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BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSSON

A Study in Norwegian Nationalism

By HAROLD LARSON



New York : Morningside Heights
KING'S CROWN PRESS

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FOREWORD

THE object of this work is to trace the career of Björnstjerne Björnson as the outstanding exponent of modern Norwegian nationalism. This study is based largely upon material gathered at the University Library in Oslo, Norway, during a year of research made possible by the grant of a Roberts Traveling Fellowship.

The volume here presented owes its inception to the encouragement and assistance of Professor Carlton J. H. Hayes of Columbia University. Had it not been for the labors already performed by Norwegian researchers—notably Chr. Collin, Halvdan Koht, and Francis Bull—the accomplishment of this undertaking would have been difficult indeed. Professor Francis Bull, in particular, has been most gracious and accommodating: the fruits of his scholarship have been shared generously with all others interested in Björnson. The staff of the University Library in Oslo has been very helpful, always anxious and willing to assist. The staffs at the Columbia University Library, the New York Public Library, and the Library of Congress have been equally helpful. Lastly, the late Hans Eitrem permitted the use of his valuable notes for a projected listing of Björnson's articles.

Three American scholars have been of special service in the preparation of this book. Professor Einar I. Haugen of the University of Wisconsin read carefully the entire study, gave valuable counsel, and suggested many improvements. He also provided access to the unpublished Björnson letters in the R. B. Anderson Papers at Madison. Professor John H. Wuorinen of Columbia University has examined painstakingly the several chapters and has made many helpful suggestions. Dr. Oscar J. Falnes of New York University has aided materially from his knowledge of Norwegian nationalism as well as from his own investigation of Björnson and the peace movement. In addition, the Norwegian scholar, Dr. Sigmund Skard, has kindly brought certain new viewpoints to the work.

H.L.

Arlington, Virginia
October, 1944

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<i>Aftenbl.</i>	<i>Aftenbladet.</i>
<i>Aftenp.</i>	<i>Aftenposten.</i>
<i>A.T.</i>	<i>Artikler og Taler.</i>
<i>Bgsp.</i>	<i>Bergensposten.</i>
<i>B-St.</i>	<i>Björnson-Studier.</i>
<i>Chra.</i>	<i>Christiania.</i>
<i>Cphn.</i>	<i>Copenhagen.</i>
<i>Dagbl.</i>	<i>Dagbladet.</i>
<i>G.H. och S.T.</i>	<i>Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidning</i>
<i>Mgbl.</i>	<i>Morgenbladet.</i>
<i>N.B.L.</i>	<i>Norsk Biografisk Leksikon.</i>
<i>N.F.</i>	<i>Norsk Folkeblad.</i>
<i>N. Int.</i>	<i>Norske Intelligenssedler.</i>
<i>Opl. Avis.</i>	<i>Oplandenes Avis.</i>
<i>Stklm.</i>	<i>Stockholm.</i>
<i>V.G.</i>	<i>Verdens Gang.</i>

I

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

IN ORDER to understand Björnson's Norway it is necessary to recall briefly the earlier past of the Norwegian people and to take note of some of their most pressing nineteenth century problems.¹ A hardy, seafaring, adventurous lot, the Norsemen had harried Europe in the Viking Age from Britain to Byzantium. The sagas reflect the stirring deeds of these rovers and traders of the sea, whose colonizing enterprises extended as far west as the New World. Medieval Norway, especially under Haakon Haakonsson (1217-63), was a vigorous and flourishing state. Through a series of misfortunes, however, the centralized kingdom of thirteenth century Norway was deprived of native leadership. The succession to the Norwegian throne passed to the royal house of Denmark, and in 1397 this union, which also included Sweden (with Finland), was solemnly ratified at Calmar by the coronation of Erik as king of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. Thus began for the Norwegians what Ibsen called the "four hundred years of night," a period which many Norwegians later preferred to forget. Sweden seceded from the union of Calmar in 1523, but until 1814 Norway remained under the control of the Danish crown.

For Norway this long union with Denmark was a national catastrophe. During the years when most other European nations were developing their own national language, literature, and culture, Norway remained apart from this development. The focus of her national life lay in Copenhagen, in a foreign land. In Copenhagen lived the ruler of Denmark-Norway, surrounded by his court. In Norway he was represented by his

¹ Among historical accounts in Norwegian see the work of A. Bugge, E. Hertzberg, A. Taranger, Y. Nielsen, O. A. Johnsen and J. E. Sars, *Norges Historie fremstillet for det norske Folk* (6 vols., Chra., 1908-17), especially vol. vi by J. E. Sars. For a more recent presentation read E. Bull, W. Keilhau, H. Shetelig, S. Steen and S. Hasund, *Det norske Folks Liv og Historie gjennom Tidene* (10 vols., Oslo, 1929-35), especially vols. viii-x by W. Keilhau. (Keilhau is a good antidote for Sars.) In English consult K. Gjerset, *History of the Norwegian People* (2 vols., New York, 1915. Reprinted in one vol., New York, 1927); and G. Gathorne Hardy, *Norway* (London, 1925).

officials, many of whom were Danes. During the centuries after Calmar the Danish people developed a national language of their own, based on the speech of Copenhagen. But there was no community in Norway with sufficient wealth and the prestige to rival Copenhagen, the capital of the united realms. Moreover, since the Norwegians could understand Danish, although with some difficulty, it became customary in the Age of the Reformation for educated Norwegians to write Danish. The new Lutheran clergy at first came largely from Denmark or at least had been trained there, and the books of the new church of Luther were all in Danish. Apparently it never occurred either to Danes or to Norwegians that Norway should have a literary language of her own. Such was the situation even down into the nineteenth century, with educated Norwegians learning to write better and better Danish and gradually modifying their own speech accordingly by the inclusion of Danish words. The books, newspapers, and periodicals read in Norway came chiefly from Copenhagen. For centuries Danish was the medium of administration and of culture among the Norwegian people. As a result, in the church, in the schools, on the stage, and among the burghers and bureaucrats of the cities, the Danish language prevailed. Everywhere in Norway the social standards and cultural traditions followed the Danish pattern.² By 1814 it was only in the rural areas and among the lower classes of the cities that the Norwegians continued to speak dialects not based upon Danish, but lineally descended from the Norwegian speech of the saga period. The native culture of the medieval Norsemen survived in varying degree, but chiefly in song and story, among the rural population. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Norwegians, in short, had yet to achieve a language, a literature, and a culture of their own.

In the political as in the cultural domain the Danish hegemony in Norway was complete. Indeed, the united kingdom of Denmark-Norway remained unbroken until the early years of the reign of Frederick VI (1808-39). After the bombardment of Copenhagen by the British in 1807, Denmark, together with Norway, became allied with Napoleon. In the meantime Sweden also had become involved in the Napoleonic conflict, had lost Finland to Russia, and had, finally, chosen as successor to her old and childless king, Charles XIII (1809-18), one of Napoleon's own

² On this "ubiquitous Danish influence" which persisted in Norway for decades after the separation from Denmark in 1814 see O. J. Falnes, *National Romanticism in Norway* (New York, 1933), *passim*.

marshals, General Bernadotte. Bernadotte, founder of the present dynasty in Sweden, was later to ascend the Swedish throne as Charles XIV (1818-44). To the Norwegians, however, he was known as Carl Johan, and he will be referred to hereafter by that name. Carl Johan soon turned against Napoleon and his ally, Frederick VI of Denmark-Norway, and by a series of treaties with Great Britain, Russia, and Prussia he was promised the cession of Norway from Denmark as compensation for the Swedish loss of Finland to Russia. Carl Johan soon discovered that his allies were reluctant to keep their promises, both because they distrusted him as a former Bonapartist, and because they did not desire a strong Sweden. After the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig in October, 1813, Carl Johan resolved personally to secure his reward, marched into Holstein, and readily defeated the weak Danish army. From Frederick VI he then extorted the Treaty of Kiel, signed January 14, 1814, by which Norway was ceded to the king of Sweden.

Norway was not consulted as to the Treaty of Kiel. Basing their objections upon such authorities as Grotius, Pufendorf, and Vattel, the Norwegians therefore argued that no king had the right to dispose of a sovereign kingdom without the consent of his subjects and that they were neither legally nor morally bound to observe the terms of this treaty. Norwegian opposition to Carl Johan was led by the young, genial, and easy-going prince, Christian Frederick, heir to the Danish throne, who in May, 1813, had been sent as *statholder* (viceroy) to Norway. Though impelled primarily by dynastic considerations, the prince by his popularity helped unite the Norwegian people. A Constituent Assembly was summoned to meet at Eidsvold in April, 1814, and in a remarkably short time it produced a constitution which proved vitally important both as a rallying point in the crisis and as an acceptable substitute for the Treaty of Kiel. On May 17, 1814, a copy of the completed constitution was presented to the newly elected king of Norway, Christian Frederick himself.

Refusing to recognize the new Norwegian constitution Carl Johan invaded Norway with his veterans. A brief war of fourteen days ensued, ending in an armistice which led to the so-called Convention of Moss, dated August 14, 1814. This Convention provided that King Christian Frederick should call an Extraordinary Storting (Legislative Assembly), and that he should surrender without reservation the executive powers vested in his person as ruler of Norway. The Extraordinary Storting should in turn make only such changes in the Eidsvold Constitution as a union of

Norway and Sweden would require. The Norwegians in the Extraordinary Storting held the required constitutional changes to a minimum, and on November 4, 1814, they elected Charles XIII of Sweden as king of Norway. In the following year both nations adopted officially the Act of Union, the first article of which stated that Norway was "a free, independent, indivisible, and inalienable kingdom, united with Sweden under one king." Henceforth, until 1905 the destiny of Norway was linked with that of Sweden.

Although the Norwegians in 1814 ostensibly entered the union on a basis of equality with the Swedes, actually Norway seemed in many respects a dependency of Sweden. Thus, at that time there was no generally recognized Norwegian flag. May 17, which later became the Norwegian national holiday, had then no particular significance, and that most prominent feature of an independent monarchy, the king, was shared with Sweden. Furthermore, this king was first and foremost the ruler of Sweden and when not in Norway he was represented there simply by a *statholder*. Finally, all foreign relations were conducted by the king through Swedish officials so that except indirectly Norway abroad was indeed without representation. One must conclude as does a recent writer that "the union of 1814 in reality did not give Norway complete equality with Sweden."⁸ Yet the disparity between the two partners in the union must not blind one to the fact that on the whole the Norwegians had been singularly fortunate. In name at least they were an independent people. They had their own constitution and they had managed to keep it free of clauses that would have given the Swedes a chance to meddle in the internal affairs of Norway. More important still, they had their own parliament, the Storting. The Storting in legislative matters was subject only to a royal suspensive veto, and it was empowered to impeach any public official, including members of the king's cabinet, for malfeasance in office.

In the years immediately following 1814 Norway was an impoverished nation. Then as now the majority of the Norwegians wrested their living from the soil or from the sea. From 1815 to 1818 the crops were poor, and the fisheries failed. The finances of the state were in disorder, taxes were heavy, and one of the first tasks of the Storting was to find funds for a Norway which was practically bankrupt. The Norwegians as a whole faced an uncertain future under their new royal master, Carl Johan, who in 1818 became King Charles XIV of Sweden-Norway. But Carl Johan soon

⁸ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. viii, p. 161. Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

learned that his Norwegian subjects were determined to defend their constitution. The Storting in particular found its power of impeachment a useful weapon in the growing conflict with the crown. For Carl Johan sought to strengthen his hand by proposing that the Norwegian constitution be amended so as to give to the king, among other things, an absolute veto on legislation and the power to create a new hereditary nobility. But the Storting and the Norwegian people rallied to the support of the constitution and steadfastly resisted the pressure of the king. In 1821, in fact, the Storting passed for the third time over the royal veto a bill abolishing the Norwegian hereditary nobility. The Norwegian nobles, to be sure, were few in number and of recent and foreign origin. But their titles could hardly be reconciled with the democratic spirit of Norway. More important, this step showed that the Storting was determined to carry out fully the provisions of Article 79 of the Norwegian constitution, whereby a measure vetoed by the king becomes a law if it is passed in the same form by three separately elected Stortings.

