn council. . . . See Gudbraudsvale sits there in the person of a gray old man! When he rises in the assembly, all listen! . . . Oh, what joy for thy old towers, Akershus, could thou see Hakon's times again!”

Radicalism in Norway.

It was in vain that Wergeland's great rival, the fine-thoughted and classical Welhaven, attempted to moderate what he considered the raw enthusiasm of his countrymen by the sharp satire of *Norges Daemring*, a famous Sonnet series published in 1834. He had support enough from the intellectual circles of Christiania, but the people, the farmer, the minister, the schoolmaster (a great personage in Norway) was all with Wergeland, true type of the high-spirited Norwegian—*den kække Normand*—just as later it was all with the genial and magnificent optimism of Björnson. A sort of radical-nationalist movement began to gather strength. It was founded very much on an idealized view of the innate

wisdom and capacity of the Norwegian farmer or bonde to decide the policy of the nation. But though Gudbrandsvale was sagacious and frugal and a very good judge of what immediately concerned him, his understanding of things outside of his fences was very limited. A bonde party in parliament could see no earthly use for a united Scandinavia which might only mean an increase of taxation. It meant to spend as little as possible on paying soldiers and diplomatists especially if they were Swedish. Were they not a peaceable people with goodwill towards all men on earth? Who should meddle with them, if once the Swedes were put in their proper place? In most of these questions the radical party was one with it. All were under the impression that by steadily shutting your eyes to foreign or international affairs, you thereby relegated them to another part of the solar system. Out of all this there emerged gradually a strong Left party which partly under the influence of the English political cries of that time, decentralization, individualistic development, Mill on Liberty, etc., stood pertinaciously on formal questions of status, constitutional framework and symbols, matters which were not just then the all-important matter and might have been left to sink quietly into insignificance as the union grew into a great new democracy. But nothing would content young radicalism but the immediate possession of its toys. Everything must be made Norse, and pure Norse, *norsk-norsk*, at once. Even the better men had to go with the stream, as Welhaven complained in one of the boldest of his sonnets.* So things continued to go wrong with the union. There was plenty of Scandinavian sentiment and sentimentality, toasting and feasting and meetings of students, but officially Norway walked steadily on the path of separation, though without in the least meaning it should end that way. And Norway held the key to the whole Scandinavian situation for she was the natural link between the other two Scandinavian countries, connected by language and tradition with the one and by political union with the other.

*I plumpe Raab fra Tølperen og Taapen.

The Blow to Scandinavianism.

In 1844 Norway demanded and got its own war-flag, still with the union mark. In 1857 Norway rejected the proposal for a common judiciary and a year or two later passed a resolution abolishing the stadtholdership, an office which did something to connect the two governments. Sweden, of course, was disappointed and irritated, and some hot-heads in the Swedish parliament began to babble in the usual way: "What was this Norway but an insignificant little country," etc. etc. And Björnson of course to reply in the shape of fiery national songs which made the babble immortal and burned it into every young Norse heart:

Hast thou heard what Sweden's saying
O young Norwegian man?

It was an unceasing progression in the direction of separation without any new principle of unity being introduced. In 1863 the first consequences of these constitutional controversies, breeding doubt and discord, came like a thunderclap. Bismarck taking advantage of this Scandinavian discord, with his usual sagacity swooped down on Schleswig-Holstein, overwhelmed the Danish resistance and secured, eventually, the whole of the double province for Prussia. The northern part of it had been Danish, "land of the Norsemen" in the days of Charlemagne. The little country of Denmark had lost a third of its territory at a blow. It was another Scandinavian tragedy, and they all, Danes, Norsemen and Swedes, felt it as such. In Norway, as well as in Denmark, there was bitter wailing, even amongst the Norsk enthusiasts who for years back had been carrying on a literary campaign against Danish influences in literature, in language, in the theatre, etc. Now they were angry because a parliament of farmers, whom they had never taught better, had neglected military preparation and hesitated to tax themselves for a war on behalf of Denmark. The Swedes, too, the chief military power of Scandinavia, had been chilled by the separatist Norse policy. Now, when it was too late, Björnson called loudly in new songs on Sweden to lead the united might of the North forth against Germany. The old blue and yellow of dear Sweden shall be

the leading flag now; now Sweden is undoubtedly the chief and must marshal the force of the North if it is to be marshalled.*

Björnson thought at this time that the mere sight of the Swedish flag at the head of the Scandinavian armies would have made the German stop; he would "understand"—*men ser han det, forstaar hv.* It might have been so, had the union shown energy and vitality, but Bismarck had gauged the situation better than Björnson who was really reasoning from a situation and conditions which no longer existed. Prussia and Sweden no longer stood to each other, in respect of military power, as they had done in the eighteenth century.