Carl Johan failed in his attempts to alter the Norwegian constitution. He was also unable to coerce the Norwegian parliament despite threats of force which reached a climax in 1821. The Storting of 1827, especially, proved most exasperating to Carl Johan. It refused an appropriation to complete the royal castle in the Norwegian capital. It denied an appanage to a prince of the royal house, and it impeached one of the king's ministers. Worse yet, it offended the king directly by celebrating May 17, the anniversary of the Norwegian constitution, rather than November 4, the day of the union with Sweden. In a speech in 1828 Carl Johan recalled vividly the three "bitterest" moments of his career: first, when he had to draw his sword against France, his native land; second, when he had to enter Norway, sword in hand, though he loved the Norwegian people; third, when he learned that the Storting had celebrated May 17 by arranging a public dinner.⁴ Out of deference to the king who was then in Christiania the Storting in 1828 resolved not to celebrate the anniversary of the Norwegian constitution. But in the following year an event took place which made the matter a national issue. May 17, 1829, was a warm and sunny Sunday. In the capital the university students celebrated the day but with no disorder. In the evening, however, a crowd which had collected in the market-place so disturbed the chief of police that he caused

⁴ B. von Schinkel, *Minnen ur Sveriges nyare historia* (Upsala, 1830), vol. xi, p. 274 *et seq.*

the riot act to be read, after which the streets were cleared by the military. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured in this so-called "battle of the market-place," although there followed a great hubbub in which figured prominently a young student, Henrik Arnold Wergeland, whom we shall have occasion to mention again. This affair drew down upon Carl Johan a sharp protest from the Storting. The people of Norway were indignant. Henceforth, May 17 was solidly entrenched as the Norwegian national holiday.⁵

The preservation of the Norwegian constitution of May 17, 1814, is a keynote to the activity of the Storting to 1830. Following the Congress of Vienna Europe suffered under the reactionary system of Metternich, and Norwegian liberalism and constitutionalism as manifested at Eidsvold were suspect. But with the July revolutions of 1830 the spirit of freedom again was in the air. Norway and her constitution were now "in the vanguard" of liberalism in Europe.⁶ Stimulated by the revolutionary winds from the Continent new conflicts, new leaders, and new issues arose on the Norwegian scene, culminating in the thirties in a wave of Norwegian nationalism.⁷ By nationalism we here mean the movement which has been described as "a modern emotional fusion and exaggeration of two very old phenomena—nationality and patriotism."⁸ Characteristic of the nationalist movement in the Norway of the thirties was the stress on the specifically Norwegian in every field of national endeavor. In the persons and in the careers of the two outstanding leaders of this period, Wergeland and Welhaven,⁹ we can see clearly the issues involved.

Henrik Arnold Wergeland (1808–45) was of rural stock, the son of the prominent pastor, Nicolai Wergeland, who had written a pamphlet detailing the "political crimes" of Denmark against Norway. When a boy of nine he moved with his family to Eidsvold, the cradle of the Norwegian constitution, of which Henrik later wrote a significant history. A precocious lad, young Wergeland soon developed into a rough and fiery poet and

⁵ See Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. viii, pp. 276–82; and Sars, *op. cit.*, vol. vii, pp. 214–38.

⁶ Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁷ A comprehensive study of Norwegian nationalism is lacking. Of value are E. Bull's article "Formation de la nationalité norvégienne," *Revue des études Napoléoniennes*, vol. 10 (1916), pp. 5–54; A. Elviken's thesis *Die Entwicklung des Norwegischen Nationalismus* (Berlin, 1930), and his article, "The Genesis of Norwegian Nationalism," *Journal of Modern History*, vol. iii (1931), pp. 365–91. For a useful survey to 1870 read Falnes, *op. cit.*, ch. i.

⁸ C. J. H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York, 1926), p. 6.

⁹ Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 30–34.

publicist. He was the friend of the poor and the champion of the Jews. For the latter, who were then excluded from Norway, he wrote the two beautifully tender poems, *The Jew* and *The Jewess*, which are among the few of his poetic productions read with pleasure even today. Having failed to obtain a pastorate, he served for a time as a copyist at the University Library in Christiania and in 1840 he was appointed the chief archivist of Norway. In politics Wergeland was heart and soul a democrat, who ardently espoused the cause of national freedom. In literature he was an erratic genius, who despised both the artificial and the conventional. Everywhere in Norway he challenged the old order. For him the political emancipation from Denmark in 1814 was not enough. Further emancipation was necessary. The people of Norway must become Norwegian in language, in customs, in culture. They must clear away the foreign and the spurious elements that had developed during the long union with Denmark. They must, in fact, restore the historic ties binding them to the Norway of the sagas. Such, in brief, was the program of Wergeland, and though his life was as short as it was tempestuous, even today his name remains an inspiration to the Norwegian people.

Against Wergeland stood the refined and sensitive poet, Johan Sebastian Cammermeyer Welhaven (1807-73). Of upper class urban stock, Welhaven taught philosophy at the University of Norway. Like many others in the Norwegian official class of that day he looked to Copenhagen for intellectual stimulus. It would not do, thought Welhaven, to cut off the cultural connection of Norway with Denmark. To do so would be equivalent to opening the floodgates of spiritual barbarism. From a personal controversy between two poets, the conflict between Wergeland and Welhaven and their friends and followers soon broadened into a struggle between two distinct parties, the first in nineteenth century Norway and the forerunners of the two great political parties which developed later. Around Wergeland gathered the most of the academic youth, a few literary friends, and the common classes. His followers were called the Patriots, for theirs was a strictly Norwegian program. Welhaven, on the other hand, drew support largely from the officials and from the upper classes, and his followers were known as the Intelligence party. The latter party in 1836 established its own daily newspaper, *Den Constitutionelle*. The first Patriot party organ, *Folketbladet*, lasted only two years (1831-33), but its ideas were carried forward by the more radical sheet, *Statsborgeren* (1831-37), which for a time was edited by Wergeland.

Wergeland and Welhaven reflect the familiar cleavage in Norway between the *bonde*,¹⁰ or freeholder of the countryside, and the bureaucrat of the city. The bureaucrat¹¹ generally had his cultural roots in Denmark, read Danish books, enjoyed Danish plays, and used a language which was closer to the Danish than to the Norwegian dialects. It was the culture and traditions of the bureaucracy which Welhaven sought to preserve. Wergeland, on the other hand, stood for an indigenous culture which stemmed from the most numerous element in the population, namely, the *bonde*, and sought support from similar contemporaneous currents of thought in other European countries. The *bonde* as a rule spoke one of the various dialects which had developed from the Old Norse. In his customs and traditions, in his folk tales and folk songs he followed a native Norwegian pattern. In his interests and in his outlook the *bonde* was definitely rural, whereas the bureaucrat was distinctly urban. Yet, whether bureaucrat or *bonde*, each of the parties to this conflict felt himself to be indisputably Norwegian.

The clash between *bonde* and bureaucrat did not begin nor did it end with Wergeland and Welhaven. But paralleling this celebrated controversy there developed during the thirties a significant political realignment in Norway. Prior to 1830 the bureaucracy had dominated the Storting and defended the Eidsvold constitution against royal encroachment. After 1830, however, the *bonde* began to realize the importance assigned him, on paper at least, by the framers of the Norwegian constitution. For at Eidsvold under the influence of Rousseau it had been decided that two thirds of the members of the Norwegian parliament or Storting should be elected from the country districts and only one third from the cities. Whereas in previous years not more than twenty *bønder* as a rule sat in the Storting, in 1833, thanks to the agitation of the *bonde*, John Neergaard, forty-five out of a total of seventy-nine members belonged to this group. In 1833 also the *bonde* secured a wise and capable leader, Ole Gabriel Ueland, who was himself of rural stock. Under Ueland the *bonde* campaigned for control of the local government, for curtailment of the power of the official class, and above all for economy in the administration of the Norwegian state. Finally in 1837 the *bonde* obtained the control of local government in Nor-

¹⁰ The word *bonde* (plural, *bønder*) is frequently translated as peasant. The *bonde*, however, was not strictly speaking a peasant but an independent farmer or freeholder.

¹¹ The term bureaucrat in Norway meant not only the officeholders, including the clergy, but the burghers and the upper classes in general. All such persons the *bonde* usually lumped together as the bureaucracy (*embedsstanden*).

way, where hitherto the bureaucrat had been supreme. As a result, seeing its privileged position in the state and in the Storting menaced by the growing political activity of the *bonde*, the bureaucracy began to look to the king for support. In the period prior to 1830, Article 79 of the constitution, which gave the king only a suspensive veto on legislation, was in the eyes of the bureaucrat a bulwark against royal encroachment. Now it appeared to him to be an unwarranted check upon the crown.¹²

The nationalist wave of the early thirties soon subsided. The Norwegian people were not prepared to build solidly upon the poetic visions of the young Wergeland. Thus, *Statsborgeren*, the organ of the Patriots, in 1837 was suspended for want of subscribers. The *bonde* became less belligerent after his victory of that year, and the conflict between king and Storting was no longer a burning issue. As Carl Johan neared his end, he became more conciliatory, and at his death in 1844 he was deeply mourned by all classes in Norway. His successor Oscar I (1844-59) began his reign with several concessions to the Norwegians, who received their own flag though with a mark of the union. Under the new monarch there flourished two important movements, national romanticism and Scandinavianism, to which we now turn.

The romantic movement of the early nineteenth century also penetrated into Norway, where it rose to a high pitch during the forties and fifties. Among the Norwegians however, it developed as national romanticism, "a broad cultural movement"¹³ which was not literary alone and in which the emphasis was laid upon the nation. In keeping with the characteristic romanticist veneration for the old and for the traditional, national romanticism in Norway led to a heightened interest in the *bonde* as the living link with the glorious past of the Norwegian people. For the *bonde* of the countryside rather than the burgher or the bureaucrat of the city had preserved in large measure the traditions, the language, and the literature of ancient Norway. Rousseau's cry of "back to nature" was echoed among the Norwegian romanticists as their eyes were opened to the natural beauty of mountain, fjord, and waterfall in their native land. With the growing appreciation of nature's splendors there arose an enthusiastic interest in the native culture of the rural population, which had heretofore been almost entirely obscured by the dominant Danish cultural pattern of the upper classes in the urban centers. Norwegian national pride was stimulated immensely by the discovery of hitherto unsuspected national

¹² Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

treasures in the songs, in the speech, and in the stories of the *bonde*. Outstanding among the pioneers who helped uncover this cultural heritage were Jørgen Moe (1813–82) and his friend P. Chr. Asbjørnsen (1812–85). Moe's small collection of Norwegian ballads and especially the Norwegian folk tales which the two men began issuing during the forties won the hearts of the entire nation. The Norwegian folk-melodies were largely collected by Ludvig M. Lindeman (1812–87), who thus provided Norwegian musical themes for later composers, such as the renowned Ole Bull. In diverse fields—music, literature, art—national romanticism brought in its wake a national renaissance.¹⁴ Under the influence of the romanticists there developed also a new scholarly approach to the language and to the literature of the *bonde*. Ivar Aasen (1813–96), the Korais of Norway, realized that the dialects used by the *bonde* sprang from the Old Norse of saga days. A linguistic genius, Aasen studied what he considered the most "genuine" native dialects, with a view to recreating a form of Norwegian equivalent to what the national language would have been had Norway never been united with Denmark. In 1853 he published his first specimen of this new language, which he called *landsmaal* (the language of the countryside), a name by which it is still commonly known. Like the romanticists, the advocates of *landsmaal* set great store by the past. But they were also good Norwegian nationalists, for the language which they espoused was intended to take the place of the so-called Dano-Norwegian or *riksmaal* (the language of the realm) used by the upper classes of the cities.