Ibsen on the Failure.

That other great Norwegian, Henrik Ibsen, also wrote at this crisis the most stirring of his lyrics, *A Brother in Need*, in equally vain appeal, though the heart of a Scandinavian mouse might have been stirred by its lines:

Hvert stormsuk som i Norge gaar
langs li fra Danmarks hav.

Ibsen, who was a deeper man than Björnson, was not so sure of the result as you see from his letters, but he thought it was a case for the North to do or die.

But neither Norway nor Sweden mustered to the aid of Denmark, though a number of volunteers went from both. To the parliament of farmers and pacifist radicals in Norway national existence was mainly an equation between the debit and credit sides of the budget, with due opportunities for public orations on '17th May' day. Ibsen who saw—clearly enough now—that the Scandinavian peoples for the third time had lost the road which led to unity and security, withdrew from his native country, a melancholy and somewhat bitter exile. He writes to Björnson from Rome: "Lies and illusion—that was all it was then" (he means the meetings, conferences, brother-banquets and orations of the Scandinavian movement). "We must strike the pen through our old Viking histories, for the Norwegians of to-day have no more to do with that ancient past than the Greek pirates of to-day with the

**Til Sverige.* Löft du dit gamie gule-blaa. Decem. 1863.

race that sailed to Troy." And to Magdalene Thoresen he expresses himself even more disconsolately as if he doubted any enduring future even for the intellectual or spiritual life of his people. "We have not the will-power," he says, "to make the sacrifices the time calls for." (Letters, Sept. 1864 and Dec. 1865). He was wrong about the intellectual life, both as regards Sweden and Norway, and he himself mainly contributed to falsify his prophecy in this respect as the first author of really European or world-wide fame in these two countries, for neither Tegner nor Björnson can quite compete with him in this respect. But he commenced by immortalizing his scorn of the Scandinavian failure and of the phrase-making of modern Radicalism in *Peer Gynt* and *The Young Man's Union*. The old saga and Viking themes, Heroes of Helgeland and the like he never touched again, but went on to evolve a new social drama which submitted modern society to the sharpest probing and criticism it had yet received. These satires of Ibsen raised a clatter of indignation and protest amongst the critics of Christiania, but Ibsen was not then a power in the land like Björnson, and the "grey old farmer" from Gudbrandsdale under the leading of doctrinaire Radicals continued to walk complacently on his path of disruption, or his successor whoever he was, for Ole Haagenstad had long retired from the Storting or Norse Parliament to live, according to bönde usage then, on bacon and veal which he kept stored for ten or twenty years till it was green and black with age.*

The Dissolution of the Union.

In 1892 the Norwegian Storting passed a resolution in favour of separate consulates from those of Sweden, a measure which Swedish opposition however delayed for twelve years. The flag question had been a sore one from the beginning. In 1844 Norway had her own war-flag substituted for Sweden's, though with the union mark upon it, an event celebrated as the freeing of the flag in Christian Monsen's glowing lyric: "Now the sailor's heart beats with redoubled vigour! How oft he

*See Vinje's *Ferdaminni*. The bönde-idealism was subsiding with further experience, and Vinje's ironic picture of old Gudbrandsvale rather takes the halo off him.

felt the smart when hoisting an alien unfamiliar flag
With joy does Norway behold thee, proud, free flag that Olaf
once and Sigurd the Crusader bore o'er the wild wave. As
Northern Lights shalt thou shine far over the blue of ocean.
And Norway shall win again her ancient glory there." But
now, in 1898, there was a further agitation for the removal of
the sign of union from the flag, and this year it was accord-
ingly removed from the mercantile flag. In 1905 the discord
came to a head over the question of a separate consulate for
Norway, whose shipping indeed was considerably greater than
Sweden's. The Storting for the second time passed a resolu-
tion to establish separate consulates. The feeling in Sweden
was that at least such an important step should have been
taken only after the consent of both peoples, and King Oscar
accordingly refused his assent to the measure. The Storting
retorted by declaring that King Oscar had ceased to reign. A
plebiscite approved the Norse ministry's action almost unani-
mously. Björnson praised the premier Michelsen in verses
which declared that his clear intellect had set the course for
the ship of State and piloted it straight into the haven,—haven
of independence or popular government apparently, for I am
not quite sure what he means by *folkehavnen*.

So ended the "union of the North", which was to renew
the glory of old Norse days. At the worst of the crisis the
Norse fleet and army had been held ready for action. No doubt
the fault was not all on one side. Sweden with her superior
resources and famous history which did not need to go back
to the Viking age for its glories, may have thought too little
at first of the Norwegian country, and of course there were
the usual rash speeches of hot-headed fools in the Swedish
parliament sure to be reported in large type by newspapers
in search of sensations or of something to help their party.
There was also, however, some difference of views and policy
in relation to Russia and foreign countries in general. While
Norway tended to English views, Sweden tended to German
ones. The enthusiasm of the Danes for Scandinavian unity
had its root originally in their need of protection against Ger-
many, as Carl Ploug had openly stated in his address to the
meeting of Scandinavian students at Uppsala in 1843. But
this very fact came to operate eventually against the move-

ments in the minds of many Swedes. In the late nineties when there was a revival of the movement, Bengt Lidforss, a well-known Lund professor, warned his countrymen to put a little more coolness into their relations with the Danes, as Germany had her vigilant eye on them. After the break with Norway that distinguished Swedish publicist, Harald Hjärne, congratulated himself that at least Swedish foreign policy need no longer be influenced in an anti-German direction. For these reasons Swedish Scandinavianism had been apt to take an ideal rather than a practical form. In short, the three Scandinavian peoples had once more failed to solve their problem.

Björnson Looks at His Work.

A year after Norway had dissolved the union, Björnson fulfilling an old promise went to Copenhagen to address the Danes on "the future of the North."* It must have been a delicate task for him. He had been a leader in every decentralizing movement that had insulated Norway in literature, art and politics from her two sister nations, except that he was not an extreme landsmaal or native dialect man. He had been the popular force behind the politicians and led the hurrahs on all occasions. And now that the countries had fallen clean apart and the Scandinavian ideal was as good as dead, he came down to the depressed and discouraged little people of the Danes to talk about the "Future of the North." He was a man of the finest literary genius with a power of moving speech which old age—he was now past seventy—had perhaps improved rather than weakened, for if his eloquence was less fiery it had a fine simplicity of accent and phrase which went to the heart. It needs an effort to steady oneself against the old man's speech and keep a fixed eye on its inner inconsistencies. You have to abstract the logical lines of thought from that cover of moving words and look at them in their nakedness to realize the situation he is describing. He does not attempt to hide that the ideal of Scandinavian unity has been destroyed and that the peoples are more apart than they were in 1864 or when Norway entered the union. He admits

*See *To Taler*, published by Gyldendal.

that Sweden with its superior power of organization is the great Scandinavian people (det store Folk and is fitted to be the leader in a union which would eventually have included all three peoples. Yet he blames Sweden for having sought to preserve some links of unity in the federation (such as the common consulates, co-operation in military organization, union mark on the flags, etc.); he blames her for feeling hurt and indignant at the long series of quarrels and conflicts which Norway had initiated on such questions and which ended in a break. He speaks as if it had been Sweden that had lost sight of the great ideal of Scandinavian unity, as if it had been she that declared the union dissolved. "Had Sweden but seen her task and the great rôle which she destroyed by a mistaken policy." For what did Norway want? Björnson in another part of his speech explains this delicate point on fine and very debatable constitutional lines. The union was not originally, he declares, a union of peoples or nations, it was a transference from one king to another (*en Overdragelse fra Konge til Konge*), and Norway therefore had the right to cut loose from all but the link of a common king. One might add also a king whose single power of veto had been constantly challenged and set at nought by the Norwegian Parliament. That was Björnson's idea of the union.