It was the task of the Norwegian Historical School, led by J. R. Keyser (1803–64) and the gifted P. A. Munch (1810–63), to free still further the Norwegians from cultural bondage. Specifically, this school contended that most of the supposedly "Scandinavian" literary antiquities, such as the sagas and the Eddas, were definitely Norwegian and Icelandic, rather than a common possession of the Scandinavian peoples. Thus the Danes, together with the Swedes, were excluded from this heritage. But it was especially against the Danes that Keyser and Munch directed their fire. Assisted, among others, by Christian C. A. Lange (1810–61), who succeeded Wergeland in 1845 as the chief archivist of Norway, the Norwegian historians of this period sought to retrieve the past of their native land. But in so doing they met stout opposition from Danish scholars in particular,

¹⁴ For the best detailed account in English of Norwegian national romanticism see Falnes, *op. cit.*

who also laid claim to the literary treasures of the ancient North and stubbornly retained in their archives and libraries certain of the original records, both literary and historical, which patriotic Norwegian scholars felt belonged in Norway.

While the Norwegian Historical School helped accentuate the differences between the Norwegians and their neighbors, the Danes and the Swedes, by challenging the current conception of a common Scandinavian literature in the distant past, another movement was gathering strength for its program of bringing the Scandinavian peoples more closely together, culturally and politically. This movement was Scandinavianism,¹⁵ or Pan-Scandinavianism, as it was sometimes known. Scandinavianism had its origin in Denmark, growing out of the fear that the Germans might seize Schleswig and Holstein, in which event the Danes would need the Norwegians and the Swedes as allies. Centering in the dream of a united North, Scandinavianism was largely sentimental. Like romanticism it was based upon the conception of a glorious past. Flourishing at first almost exclusively among the Scandinavian students the movement gained the support of prominent Danish literary men like Carl Ploug and N. F. S. Grundtvig. Grundtvig, distinguished scholar and churchman, looked upon the Scandinavian North as one country with one language. In general, however, Scandinavianism did not appeal to the masses in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, but rather to a limited group whose strength lay in the academic and the literary circles of the day. Moreover, in Norway, where serious doubt had been cast upon the idea of a common Scandinavian literature in the past and where also dismal memories remained of the long union with Denmark, Scandinavianism did not take root until the late forties.

To the Norwegian patriot the Pan-Scandinavian movement involved an additional "threat to national self-sufficiency and national independence."¹⁶ For it was a weakness of the movement that it did not allow for national individuality. Thus, the Norwegians who had but lately escaped the tutelage of the Danes and were then united with the Swedes would probably have fallen into still greater obscurity as a nation in a union of all three peoples. Nevertheless, Pan-Scandinavians in Norway sympathized with

¹⁵ The older general treatment of Scandinavianism by J. Clausen, *Skandinavismen historisk fremstillet* (Cphn., 1900), may be supplemented by the more recent work of T. Jorgenson, *Norway's Relation to Scandinavian Unionism, 1815-1871* (Northfield, Minn., 1935).

¹⁶ Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 36 *et seq.*

their Danish brothers in the Dano-German crisis of 1848-49, but did not seek a union with them. Indeed, toward the mid-century the Pan-Scandinavian movement was characterized in Norway by an increasing stress upon the bond with Sweden. After 1850 and especially among the older generation there arose genuine affection for the Suedo-Norwegian union that Carl Johan had established. With this affection was coupled a tendency to seek support in Sweden. The term unionism perhaps best describes the attitude of this group.¹⁷ Yet to the Norwegian patriot unionist sentiment was as likely to cause concern as was Scandinavianism, for in any extension of the ties between Sweden and Norway, the former as the stronger nation would surely predominate. Under Charles XV (1859-72), who succeeded Oscar I as king of the united realms, Scandinavianism and its corollary, unionism, flourished and gained adherents. Scandinavianism reached its height in 1864 when the movement suffered a death blow in the failure of the Norwegians and the Swedes to help the Danes in their hour of need. The fate of Denmark in that year gave further impetus to unionism, since it illustrated the hazardous position of the smaller states in the midst of predatory powers such as Prussia. Unification also was in the air in the sixties. Thus it was the cause of union which triumphed in Italy, in the Germanies, in Austria-Hungary, and among the North American States. Unionism in Norway and Sweden led to a proposal in 1867 for a revised Act of Union aimed at bringing both realms more closely together. But as a result of strong nationalist opposition this proposal was decisively defeated in the Storting of 1871.

Scandinavianism and unionism met with favor not only in the royal house but also among prominent persons in both Norway and Sweden. Yet neither the unionist nor the Pan-Scandinavian, no matter how prominent, could do more than obscure Norwegian national feeling, which continued to manifest itself during the fifties and sixties. As in Wergeland's time Norwegian nationalism was generally directed against the foreign elements in the country. A small pamphlet entitled *The Young Norway*, issued in 1859, proclaimed that the Norwegians constituted a distinct nation with their own language and customs. In that same year the Storting attempted though without success to abolish the office of *statholder*, which the Norwegians thought made their country appear inferior to Sweden. In 1859 also, there was organized upon the initiative of Henrik Ibsen the Norwegian Society to promote the national interests in art and on the stage.

¹⁷ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 57.

Specifically, it challenged the Düsseldorf traditions in painting and the Danish hegemony in the Norwegian theater. The national spirit which characterized the year 1859 was revived in 1867 by the group of young Norwegians who, led by the historian, J. E. Sars, established the short-lived patriotic organ, *Vort Land (Our Country)*. Sars and his colleagues were in the forefront of the Norwegians who in 1871 helped defeat the unionist program calling for closer ties between Norway and Sweden.

The eventual drawing of party lines in Norway was strikingly foreshadowed as early as the fifties. The elements of partisan strife were already present. Thus, Scandinavianism and unionism emphasized the bond with Sweden, the extension of which was favored by some Norwegians and feared by others. From the time of Wergeland and Welhaven there remained the cultural conflict between those who prized the influence of Copenhagen and those who cherished a native Norwegian pattern. Finally, like a constant motif, must be mentioned the basic clash between bureaucrat and *bonde*. All these opposing groups were to enter into the two political parties which finally emerged in nineteenth century Norway. In 1859 Johan Sverdrup attempted to weld the liberal and opposition elements in the Storting into a definite political party. To this end he organized the short-lived Reform Association. Point one of its program was the maintenance of "Norway's national interests and equality in the Union."¹⁸ But it was difficult to fit the *bonde* into a liberal program, for his interests were generally narrow and utilitarian. Under Ueland, who died in 1870, and especially under his successor, the noted agrarian leader, Sören Jaabæk, the *bonde* followed a penny-pinching policy aimed at keeping taxes low by paying his opponents in the official class as little as possible. Yet the support of the *bonde* was absolutely essential to any strong national party in Norway. Not until 1869 was Johan Sverdrup able to launch a real and effective Liberal party in which the *bonde* was represented. Known in Norway as the Left, this organization became increasingly important when in that very year the Storting decided that thereafter it would hold annual sessions. The leading organ of the Liberals was *Dagbladet*, edited by H. E. Berner from 1869 to 1879, but the party also enjoyed the support of the independent newspaper, *Verdens Gang*, which under O. A. Thommessen had a wide circulation.

Almost of necessity the Liberals had ultimately to make the bond with

¹⁸ See its protocol and H. Koht's valuable comments in (*Norsk*) *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 5 R., 4 B. (1920), pp. 518-33.

Sweden a national political issue and to carry the country forward step by step on the road to complete independence. But as the immediate objective Johan Sverdrup sought to introduce the parliamentary system and to place all power in the Storting. This goal was achieved in 1884, when the Sverdrup ministry took their seats in the Storting. During the intervening years from 1869 to 1884 Sverdrup and his followers had found already entrenched an opposing group who finally formed another party, the Conservatives, known in Norway as the Right.¹⁹ In the ensuing conflict it was the Liberals in the main who triumphed and theirs became the memorable history of the time. Less known was the saga of the losers, gifted though they were, and the real inner history of the party remains to be written.²⁰ Here it will suffice to note that the Conservatives sought to protect their own vested interests as an officeholding bureaucracy and to support the king, their natural bulwark. They were in fact primarily bureaucrats holding offices in church and state. Moreover, their names frequently betrayed their foreign origin, for the Reformation in particular had brought many Danes into high places, especially in the larger cities on the coast.²¹ Conservatives read and prized *Morgenbladet* as their chief organ. Established in 1819 as the first daily in the country, *Morgenbladet* during the late fifties became definitely Conservative in viewpoint and under the uncompromising Christian F. G. Friele, it delighted in flaying the Liberals. But the Conservatives also had the support of the powerful *Aftenposten*. Founded in 1860, *Aftenposten* from the eighties on became an important and enterprising organ of the Conservative party.

After their initial victory in 1884 the Liberals broke into two factions. A smaller group called the Moderate Liberals continued to support Sverdrup, but the majority of the party rejected his leadership as reactionary and under Johannes Steen formed the Pure Liberals. The Moderate Liberals never were strong enough to form a ministry. As a result during the closing quarter of the nineteenth century it was the Conservatives and the Pure Liberals who contended with each other for control of the Storting. Aside from a steady growth in the democratizing of the country, the history of

¹⁹ Strictly speaking, there was no effectively organized Conservative party until Emil Stang took the lead in 1884. See Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 368 *et seq.*

²⁰ A step in this direction is Olaf Gjerlöv's *Norges Politiske Historie: Høires innsats fra 1814 til idag* (Oslo, 1934-36).

²¹ Arne Garborg compared the foreigners on the coast to Philistines; inland lived the real Norwegians. The reader may be surprised at the number of foreign names in modern Norwegian history. See *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon*, *passim*.

Norway under her last Bernadotte ruler Oscar II (1872-1905) was dominated by the growing tension with Sweden over the control of foreign affairs. The first Bernadotte, Carl Johan, had been very largely his own foreign minister, but under his successors to 1885 the conduct of Norwegian foreign affairs was carried on in the main through the Swedish foreign minister. In 1885, however, the Swedish parliament brought the Swedish foreign office more directly under its control and restricted still further Norwegian influence in the direction of foreign affairs. Under these circumstances the Pure Liberals demanded that Norway have a separate minister of foreign affairs, while the Conservatives maintained that this official might be either Swedish or Norwegian but should be responsible to both realms. After Steen came to power in 1891 he dropped the demand for a separate Norwegian foreign office, to which neither the Swedes nor the Norwegian Conservatives would then agree, and concentrated instead upon the more modest objective of a separate Norwegian consular service. The agitation for a separate Norwegian consular system culminated in the crisis of 1895, when Swedish militarists threatened to invade Norway and to force a revision of the Act of Union between the two realms. The Norwegians thereupon adopted a more conciliatory attitude and entered into negotiations with the Swedes upon the consular issue. These negotiations, which terminated in 1898, brought only a negative result. Meanwhile, the Norwegians strengthened their long-neglected army and navy and constructed a chain of forts along the Swedish border so as to be prepared for war, if need be. In 1902 the Swedes revived the consular question. Despite a promising beginning, a satisfactory agreement could not be reached. Therefore, on June 7, 1905, by unanimous vote the Storting dissolved the Union with Sweden. A Norwegian plebiscite on August 13 ratified the *fait accompli* of June 7, in which the Swedes also grudgingly acquiesced. Finally, the Norwegian throne was offered to Prince Charles of Denmark. This prince, whose election was approved by a general plebiscite, took the title of Haakon VII (1905-). Norway again was completely independent with a king of her own.

Outstanding among the Norwegian patriots who prepared the way for the separation from Sweden in 1905 was Björnstjerne Martinius Björnson (1832-1910).²² The son of a taciturn country pastor stationed at the isolated mountain parish of Kvikne, Björnstjerne in 1837 followed his father

²² The name Martinius was later dropped. No adequate full-length biography of Björnson is as yet available.

to Nettet in Romsdal, one of the most beautiful districts in Norway. Here the lad spent many happy days, surrounded by friends and enchanted by the magic of mountain and fjord. In July, 1844, he was sent to school at Molde, where he probably gained more from his own reading than from his teachers. At Molde, the great Icelandic historian Snorre Sturlason, with his dramatic sagas of the kings of medieval Norway, became young Björnsson's favorite author, to whom, thinks Collin, he was led by Henrik Wergeland's praise of the sagas, "especially as told in Snorre Sturlason's immortal writing."²³

A poor student, Björnsson's grades suffered especially in the spring of 1848 because "at that time his spirit was not at Molde but in France."²⁴ A year later he himself rebelled and left the little school, never to return. After a sojourn with his family at Nettet Björnsson in 1850 turned to Christiania, where he prepared for his entrance examination at the University of Norway. But having made no headway in his studies²⁵ he decided in 1854 to continue no longer. He had determined to become a poet. His subsequent activity as poet and patriot, playwright, politician, and pacifist will be revealed in the course of this work. At this point, however, it is essential to a true understanding of his career as the foremost exponent of modern Norwegian nationalism that we discuss briefly Björnsson the man and then indicate in general his role in the development of Norway as a completely independent nation.

Among the poets of the world it would be hard, indeed, to find a more vigorous and manly figure than Björnstjerne Björnsson. When Norwegians cherish his memory today they pay tribute quite as much to his vibrant personality as to his writings or to his achievements. For more than fifty years he was the storm center of Norwegian life, never sparing himself when there was a cause he could serve. No poet in an ivory tower, it was Björnsson's proud boast that

"To be where I was needed most
Was more to me than nearly all
Of what my pen produced."

Always he felt himself the champion of the Norwegian people, guiding its destiny, sharing its joy and its sorrow. As he once assured his friend Georg

²³ C. Collin, *Björnstjerne Björnsson. Hans barndom og ungdom*, vol. i (Chra., 1907), p. 96.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 94.

²⁵ E. Olsen, *Edda*, 1923, pp. 204-08.

Brandes, "I will live in Norway, I will flog and be flogged in Norway. I will sing and die in Norway. Be certain of that!"²⁶

Face and figure alone marked Björnson as the born leader. Tall and powerful in build he walked about like a Viking of old, his massive head surmounted by a shock of blond, wavy hair. Most impressive of all was his frank and open face, with its bushy eyebrows and its powerful profile. A Swedish greeting on his seventieth birthday declared that "Björnson's face is great, gruff, and kindly like his own country." The Danish literary critic, Georg Brandes, observed that merely to mention the name of Björnson was, as it were, to fling aloft the Norwegian banner since he was "in his excellencies and his defects, in his genius and in his failings as distinctly national as Voltaire or Schiller."²⁷ Indeed so characteristically Norwegian was Björnson that a fellow countryman called him the "high priest of the national spirit."²⁸

Beneath this bold exterior was a bold and restless spirit. Often ruthless and sometimes even blind and unthinking in his enthusiasms, Björnson was always generous, never petty. His ideas made him the most fanatically loved and most cordially hated man in Norway, and yet, in all his strife no breath of scandal ever touched him. Excitable, impetuous, obstinate and imperious, and yet surprisingly naïve, Björnson could be a trial to his friends and a scourge to his enemies. By nature optimistic and sunny he could nevertheless flare up in sudden anger and resort to the language of the worst fishwife. He expected his friends to follow him wholeheartedly in his enthusiasms and to respond to his antipathies. They were to form the group, and he the center. Perhaps his friends might even have done so had Björnson been static in his beliefs. But that he never was, for his views were in constant development. To him the latest truth was always *the* truth, to be proclaimed as loudly and as vigorously as possible, regardless of what he had believed before. He frequently changed his beliefs, and it was too much to expect, as he did, that all his friends would follow him when, as in the seventies, he turned from Christianity to agnosticism and changed from admiration of the Danes to admiration of the Germans. Undaunted, Björnson hurried on, finding new adherents and among them new friends. One friend alone never deserted him. This was his wife, Karoline, for fifty years his mainstay.

²⁶ H. Koht, ed., *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i (Oslo, 1932), p. 149. Letter of April 27, 1880.

²⁷ Georg Brandes, *Samlede Skrifter*, vol. iii (Cphn., 1900), p. 362.

²⁸ H. Christensen, *Det nittende Aarhundredes Kulturkamp i Norge* (Chra., 1905), p. 260.

So much for Björnsson the man. The role of Björnsson the nationalist in the development of the completely independent Norway of 1905 is another story. First of all, in his program Björnsson was the successor of Wergeland. Both were national poets fighting essentially for the same end, to free their country from foreign influence.²⁹ From Wergeland, said Björnsson, "we first learned to love the fatherland and freedom."³⁰ Secondly, Björnsson was the poet, agitator, and organizer for the *bonde*, whose support was essential to the Norwegian Liberal party in which for some thirty years the poet was a potent force. Finally, while he never faltered in his nationalist program, during his entire life Björnsson remained a sincere Pan-Scandinavian. Follower of Wergeland, champion of the *bonde*, Norwegian nationalist but Pan-Scandinavian as well, such in brief was the role of Björnsson in modern Norway.

In the chapters that follow will be unfolded the account of Björnsson's conflict on two fronts—on the one, against the cultural claims of Denmark; on the other, against the political power of Sweden. It will be shown how as patriot, poet, and playwright he helped create a new Norwegian literature, how he challenged the Danish domination of the Norwegian stage, and how he assisted in driving the Danish language out of Norway. Like every other nation Norway must needs have a national anthem, flag, and holiday. Here again Björnsson led the way. A completely independent Norway could come only from the ultimate severance of all ties with Sweden, and to the poet's part in this significant development two chapters will be devoted. All of the foregoing fitted logically into a nationalist program which in the main Björnsson endorsed. But he went further. He did not remain narrowly national, narrowly Norwegian. In a closing chapter he will, therefore, be depicted as the champion of subject nationalities; the friend of the working classes; the Pan-Scandinavian and the Pan-German; the lover of peace—in short, the cosmopolitan, many-sided Björnsson.

²⁹ On Björnsson and Wergeland see F. G. Lynner in *Björnsson-studier* (Chra., 1911), and H. Beyer in *Edda*, 1932, pp. 351-72.

³⁰ *Artikler og Taler*, ed. by C. Collin and H. Eitrem, vol. i (Chra., 1912), p. 515. This collection of Björnsson's articles and speeches will be referred to hereafter as *A.T.*

II

PATRIOT, POET AND PLAYWRIGHT

BjÖRNSSON was basically the Norwegian patriot, the ardent lover of his native land. But he was also preeminently the poet of the Norwegian nation, a worthy successor to Wergeland in that his life and his poetry were dedicated to his people. Finally, following again in the footsteps of Wergeland, Björnsen labored to free the theater in Norway from bondage to Danish direction, Danish actors, and Danish drama. It is the purpose of this chapter to show how Björnsen challenged the cultural hegemony of Denmark in Norway and how in so doing he helped create a new Norwegian literature, theater, and drama.

The theater and the drama appealed strongly to Björnsen even as a schoolboy. At Molde he had distinguished himself by his ability to retell in dramatic form his varied reading—Ingemann, Scott, Marryat, Cooper, Snorre, and Wergeland. While there he also started a theater but the available personnel proved too small.¹ Upon his arrival in the Norwegian capital in 1850 Björnsen was drawn at once to the Christiania Theater. Established in 1827 this theater² by the mid-century had become thoroughly Danish. For as Björnsen himself wrote, "Until the fifties we were artistically a dependency of Denmark. We were without a dramatic literature, without actors, and, in the opinion of many educated Norwegians absolutely incapable of securing any of these—until Ole Bull showed the people that there still was a great talent for acting among them and that the plays came of themselves."³ Following the Bergen Theater,⁴ which Bull founded in 1850, arose late in 1852 the Christiania Norwegian Theater. The latter was the outgrowth of a dramatic school established with the expressed aim

¹ Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 104-05.

² For its history read H. J. Huitfeldt, *Christiania Theaterhistorie* (Cphn., 1876); and T. Blanc, *Christiania Theaters Historie 1827-1877* (Chra., 1899).

³ *Nyt Tidsskrift*, N.R., 1893-94, p. 809.

⁴ Known as Norway's "first national stage." For its history see T. Blanc, *Norges første nationale Scene* (Chra., 1884).

of promoting a Norwegian national theater through the training of native-born actors. By 1853 there were three important theaters in Norway: Ole Bull's patriotic enterprise in Bergen, and in the capital a struggling Norwegian Theater which had begun as a weak protest against the Danish dominance of the older and more firmly established Christiania Theater. Björnsson was to deal with each of these institutions in his efforts to obtain a distinctively Norwegian stage.

With characteristic self-confidence as early as 1851 young Björnsson tried his hand at playwriting and produced *Valborg*, a patriotic drama directed against emigration. The drama was accepted by the Christiania Theater, and he received a free seat. But the more plays he saw, the more critical he became of his own, the manuscript of which he therefore destroyed. Two other dramatic works he likewise discarded in the years 1851-53.⁵ He was not yet ready to enrich the Norwegian stage with a drama of his own. Nevertheless he was apparently already aware of the danger to the developing Norwegian stage in the continued Danish hegemony in the Christiania Theater. Professor Francis Bull claims that at least seven anonymous and pseudonymous theater articles in *Morgenbladet*, 1850-52, must have been written by Björnsson. With their "national program," says Bull, these articles form a natural introduction to Björnsson's chief journalistic activity later in the fifties: "the struggle for a genuine Norwegian scenic art."⁶ But the evidence as to authorship is not conclusive,⁷ and all that the cautious student can deduce is that there did exist a definite demand for a Norwegian national theater in the capital.

But what was needed to insure a truly national stage in Norway? Briefly, Norwegian actors presenting Norwegian plays under Norwegian direction. Björnsson's position in regard to this program is shown by his attitude toward the Christiania Theater. Already a stronghold of Danish influence, this theater took on a more decided Danish tinge when in 1851 Carl Borggaard, a native of Copenhagen, became artistic director. True enough, an occasional Norwegian was added to the personnel, such as the gifted Laura Svendsen who made her debut in 1850. But by and large the leading roles fell to Danes. The rise late in 1852 of a competing dramatic group in the capital, appealing to the nationalistic element, probably accounts for

⁵ *N.B.L.*, vol. i, p. 610. See Björnsson's letter of July 5, 1852, *Edda*, 1932, p. 430.

⁶ *N.B.L.*, vol. i, p. 611. See *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 51 *et seq.* for a convenient selection of Björnsson's theater articles in the fifties.

⁷ See Valborg Erichsen's article, "Et Forspil til Björnssons Teaterkamp," *Edda*, 1920, pp. 138-43. *Mgbbl.* 1919, no. 5.

the announcement⁸ in 1853 by the Christiania Theater of its intention in the future to engage only natives. Yet less than a year later Björnson protested that Mlle. Svendsen had nothing to do while a Danish actress, Mme. Schrupf, got all the more notable roles.⁹ In March, 1854, in two important articles Björnson discussed critically the actresses—Laura Svendsen, Sofie Parelius, Karen Lucie Johannesen, in particular—on whom he relied for the establishment of a Norwegian stage.¹⁰ The Danes he frankly termed “a temporary makeshift.” Actually Björnson desired no sudden break with the Danish tradition on the Norwegian stage and was willing to allow for a reasonable period of transition during which the younger Norwegians who were available would gradually replace the older Danes upon the boards. Incidentally, the cultured public which largely frequented the Christiania Theater preferred, at the time, the Danish pronunciation and Danish acting, which admittedly fitted best the Danish plays and Danish translations of foreign plays presented there.

While guarding carefully the interests of Norwegian actors, Björnson did not overlook the need for original worthwhile Norwegian plays. When the anonymous play, *The Fisherman's Home*, was produced at the Christiania Norwegian Theater in March, 1855, he protested¹¹ against the type of Norwegian national life which it portrayed: a life in which thievery, attempted murder, or actual manslaughter loomed large. With a touch of humor he intimated that the Christiania Theater had in its possession several hundred original Norwegian works, which were rejected because they had two or three villainies or one or two murders too many. Nor did the rural characters in such plays ever use the language of the countryside. But when late in April of 1855, Ivar Aasen's original one-act opera, *The Heir*, appeared at the Christiania Norwegian Theater Björnson cried out in relief that here at last the farmer (*bonde*) was portrayed as he was, without boasting, without jaded naïvete or sentimental dreaming, and with his own speech.¹² The young critic Björnson had not spent his early years in a rural parish in vain. That golden era of Norwegian drama which Björnson and Ibsen were to inaugurate had not yet arrived, but when the latter's play, *The Feast at Solhaug*, was offered at the Christiania Theater in March, 1856, the former hailed it enthusiastically¹³ and when it was criticized in the press he sprang to its defense. In *Morgenbladet*¹⁴ he com-

⁸ *Mgbl.*, March 24, 1853.