And now that it has all gone to pieces those high hopes of Scandinavian union and a common Scandinavian future, what has Björnson to say to these poor Danes who are quite aware of the dangers looming ahead in Europe for them, and a little uneasy over German policies and Pan-Germanist cries, '*von Skagen bis zur Adria*'—(From the Cattegat to the Adriatic)—what does Björnson say to those Danes now? It sounds absurd, but here it is in his own words: "How shall we now, all three of us, come together again? That is the question. How shall we be united again?" And he goes on to say that it now "depends upon the Swede," but that "the Swede is angry." And again, a page or two later, he cries: "How shall we now come together? What shall we do to achieve that?" "And why should we come together?" he asks, and he explains why: "In order together to seek stronger alliances. That is the only, only, only way in which we small

peoples can secure our future. . . . And it is to preach this that I have come here."

Pan-Germanism in the North.

Björnson evidently regards the situation better now than he did in the old days when his trust in a coming era of universal peace, of arbitration and disarmament was greater. Now he sees only two ways for the Scandinavian peoples, an alliance with all the small nations, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, which would at least give them a voice in "the European concert" which he describes satirically as a case of "the Great Powers sitting and determining what is to be done with us." Or we must seek, he says, the protection of Germany, if only it had a decent system of politics. That is the only barrier, "the unfree institutions which Germany has." He admits that Germany is ruthless; he says: "Germany has no respect for the nationality of others. In the provinces which they have conquered from us, from Poland, from France, they outrage the national spirit and consciences of the people, they trample down our speech . . . and in doing that they really show a contempt for us." Yet he is ready to seek shelter under this very Germany whose iron hand has been laid so heavily on his race. That is how the great optimist and pacifist is ending. Nor is he alone in this tendency. Even in Denmark men like J. V. Jensen and Georg Brandes show sympathies in that direction.* Brandes it is true is a Jew and cosmopolitan by culture; a great critic and in old days high Radical, breathing death to all 'Holy Alliances'; latterly Danish minister of the interior, with sympathies for the land of Bismarck and Treitschke—and a people that appreciate other literatures than their own: more sympathy at least than for the land of pogroms.

It is the inevitable attraction strength has for the weak, and well does Germany know how to reinforce that sentiment in the small nations around her. Björnson, however, covers his surrender by a misty sort of Pan-Germanism which includes the Germanic races in Austria, Holland, Switzerland, Scandinavia and even Great Britain and the United States. It is to be a great Germanic federation. "That is the great

*Jensen is open enough. See his book *Nordisk Aand* (Gyldendal).

thought which hovers over our life," he says, "and we must begin to work at it . . . , it is a matter of our life." That is the Utopia in which Björnson finds escape when he began to realize the ruin he had done so much to bring about.

Federations Real and Utopian.

For his schemes seem rather Utopian . The paper alliances of small states will never bear the strain of a crisis, as we see to-day. And paper alliances between a large and a small State are likely to work out to the cost of the small State, as we also see to-day. There is an artificial element in such that breeds doubt and hesitation at the decisive moment. It is only the family or political federation under one roof that gives equal security to all, because it is the same security for all and is based on something which is not subject to question even in times of crisis and danger. The clear lesson to be learned from the Scandinavian failure is the difficulty of creating new conditions for a union where the existing ones have been too rudely handled or have been allowed to go into disuse. We cannot set too high a value therefore on federative links and connections which already exist in free and natural operation, as they do in the British empire and also in a large part at any rate of the Russian empire. It is only by such federations that the areas of peace can be really enlarged, the areas within which war is unthinkable. The alternative to that is the Roman military empire. For the Utopian ideals of Scandinavian pacifists like Björnson, E. Bull, or Ellen Key are difficult if not impossible to realize in a stage of society which is plainly founded on keen, almost unscrupulous, competition between States and individuals alike. The man is a child in political matters who does not see that trade and commercial expansion are breeding and must breed as much conflict and controversy to-day as religion did in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The one cause has almost ceased to operate while the other seems to be gaining in strength and malice with the increase of its importance. But indeed it has always been a strong predisposing cause of war. You could make a fair history of Europe, and a very picturesque one, out of its trade wars alone from the days when Hanseatic and Norse fleets fought for control of the Baltic down to our own day.

JAMES CAPPON.