¹⁰ *Mgbl.*, March 24 and 29, 1854.

¹² *Ibid.*, May 3, 1855.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, April 11, 1856.

⁹ *Krydseren*, March 1, 1854.

¹¹ *Aftenbl.*, March 17, 1855.

¹³ *Mgbl.*, March 16, 1856.

plained that Ibsen's drama, "a patriotic work of rare worth," was no longer to be offered. Late in April he asked again why the theater did not present this drama, for it was not only national but also possessed of a special merit that would insure a good reception upon any stage.¹⁵ Two days later, on April 29, 1856, the Christiania Theater announced a new showing of *The Feast at Solhaug*, with Mlle. Svendsen in the chief role, in place of the Danish actress who had previously played this part. Björnson had won his point.

In the meantime, despite the policy announced in 1853 that native-born actors would be preferred, the directors of the Christiania Theater failed to cultivate a Norwegian personnel and turned again to Denmark for assistance. Ferdinand Schmidt of the Casino at Copenhagen was retained in May of 1856, ostensibly as a guest artist but in reality as a regular actor. His appearance precipitated the celebrated "theater battle" of May 6 and May 8, 1856, and brought Björnson to the front in the struggle for the nationalizing of the Christiania Theater.¹⁶ Always alert to the nation's needs, Björnson had complained some two months earlier that the artistic director of the Christiania Theater had not given proper heed to preparing promising young Norwegian actors to fill vacancies in his troupe.¹⁷ Moreover, as Blanc points out,¹⁸ Björnson was determined that no new Danes should be engaged, since such a practice would but lead to delay and confusion in the natural evolution of the Norwegian stage. When the artistic director ignored the national demands, Björnson assembled his followers for more aggressive action.

When the Danish actor, Schmidt, made his first appearance on May 6, 1856, he was greeted with a chorus of catcalls. According to *Morgenbladet*, which was critical of the management of the Christiania Theater, Schmidt's "second so-called guest role" on May 8 resulted in "a far worse uproar" than before. There were hurrahs for Norwegian actors and hurrahs for the fatherland. Yet, said *Morgenbladet*, not a voice was heard to demand more than a recruiting of Norwegians in the future.¹⁹ *Christiania-Posten*, on the other hand, reflected the attitude of the conservative, pro-Danish bourgeoisie of the capital by describing the initial reception of Schmidt as "a scandalous event," engineered by a "coterie" who did not realize that the nation was not yet ready to dispense with the Danes in its chief theater.²⁰

¹⁵ *Mgbl.*, April 27, 1856.

¹⁶ T. Blanc, *Christiania Theaters Historie*, pp. 148-49.

¹⁷ *Mgbl.*, March 9, 1856.

¹⁸ Blanc, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-51. ¹⁹ *Mgbl.*, May 10, 1856.

²⁰ *Christiania-Posten*, May 8, 1856. See the letter of "A Stockholder" in the issue of May 9, 1856.

Turning from the meager reports of the press to the reminiscences of participants one sees that the conflict has become an exciting melodramatic episode. Thus, a certain "N.K." says that two tinsmiths were kept busy making whistles and fifes for Björnson's "troops."²¹ So overwhelming in nature was the demonstration that the Danish actor Christian Jørgensen is reported to have said that, "Now the Danish drama is ended in Norway."²² The interesting if not always reliable Olaus Arvesen repeats much the same story.²³ In Björnson's own account of the affair he is the hero who by force denies enjoyment of the theater to an opposition lacking in all "patriotic considerations."²⁴ One may doubt if Björnson had as many as the six hundred persons usually given as his following. But there can be no doubt that he was the leader.²⁵

Björnson, however, did not confuse the man, Schmidt, with the cause at stake. In *The Pipers' Program*, which he published anonymously,²⁶ he was careful to point out that the protest made was not against Schmidt personally but rather against that failure to respect the nation's demands which was shown by his engagement. A theater in the capital, said Björnson, is an outpost of nationality, since it is there that the difference between that which is foreign and that which is native stands out most clearly. After paying tribute to the efforts of Henrik Wergeland and Ole Bull on behalf of a Norwegian theater, he expressed his gratitude to the Danish artists who "have temporarily maintained a foreign theater among us." The Danes already on the Norwegian stage have become acclimated. But to add new foreigners "is not only to destroy what we have done and are doing, it is to render us contemptible. No, not us, but a power which stands above us all: our common Fatherland." Had Schmidt been left undisturbed, he and other Danes would have been retained, and that was why the demonstration had taken place. Björnson closed with the threat to protest again should Schmidt attempt to serve his apprenticeship on the Christiania stage.

As was to be expected, Danish and Swedish newspapers soon took notice of the conflict. The general tendency, however, was to censure Norwegian

²¹ *Bergens Tidende*, December 8, 1902.

²² Actually, Jørgensen was hardly affected by the disturbance. He remained on the Christiania stage until 1863.

²³ O. Arvesen, *Oplevelser og Erindringer* (Chra., 1912), p. 86 *et seq.*

²⁴ *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 137-38.

²⁵ Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 314; *Aftenp.*, June 4, 1894. See also S. A. Lindbæk, *En russ fra 50-aarene* (Chra., 1922).

²⁶ *Mgbl.*, May 8, 1856.

efforts for a national theater. That the Danish press should prove hostile was, in Björnsson's opinion, natural enough, but that the Swedish press should act similarly was inconceivable.²⁷ In view of his Pan-Scandinavian leanings it must have been painful, indeed, to discover that the Swedish and Danish "brothers" in the North were apparently unwilling to concede to Norway that independence in the theater which to Björnsson was but one expression of independence in general. In a second article he singled out as his "real opponents" the Norwegians in Christiania who preferred Danish speech and culture just as refined Danes in Copenhagen once preferred the German. He stressed again the fact that even the ultra-Norwegian party demanded only "no *new* Danes." The trend, he felt, was toward Denmark and a united North. But this, he concluded, will not obtain until the Danes can endure the Norwegians "as we are," in other words, "not until we have become something for ourselves."²⁸ The Norway of a united North must, in short, be independent.

Much space has been devoted to the "theater battles." They were significant dramatic clashes between Dane and Norwegian in the world of the theater. They marked a turning point in the history of the development of the Norwegian stage. Finally they showed Björnsson fighting his first major engagement on behalf of a Norwegian theater—his first but not his last, for victory did not come at once. Despite the glamour with which it has since been invested, this initial challenge to Danish supremacy had at the time rather inglorious results. Björnsson had threatened reprisals, but of so little weight was his opposition that the management of the Christiania Theater engaged not only Ferdinand Schmidt and his wife but also several other Danes.²⁹ The Norwegian element had to take what comfort it could in the almost simultaneous engagement of that capable couple, Johannes and Louise Brun, of Bergen. But the day of the Dane on the Christiania stage was nevertheless closing, thanks largely to the agitation of Björnsson.

There followed now a lull in the storm which had gathered about the theater in Christiania. During June, 1856, Björnsson took part in an inspiring student gathering at Upsala, Sweden, after which he wrote his first saga play, *Between the Battles*. But he did not forget the need of a national theater in Norway. In the summer of 1857 he urged the Storting to aid Norwegian dramatic art by means of a subsidy. In his opinion the theater

²⁷ *Mgbl.*, June 2, 1856.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, June 15, 1856.

²⁹ Blanc, *Christiania Theaters Historie*, p. 154.

would serve to unite the people. But so long as nothing was done for a national theater, nothing was done to give the masses a share in its beneficial influence. The Storting, however, refused to make an appropriation for this purpose.³⁰

Mention has already been made of the Bergen Theater established by Ole Bull in 1850. Bull's object (in Björnson's words) had been to secure a thoroughly Norwegian theater, with Norwegian plays, and with the Norwegian language, not Danish. Bull also wanted Norwegian characters, not French ones; Norwegian music, not the music of Leipzig; and a Norwegian ballet.³¹ Not an easy program to carry out, for at the time there was virtually no worthwhile Norwegian drama to produce.³² The Bergen Theater had to content itself with vaudeville by the Dane J. L. Heiberg or with French comedies, usually by Scribe and generally in Danish versions. Because of an extended sojourn abroad Bull had left his theater in the hands of four directors, who in turn had retained Herman Laading and Henrik Ibsen as instructors. But the directors had the final word. Ibsen withdrew during the summer of 1857 and left no great void. "He had," says Koht, "no ability as a stage manager."³³

In the fall of 1857 Bull returned to Bergen and soon discovered conditions at his theater that were not to his liking. Neither financially nor artistically had it progressed, and he determined upon a change. Violent in his methods he broke openly with the directors,³⁴ who in retaliation proposed to erect a new rival theater. But, says Blytt, who was one of the directors, "we had forgotten the magic might of his (Bull's) violin."³⁵ The project of Blytt and his colleagues failed and the people of Bergen sided with Bull, who assembled a new group of directors. On November 29, 1857, Björnson came to Bergen, called there hastily by Bull to serve as artistic director of the Bergen Theater.

It was a shattered institution into which Björnson entered. But he suc-

³⁰ *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 127-33. *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, pp. 260-61. ³¹ *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 153.

³² With the possible exception of the work of the gifted Ludvig Holberg, "the Molière of the North," to whom the Danes also laid claim.

³³ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. xxxi.

³⁴ For details of the controversy see Blanc, *Norges første nationale Scene*, p. 233 *et seq.* Read P. Blytt, *Minder fra den første norske Scene i Bergen* (Bergen, 1907), p. 56 *et seq.* for the point of view of the directors.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 65. For Bull's story of the national theater see his letters to his wife, in Alexander Bull, ed., *Ole Bulls Breve i Uddrag* (Cphn., 1881), pp. 373-82; Oddmund Vik, *Ole Bull* (Bergen, 1890), pp. 287-344; and Sara C. Bull, *Ole Bull, a Memoir* (Boston, 1883), pp. 198-213.

ceeded in persuading the actors to continue for the season and, what was more difficult, to submit to discipline. They learned to their chagrin that while he was in charge they would have to obey. He worked as he never had before, adapting plays for the repertoire, arranging a series of performances in Trondhjem in the spring of 1858, and attending to the finances of the theater. Apparently also it was he who aided in transferring the venture (1858) from Ole Bull's private possession into the hands of a joint-stock company.³⁶ It was not a light task for Björnson, but his efforts were appreciated. When in December, 1858, he warned the directors of his intention to retire they issued a testimonial gratefully acknowledging his able and conscientious work for the theater.³⁷

Apart from rescuing the "first national stage," Björnson's chief contribution at Bergen was his instruction of the actors.³⁸ Yet for Björnson Norwegian actors and Norwegian plays were not enough. The entire theater must be Norwegian, freed in every respect from the influence of the traditional Danish pattern. For as Koht has observed,³⁹ Danish acting was to a high degree conventional, superior in a technical way, but without that individual freedom which Björnson demanded. The Norwegian actors were to be themselves, not imitators of the polished Danes.

So much for Björnson at the Bergen Theater. His career there was brief but significant. He had revived Ole Bull's enterprise (which managed, however, to survive only until 1863); and he had given a powerful impetus to the movement for a national stage in Norway. At the close of the season of 1858-59 he left Bergen and in the fall of 1859 he returned to Christiania, where he joined the editorial staff of the liberal newspaper, *Aftenbladet*. With Henrik Ibsen, who later grew to detest all forms of organization, he cooperated in the Norwegian Society's program to further "nationalism in literature and art." Björnson served as chairman of the society and during the winter months of 1859-60 he gathered about him all sorts of people with national interests, politicians, journalists, scholars,

³⁶ See Blytt, *op. cit.*, p. 67 *et seq.*; Blanc, *Norges første nationale Scene*, p. 247 *et seq.* Especially helpful is the brief article by Sigurd Skonhoft, *Edda*, 1921, pp. 292-304.

³⁷ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. xxxii.

³⁸ All accounts agree that he was the ideal instructor, probably the greatest master of dramatic art that his country has ever known. Note the praise of Lucie Wolf, *Livserindringer* (Chra., 1898), p. 194; and of Alma Fahlström, *To norske Skuespilleres Liv* (Oslo, 1927), p. 41. Even Yngvar Nielsen, who lost no love on Björnson, has testified that as a director Björnson was "brilliant." See Y. Nielsen, *En Christianiensers Erindringer* (Chra., 1910), p. 335.

³⁹ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. xxxiv.

artists.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, except for this stimulating intercourse, the Norwegian Society accomplished little. Indeed, fully as important as its efforts were Björnson's newspaper articles on behalf of a Norwegian theater. The poet in particular had a friendly word for Ibsen, who had become artistic director of the Christiania Norwegian Theater. The press, said Björnson, had given Ibsen's theater all too little attention.⁴¹ In the columns of *Aftenbladet* Björnson hammered away at what he termed "the harmful influence"⁴² of the Danish actors upon their Norwegian colleagues. In the same organ he attempted to show that a Danish theater in Christiania would in the end become a poor theater: he claimed, for example, that Mlle. Svendsen had been forced into a Danish manner that was foreign to her.⁴³

In the late fifties the Danish players, evidently influenced by the agitation against them, began to withdraw from the Christiania stage and to return to Denmark. The impending departure (1859) of the Danish favorite, Vilhelm Wiehe, gave rise to an amusing newspaper controversy, in which Björnson and Ibsen fought side by side for the Norwegian cause. Wiehe was well liked. Elise Aubert, for instance, praised him, but feared that he would not remain in Norway. For Björnson, she noted, had declared that within a year every Danish actor would be driven away—thanks to his bombardment. Moreover, she believed in the young poet and in the "fearful might" of his pen.⁴⁴

When the news of Wiehe's proposed retirement reached the public, there was an immediate "outcry."⁴⁵ The controversy which followed raged in prose and in verse. The pro-Danish group blamed Björnson and his followers for the loss of Wiehe. The minor poet, H. Ö Blom, expressed his chagrin in a dozen stanzas, but was consoled by the thought that even at Copenhagen Wiehe would benefit Norway, since in the sphere of the theater, that center would long continue the model for the North.⁴⁶ To this Ibsen replied, also in verse, with the assurance that a "newborn sun dawns on the mountains' edge."⁴⁷ Blom, unconvinced, retaliated with

⁴⁰ H. Koht, *Henrik Ibsen*, vol. i (Chra., 1928), p. 186.

⁴¹ *Aftenbl.*, November 26, 1859.

⁴² *Ibid.*, December 12, 1859. See A. Lund, *Henrik Ibsen og det norske Teater, 1857-1863* (Oslo, 1925), p. 59 *et seq.*

⁴³ *Aftenbl.*, December 13, 1859.

⁴⁴ See *Fra Krinoline-Tiden* (Chra., 1921), p. 121.

⁴⁵ Blanc, *Christiania Theaters Historie*, p. 171.

⁴⁶ *Mgbl.*, December 7, 1859.

⁴⁷ *Aftenbl.*, December 10, 1859.

twenty-two verses. Interesting in the light of the fame which subsequently came to Ibsen and of the later obscurity of Blom are these bumptious lines:

“But I am H. Ö. Blom, see, that’s the thing!
And you are Henrik Ibsen—nothing more!”

And lest Ibsen fail to understand, Blom “bombarded” him with a closing line in Greek! ⁴⁸

The poet Andreas Munch was likewise moved to lament in verse the departure of Wiehe. Can it be possible, said Munch, that the Danish actor has been driven out by the “wild cries” of the “national berserkers,” when he has won the entire public? Munch closed with the hope that at least Jörgensen would not leave, for without him the stage would sink back into a marsh.⁴⁹ Björnson next entered the fray. In a prose which was a pleasant contrast to the dull “poetry” of Blom and Munch he admitted that while Jörgensen was a great actor, who would be missed, nevertheless the Norwegians would rather miss him than to miss Norwegian acting and its influence upon the social circles and the national temper of the capital. The Danish players, he conceded, were respected and esteemed. Nevertheless, the Norwegians would prefer to toil patiently with their own struggling artists. The Danish theater in Christiania was in certain respects (with Norwegian assistance) a good theater and would suffer from the loss of three or four of the best Danes. Yet the Norwegians were ready to make this sacrifice, if thereby they could gain as soon as possible an art of their own. The article ended with an appeal to Munch’s patriotism for support of an independent Norwegian stage.⁵⁰ As Collin notes,⁵¹ though Ibsen and Björnson wrote in *Aftenbladet* and Blom and Munch in *Morgenbladet*, the two newspapers took virtually the same position on this question. Thus *Morgenbladet* remarked that, although a theater in which the most important players were Danes could call itself the “Christiania” Theater, it remained Danish, not Norwegian, and could never take the place of a genuine national theater, or of a characteristic active effort by the native-born to develop a dramatic art, “in the country’s own spirit and own language.”⁵² Also in *Morgenbladet*, Professor M. J. Monrad printed an anonymous attack in verse upon Blom and Munch. After almost half a century of freedom from Denmark was it not, he demanded, time for the Norwegian stage to escape its guardianship? ⁵³ As Björnson had observed

⁴⁸ *Mgbl.*, December 13, 1859.

⁵⁰ *Aftenbl.*, January 6, 1860.

⁵² *Mgbl.*, December 11, 1859.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, December 27, 1859.

⁵¹ Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 472.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, January 8, 1860.

in the same newspaper, the debate hinged upon whether the Danish influence in the theater in the Norwegian capital did or did not hinder the development of Norwegian dramatic art.⁵⁴ The verdict of Björnson, Ibsen, and Monrad was that it did.

In the meantime the hegira of the Danish actors continued. Mme. Schruppf, whom Björnson attacked as early as 1854, left in 1860. In that same year Wiehe gave his farewell appearance and soon several other Danes retired from the Christiania stage.⁵⁵ Coupled with the economic insecurity which has almost constantly beset theatrical enterprises in Norway, the withdrawal of the Danish personnel was soon to bring to a close the Danish hegemony on the Christiania stage. Early in 1863 Carl Borgaard was discharged as artistic director and retired to Copenhagen. Two other Danish artists, Christian Jörgensen and his wife, the next to leave for the Danish capital, were honored at a farewell reception, for which Ibsen wrote a song.⁵⁶ The departure of Borgaard and of Jörgensen, both of whom had figured prominently in the "theater battles" of 1856, must have come as a surprise to Björnson. For in 1861 Björnson had predicted, pessimistically, that Borgaard would be retained until he died. He would then be succeeded as director by Jörgensen, who would serve until he reached the age of eighty.⁵⁷ Björnson was mistaken in his prediction. But whether the poet realized it or not, his campaign against the Danish influence in the Norwegian theater was nearing its end. For with the removal of the leading Danes from the Christiania stage the way was prepared for the merging of the Christiania Theater and the Christiania Norwegian Theater. Both institutions were heavily burdened with debt and continued rivalry between them would have proved ruinous. After involved negotiations the eleven years of conflict between the two houses closed with their consolidation in 1863 under the name of the Christiania Theater.⁵⁸ The Norwegian capital again had one theater, a national theater, which presumably would secure that undivided support which was lacking when the city was torn between two rival institutions. Numerically at least the Christiania Theater had become a Norwegian theater. Of its company of forty, only six were Danes.⁵⁹ But otherwise the new institution was none too strong.

In a letter of June 29, 1862, occasioned by the suggestion that he take

⁵⁴ *Mgbl.*, January 6, 1860.

⁵⁵ Blanc, *Christiania Theaters Historie*, pp. 170, 173, 174.

⁵⁶ Henrik Ibsen, *Digte* (Cphn., 1871), p. 66.

⁵⁷ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. 260.

⁵⁸ For details see Blanc, *op. cit.*, p. 176 *et seq.* A. Lund, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-08, 129.

⁵⁹ Blanc, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

charge of the proposed consolidated theater in Christiania Björnsson had expressed his doubt as to the ultimate outcome and had stated that he would rather run the guano factory at Aalesund, since the artistic results unquestionably would be greater.⁶⁰ He was then in the Tyrol, but upon his return to Christiania in the fall of 1863 he again became interested in the Christiania Theater. As the result of certain negotiations, involving mainly Björnsson's insistence upon a strict control of both repertoire and cast, he consented late in 1864 to become artistic director of the Christiania Theater.⁶¹ Only some eight years before as a student he had challenged the policies of Carl Borgeard, whom he was now to replace. Björnsson served only until the summer of 1867 and though his was a difficult period of conflict and transition, he laid the foundation for a truly national theater in the capital. As an instructor he was superb and his repertoire on the whole was excellent. Perhaps his most significant offering was Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. But he did not neglect his own dramas, such as *Hulda the Lame*, and in order to fill the coffers of the house he did not scruple to present a revised version of Offenbach's operetta, *La Belle Hélène*, much to the irritation of respectable bourgeois moralists. At the close of the season of 1865-66 he accounted for his stewardship and set forth the needs of the theater, which in his opinion had not yet become "popular" and was undervalued by the public. In conclusion he stressed the significance of the theater for the entire country.⁶² During the following year of 1866-67 he disagreed with the management of the Christiania Theater and lost popularity with the public. Bitter over the opposition aroused, he resigned his position in the summer of 1867. He felt that he had been forced out of his life work.⁶³ For years thereafter he did not set foot in the theater though he later blessed the day he left.

Here one might well write *finis* to an account of Björnsson and the Norwegian stage, for by 1867 he had already accomplished the chief aims of his program. Norwegian actors dominated a Norwegian theater and all that remained was to develop a distinctively Norwegian repertoire. This was to be the task of Björnsson and Ibsen, but before touching upon the contributions of each as a playwright, Björnsson as patriot and poet requires attention.

It was primarily as a patriot that Björnsson had reacted against the Danish

⁶⁰ *Edda*, 1932, p. 446.

⁶¹ Blanc, *op. cit.*, p. 189 *et seq.*; *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, pp. lxii-lxiii.

⁶² *Aftenbl.*, June 25, 1866.

⁶³ See his letter to Lucie Wolf, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

control of the Christiania Theater. It was likewise patriotism which motivated his career as the national poet of modern Norway. His literary debut was made in 1854 with a review⁶⁴ of *A New Year's Book*, an anthology to which the leading Norwegian poets had contributed. With the audacity of youth Björnson swept aside the older celebrities on the Norwegian literary scene and announced the coming of a new generation of poets who should follow the cheerful and lifelike national poetry of Henrik Wergeland. A scant two years later, in 1856, Björnson himself was ready to lead this new generation of poets. Nor in the ensuing years did he restrict his literary production to a single field. Stories, dramas, novels, poems and songs flowed from his pen in a steady stream. Thus Björnson gave to his native land the nucleus of the modern and truly Norwegian literature that emerged in the course of the nineteenth century. Here we shall outline his literary career, beginning with his poems and songs and continuing with his short stories and plays.⁶⁵

The first published poem (1851) which bears Björnson's name is a tribute in verse to his boyhood home in Romsdal. He himself, however, traced his determination to become a poet to the eventful year 1856. Fresh from the conflict over the Danish influence in the Christiania Theater, Björnson has described how, joyfully, he attended an inspiring Scandinavian student gathering in Sweden in June, 1856. There according to his own account he was overwhelmed by memories of the past and by the sight of the garments, weapons, and tombs of the Swedish kings. More than ever before he was impressed by the work of P. A. Munch in revealing the history of Norway. The thought came to him that the Norwegians also had celebrated ancestors and that from the sagas of their kings could be created a historical gallery in which a poet would find interesting studies.⁶⁶ The first fruit of this awakening was his saga play, *Between the Battles* (1856), after which followed (1857) his stories, *Thron*, and *Synnöve Solbakken*, together with the historical drama, *Hulda the Lame*.

Beginning with his very first literary works Björnson used the device of having his characters reveal their hidden feelings in poem and song. Only

⁶⁴ *Mgbl.*, 1854, no. 15.

⁶⁵ For the literary background see F. Bull, Fr. Paasche and A. H. Winsnes, *Norsk Litteraturhistorie* (5 vols., Oslo, 1924-37); and T. Jorgenson, *History of Norwegian Literature* (New York, 1933). Of value are the scholarly introductions and notes of the standard edition of Björnson's literary works, edited by F. Bull, *Samlede Digterverker* (9 vols., Oslo, 1919-20).

⁶⁶ See Björnson's own story in *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 137-41.

rarely do his stanzas appear alone. In general they fall into the pattern of a drama or a story and almost always they deal not with nature but with the character, the deeds, and the fate of man. Because they are occasional,⁶⁷ Björnsson's poems and songs account for but a small portion of his entire literary production.⁶⁸ Yet they have become so much a part of Norwegian life, so national in fact that one can safely say that no Norwegian of today could reach maturity without having made their acquaintance in one form or another. Björnsson's own collection of his *Poems and Songs*, first issued in 1870, ran into approximately 100,000 copies. Aside from his national anthem, *Ja, vi elsker dette landet* (*Yes, we love this land*), which occupies a special position of its own, his lines have been printed and reprinted in numerous books, readers, anthologies, pamphlets, and newspapers in his native land. No other Norwegian poet has appealed so strongly to Norwegian composers as has Björnsson. As a result his words, set to music, have resounded from one end of the country to the other.⁶⁹ Familiar to all Norwegians are such exquisitely tender bits of verse as "Synnöve's Song" in *Synnöve Solbakken*, and the inspiring lines of the poems, "Love Thy Neighbor" and "Lift Thy Head," which appear in *A Happy Boy*. Characteristic of Björnsson himself is his poem "I Choose April." That month appealed to him precisely because it was stormy. But the basic subject of Björnsson's verse was "patriotism in the broadest sense."⁷⁰ Compact, abrupt, suggestive, dramatic, his poems and songs are primarily expressions of the patriot paying tribute to the Norway he loved. That no doubt is why to this day they are treasured by the Norwegian nation.

Björnsson's poems and songs were only a small though highly significant portion of his entire contribution toward a modern Norwegian literature. Such a literature, however, to be truly national had to be built in part, at least, upon Norway's chief literary heritage, namely the Old Norse sagas, and in part upon the *bonde*, the basic element in the Norwegian nation. So important were the Old Norse sagas and the *bonde* in Björnsson's literary program that it is essential to note briefly how, through his efforts, they truly came into their own in the literature of modern Norway.

⁶⁷ As Björnsson once said, he was not a lyrical poet, except as moved by circumstance. See *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. 312.

⁶⁸ His collected poems, edited by Francis Bull, fill two small volumes, *Samlede Digte* (Oslo, 1926). A. H. Palmer has attempted the difficult task of a selection in English translation from Björnsson, *Poems and Songs* (New York, 1925). See also C. W. Stork, transl., *Anthology of Norwegian Lyrics* (Princeton, 1942).

⁶⁹ F. Bull, ed., *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. iv.

⁷⁰ A. H. Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. xx.

Since boyhood Björnson had believed that the characters of the sagas lived again among the *bønder*, or farmers, of Romsdal. More and more he felt that he was called for two things, "to elevate our history through its greatest and most characteristically Norwegian men, and to draw pictures of our daily life."⁷¹ Later, in 1880, he said, "I began within the ring of the saga and the *bonde*, in that I let the one illustrate the other, which at that time was new."⁷² This interesting parallelism he carried on for some fifteen years to the enrichment of the literature of his native land. In both his saga plays⁷³ and in his tales from rural life⁷⁴ the characters are taciturn⁷⁵ and unwilling to bare their feelings. The plays generally ended tragically but the stories usually had a happy outcome. Together they served to weld Norway's past to her present and to set forth the *bonde* or independent farmer as the true backbone of the nation, the contemporary exponent of the heroism displayed in the sagas.

Björnson was peculiarly well equipped to portray the life of the *bonde*. The work of Asbjørnsen and Moe and of Ivar Aasen, which he eagerly followed, laid the foundation for a true understanding of the rural classes in Norway. Björnson's father, in fact his ancestors on both sides, belonged to this group, with which he also had become intimately acquainted during his boyhood days at Nesset. The romanticists had lauded the *bonde* to the skies, but in the fifties came a reaction, strengthened by Eilert Sundt's uncovering of the darker side of country life. Björnson himself varied between censure and praise in his treatment of the *bonde*. He realized that the *bonde* had his faults—ignorance, prejudice, drunkenness. But ever optimistic he made, as a rule, the chief character in his story a country lad who overcomes these very faults in his own life. The romance must not blind us to the realism in Björnson's approach: thus, his "happy boy," Öivind, financed by his father's savings, learns modern agricultural methods which he will apply on the farm of his father-in-law.⁷⁶ There is also a patriotic note: the stress is upon staying at home (as in *Arne*) and making the most of the country by modern methods of farming (as in *A Happy*

⁷¹ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. 246 (c. May 20, 1861). ⁷² *Dagbl.*, January 16, 1880.

⁷³ *Between the Battles* (1856); *Hulda the lame* (1858); *King Sverre* (1861); *Sigurd Slembe* (1862); *Sigurd Jorsalfar* (1872).

⁷⁴ Such as *Synnøve Solbakken* (1857); *Arne* (1858); and *A Happy Boy* (1859).

⁷⁵ Much has been made of the taciturnity of the Norwegian *bonde* and it has been almost elevated into a national characteristic.

⁷⁶ T. Hegna, *Bjørnstjerne Björnson og Norsk Samfundsutvikling* (Oslo, 1933), p. 17 *et seq.* See A. Överås, *I Björnsons Fote-Far* (Oslo, 1936), p. 155 *et seq.*

Boy). His earlier tales of rural life, such as *Thronde*, were rather immature. But with *Synnöve Solbakken* (1857) he mastered this form. Together with *A Happy Boy* it represents Björnsson's finest achievement in this genre. Apart from their literary importance these simple little stories are noteworthy because they placed the *bonde* in true perspective as the backbone of the Norwegian nation. In the opinion of Francis Bull these stories undoubtedly influenced the thought of the time and contributed to the creation of a national party of the Left (the Liberals), which depended first and foremost upon the support of the *bönder*.⁷⁷ Once the latter became class conscious they could and did become a powerful political force in nineteenth century Norway. In a brief but stimulating study Trond Hegna has observed that until 1870 Björnsson's most significant contribution lay in his activity as poet and prophet, agitator and organizer of the *bonde*. In the ranks of his critics both before and after 1870 the effort was often made to distinguish between Björnsson the "politician and journalist" and Björnsson "the poet." Such a distinction, thinks Hegna, was untenable, and those who sought to draw it "demonstrated only that they had no conception of the mighty factor that art, especially literature, is, in modern social life."⁷⁸ With Björnsson as with Wergeland life and literature were one and the same.

The high point of Björnsson's career as poet and patriot was reached during the year and a half (1857-59) which he spent in Bergen. The setting was ideal for stimulating what Björnsson called "the national instinct," for Bergen was then a lively center of patriotic activity.⁷⁹ Not content with simply managing his own patriotic project, Ole Bull's Bergen Theater, Björnsson soon took the lead among the local patriots in promoting a broad nationalist program aimed at freeing his native land from every sort of foreign influence. Music in Norway, he asserted, should be controlled not by imported Germans but by native Norwegians who should foster "love for music and thereby a love for the Fatherland."⁸⁰ He continued the campaign he had initiated in Christiania for an independent Norwegian architecture, for in this field as in music he challenged the prevailing German influence. He became more national, more Norwegian in his speech. Having become associated with the "language reformers" in Ber-

⁷⁷ *N.B.L.*, vol. i, p. 615.

⁷⁸ T. Hegna, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁷⁹ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. xxxiv.

⁸⁰ *Bgsp.*, February 25, 1859. In 1855 he had welcomed the new Norwegian piano produced by the Brothers Hals. It was "desirable," he said, that one assist a "promising national factory." See *Illustreret Nyhedsblad*, 1855, no. 42.

gen he allowed one of them, Henrik Krohn, to "norwegianize" his play, *Hulda the Lame*, and his story, *Arne*. "All this struggle for nationality in art and in language was still not enough for him. He also struggled for nationality in politics."⁸¹ He made the relationship of Norway to Sweden a political issue, and as editor of the local newspaper, *Bergensposten*, campaigned against any attempt at amalgamation of the two realms. May 17, 1859 he celebrated with an oratorical triumph, thus inaugurating his career as a perennial speaker on Norway's Constitution Day. At Bergen in 1859 he also composed the original versions of two of his most popular patriotic songs.⁸² It is not strange, therefore, that to Björnson Bergen stood out as "a national, Norwegian city."⁸³ Indeed, the period at Bergen epitomizes in many ways Björnson's career as patriot and poet. Never again was he quite so national, so exclusively Norwegian in his outlook, for with the passing of the years came new impulses, ideas, and associations, which were to influence him profoundly and to alter his viewpoint. But in Bergen he outlined the ideal issue for a nationalist program, a completely independent Norway in both the political and the cultural domain.⁸⁴

Late in 1860 Björnson received a small stipend from the Norwegian government which enabled him to go to Rome. There he associated with the learned Norwegian historian, P. A. Munch, heard the music of Palestrina, and viewed the murals of Michelangelo. The first fruit of his sojourn in Rome was the historical drama, *King Sverre* (1861). One of the most remarkable rulers of medieval Norway, Sverre (1177-1202) claimed that he was the son of King Sigurd Mund and by force of arms succeeded in winning the Norwegian throne. Though educated for the priesthood Sverre, as king, ably asserted his supremacy over the clergy as well as the nobility. For a time he even clashed with the powerful Pope Innocent III, who in 1198 placed Norway under an interdict and excommunicated King Sverre. But in the end Sverre triumphed over all opposition. Though the monarch was an inspiring subject Björnson's drama *King Sverre* proved a failure. Yet it was significant in that it led directly to the successful drama, *Sigurd Slembe* (1862). Sigurd like Sverre had claimed to be of royal blood. But though gifted and resolute Sigurd never became king of Norway and instead met death by torture (1139). Sverre and Sigurd Slembe were Björnson's favorites in the history of medieval Norway. Indeed, Professor

⁸¹ H. Koht, *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. xxxvi.

⁸² *Dagbl.*, 1930, no. 67 (from *St. Halvard*).

⁸⁴ *Bergens Tidende*, December 8, 1902.

⁸² See below, ch. iv.

Ludvig Daae used to say that had Björnsson lived in the twelfth century he would undoubtedly have posed as a king's son and completed a triumvirate with Sigurd Slembe and Sverre.⁸⁵ Although each of these dramas sprang from the sagas, *King Sverre* and *Sigurd Slembe* also reflected the deep influence of papal Rome upon the poet. Furthermore, in addition to drawing heavily on P. A. Munch for historical background, Björnsson had not hesitated to learn from such masters as Goethe, Oehlenschläger, and Shakespeare. In *Sigurd Slembe*, in particular, the influence of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* was readily apparent.⁸⁶

On his way south to Rome in 1860 Björnsson had attended a performance of Schiller's tragedy, *Maria Stuart*, and had thought of attempting a drama based on the life of the ill-fated Scottish queen. But it was not until 1864, that Björnsson published his *Maria Stuart in Scotland*. Beneath a glamorous setting lies the real and human conflict of the drama, the contest for the love of the queen and for the control of Scotland. This work, which became a popular stage production, is notable as the only historical drama in which Björnsson ventured beyond a Norwegian milieu. But even *Maria Stuart in Scotland* had a Norwegian touch. Thus the bold Bothwell, a favorite character of the poet, was made to speak of the Norwegian Vikings "from whom we are descended." Björnsson completed his cycle of historical dramas with *Sigurd Jorsalfar* (1872). The hero of *Sigurd Jorsalfar* was King Sigurd (1103-30), who at the age of seventeen led a memorable crusade from Norway to the Holy Land. Sigurd the Crusader was a fitting figure to close the "historical gallery" which Björnsson had sought to erect in his saga plays. In thus dramatizing the stirring past of his native land the poet had also a patriotic purpose—to arouse among his fellow countrymen the "ancestral pride, which every people struggling for nationality must have."⁸⁷

Björnsson's historical dramas, rooted in the past, were followed by his social dramas, based on the present. The former appealed especially to Norwegians, the latter, to Europeans in general. Both the historical and the social dramas were necessary in order to develop a Norwegian repertoire. As already indicated,⁸⁸ the development of such a repertoire was to be the task of Björnsson and Ibsen, the two outstanding playwrights of modern Norway. At the risk of digression the contributions of Björnsson and Ibsen to the Norwegian theater may be briefly noted here.

⁸⁵ *N.B.L.*, vol. i, p. 627.

⁸⁶ F. Bull in *Norsk Litteraturhistorie*, vol. iv, p. 529.

⁸⁷ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. 255.

⁸⁸ See above, p. 30.

That caustic critic, Gunnar Heiberg, has made the bold statement that "Björnson had nothing to say in the drama, which he could not as well say elsewhere, and that he had no new form," whereas, "Ibsen had something to say in the drama" and "created a new dramatic form."⁸⁹ Heiberg was none too friendly toward Björnson and yet there is much truth in his words, for Ibsen and not Björnson has left a lasting mark upon the modern drama. To contemporaries, however—at least in the beginning—Björnson towered above Ibsen. Success came almost suddenly to the former. The latter had to wait years for recognition. Nature and environment had given Björnson a magnificent physique, a commanding presence, a supreme confidence in himself and in the innate goodness of man. But nature had equipped Ibsen with a frail body, while his environment—a family in need, lonely years in an apothecary shop in Grimstad—contrived to make him bitter toward life, introspective, suspicious of his fellow men. This past probably explains why the thoroughly conventional Ibsen nevertheless wrote most unconventional plays, scourging the society whose baubles, medals and decorations galore, he later wore with childlike pride upon his eminently correct and prim little person.

In the field of the drama Björnson has been considered a forerunner of Ibsen, but such a view must be accepted, if at all, with great caution.⁹⁰ While Björnson cultivated extensively the historical drama, Ibsen also contributed significantly to this field.⁹¹ Apparently in this genre both playwrights were working in the same direction. But according to Koht there was a deep-seated difference.⁹² Thus, although Ibsen in his *Warriors at Helgeland* wished to create a national drama, fundamentally his was a romantic objective, to portray life as it was in the Norway of the past. Björnson on the other hand would erect a "historical gallery" from the romantic past in order to repeat an idea "for a greater explanation of a present-day relation." In short, though like Ibsen he dealt with the past, his chief concern was with the Norway of the present. Furthermore, Björnson cherished the somewhat naïve hope that if foreigners could be led to see pictures from Norwegian history, to "acclaim them and study them,"

⁸⁹ See "Et Ord" in his *Ibsen og Björnson paa Scenen* (Chra., 1918).

⁹⁰ See H. Koht, *Henrik Ibsen*, vol. i, p. 155.

⁹¹ As in his remarkable *Lady Inger of Östraat* (1855); the romantic *Feast at Solhaug* (1856); the saga play, *Warriors at Helgeland* (1858); and that masterpiece, *The Pretenders*. *The Pretenders* marked the climax in national romanticism as manifested in Norwegian drama. Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. ix, pp. 332-36.

⁹² *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. xxvii.

his nation would have ambassadors at their courts, "who would speak better than many cabinet secretaries."⁹³

As for the social drama, it would appear that here Björnsson definitely anticipated the later, and more striking, work of Ibsen. From his early years Björnsson admitted a passion for the "bourgeois" drama, that is, the social play based upon the life of the bourgeoisie.⁹⁴ His first effort of this type was *The Newlyweds* (1865), a popular play which won success in the entire North. But it was not until 1875 that he turned definitely to the portrayal of scenes from the ordinary life of his own day. Francis Bull thinks that he might have been influenced by the celebrated demand of Georg Brandes that literature should "place problems under debate." Yet this is not certain, for everywhere in the Europe of the seventies realism was in the air. Most significant for Björnsson's development as a realist were, perhaps, the newer French dramatists, Augier, Dumas the Younger, and Sardou. But at length Björnsson was able to satisfy his longing for the realistic in his two dramas, *The Editor* and *A Bankruptcy*. These two plays appeared in 1875, and, says Francis Bull, "they became epoch-making: with them was introduced the realistic problem-drama in the North." Ibsen's *Pillars of Society* of two years later is undoubtedly indebted to Björnsson's *A Bankruptcy*. For August Strindberg also, Björnsson's two social dramas of 1875 were the first "signal rockets."⁹⁵

The Editor treats of the power of the press, reflecting in part the poet's own unfortunate experience with Christian Friele, the uncompromising editor of *Morgenbladet*. *A Bankruptcy* deals with capitalism, utilizing in part Björnsson's recollections of the financial crisis through which Bergen passed in 1857-58. Both plays represent a contribution to Norway's national literature, naïve though the approach is to the factors at stake, for the author was notoriously ignorant of economic and financial matters.⁹⁶ *The Editor* and *A Bankruptcy* brought to the Norwegian stage for the first time the pressing problems of a modern capitalistic society. *The Editor* was too polemical and too personal in its application to achieve popularity. But *A Bankruptcy* aroused attention all over Europe and became Björnsson's greatest theatrical success. Of his later plays, few will live, with the possible exception of *Beyond Human Power, I*, and of *Paul*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 254-55.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 255-56; pp. 267-68 (summer of 1861).

⁹⁵ F. Bull, *N.B.L.*, vol. i, p. 645.

⁹⁶ T. Hegna, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

Lange and Tora Parsberg. Many of his later dramas⁹⁷ were, in fact, such mixtures of problem and exhortation that they often simply irritated his contemporaries and are likely only to bore posterity.

So much for Björnson. Henrik Ibsen, however, had hardly mastered the social drama until 1879. In that year appeared his sensational play, *A Doll's House*. Then came in steady succession the dramas, such as *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People*, which established Ibsen as the leading playwright of his age. Technically, Ibsen's plays were far superior to Björnson's and seem more likely to survive the test of time. Yet the reader of today may perhaps wonder if Ibsen's "problems" are at present as significant or as vital as they seemed when his plays were first produced. But certain it is that the dramas of both Ibsen and Björnson lifted the Norwegian stage to a European level and made Norway better known to the world at large.

Viewing Björnson's career in retrospect it is clear that above all he was the patriot seeking to free his country from foreign influence, not only in the theater but in other fields as well. It was his task to assist in the creation of a genuinely Norwegian national literature based upon the *bonde* and the saga. It was his privilege to contribute as has no other Norwegian to the poems and the songs of his nation. It was his function, together with Ibsen, to supply a distinctive Norwegian repertoire for the theater in Norway. Finally, apart from the influence of his constant agitation as patriot and poet, what was Björnson's chief contribution to Norwegian dramatic art? In brief, his own personality. Many of his plays may be forgotten, his theatrical criticisms may be neglected, and with the exception, perhaps, of the striking conflict of 1856—remembered now almost as a legend—the details of his warfare with Danish dramatic art may fade into oblivion. But his dynamic personality with its impelling insistence upon all that is Norwegian will live on as a vital tradition of the Norwegian stage.

⁹⁷ Such as *The King* (1877); *The New System* (1879); *Leonarda* (1879); and *A Gauntlet* (1883). The later didactic novels such as *Magnhild* (1877) do not fall within the framework of this chapter.

III

A NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE

THE STRUGGLE to revive or to preserve a national language has been a familiar feature of the recent history of Europe. Witness the efforts of the Finns to displace Swedish and of the Irish to supplant English. None of these movements, to be sure, has been exactly like the linguistic struggle in Norway, but at the core of each has been a nationalist campaign to rid the land of a language considered foreign and to substitute for it a language considered truly national. Thus in Norway, thanks to the long union with Denmark, it was the Danish language which in the nineteenth century came to be thought of as foreign. With the separation from Denmark in 1814 had come the realization that the so-called Norwegian language then used by educated Norwegians was really Danish. The more ardent Norwegian patriots felt that the lack of a truly national language was a disgraceful reminder of the inferior position of Norway in the union with Denmark. With the wave of nationalism which swept over Norway in the 1830's arose an agitation under the great poet Henrik Wergeland to make the prevailing language more Norwegian.¹ Since Wergeland's time the language question has remained a burning issue in the literary and political life of Norway. Today there is general agreement that Norway should have a language entirely her own, but there is still controversy over the ways and means of achieving that goal.

The linguistic situation in Norway in the nineteenth century may be summarized as follows. In the cities and particularly in the capital there had developed among the educated persons a spoken Norwegian which was based largely on written Danish. But this language was so tinged with Norwegian idioms and as spoken was so modified by Norwegian pronunciation and intonation that no Dane would recognize it as his own. This was the language which enjoyed the greatest social and cul-

¹ See D. A. Seip, *Norskhet i Sproget hos Wergeland og hans Samtid* (Chra., 1914).

tural prestige in nineteenth century Norway. It was the language of Wergeland, Björnson, and Ibsen. Its spelling in the nineteenth century was almost identical with that of Danish. Because of its origin it was, in fact, called Dano-Norwegian. But to Björnson it was generally known as *riksmaal*,² the term by which it will be referred to in this chapter. Finally, this language, *riksmaal*, was ordinarily used in the Storting, in the church, in the schools, and in good society. It was also overwhelmingly the language of science, business, and journalism.

Yet there were many Norwegians who never felt at home in this language. It had failed to gain a foothold among the common people before the separation from Denmark in 1814. It was not the language which came natural to the *bonde*. Its foreign origin militated against it among the more ardent Norwegian patriots. Outside the cities in particular most Norwegians of the nineteenth century, including the *bonde*, continued to use dialects not based upon Danish, but lineally descended from the Norwegian language of ancient times. As already mentioned, it was the work of the gifted Ivar Aasen to develop from these native dialects the new Norwegian language which he called *landsmaal* ("the language of the countryside.")³ Basically *landsmaal* was the modern equivalent of the Old Norse of the sagas. A musical language, *landsmaal* appealed primarily to the *bonde* from whose dialects it was drawn. But it also had able advocates in the schools, the church, and the press, and it was employed by such notable literary figures as Aasmund Vinje and Arne Garborg.

Today *landsmaal* and *riksmaal* are officially on an equal footing as the national languages in Norway. But from Aasen's time to the present a bitter warfare has been waged between the proponents of these two languages.⁴ This language controversy, moreover, has broadened in scope until it has become not merely a linguistic matter but also a social, political, and

² Literally "the language of the realm." Though called Dano-Norwegian, it must not be confused with the Danish of today, from which it distinctly differs. At present in Norway *riksmaal* is known officially as *bokmaal*, that is, "the language of books."

³ *Landsmaal* at present is known officially in Norway as *Nynorsk*, that is, "New Norwegian." The meaning of the terms *riksmaal* and *landsmaal*, as well as the work of Aasen, are fully discussed by Einar I. Haugen in *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, vol. xlviii, no. 2 (1933), pp. 558-97.

⁴ The literature on the language conflict is considerable and highly controversial. For a good objective treatment see A. Burgun, *Le Développement linguistique en Norvège depuis 1814* (Chra., 1921). D. A. Seip's *Norsk Språkhistorie til 1370* (Oslo, 1931), is the first volume in a projected general linguistic history of Norway.

cultural question. Indeed, it came to be assumed by some that the *landsmaal* and *riksmaal* groups, opposing forces by which Norwegian society was cleft, represented two rival cultures, even two separate nationalities.⁵ Finally, it was but natural that political support should be sought for proposed linguistic reforms, and that in the ensuing conflict each faction should consider itself the sole custodian of what was truly national and truly Norwegian.

Where did Björnsson stand upon this vexing issue? By and large, he was hardly consistent in his attitude toward *landsmaal*. He embraced it enthusiastically during the fifties but his affections cooled in the sixties, and after blowing both hot and cold he ended as a chill and severe critic of the entire *landsmaal* movement. Björnsson's own background partly explains his reaction to *landsmaal*. Reared in a parsonage he naturally learned *riksmaal*, the official language then used by the church in Norway. It continued to be his tool both at school and later when he wrote for the press. It was the language which came natural to him and in the main it was modified in only two particulars. First, having lived as a child at Nettet in Romsdal his spoken Norwegian ever after retained traces of the local dialect.⁶ Second, being a poetic genius,⁷ he did not hesitate to take liberties with the language, coining words of his own, or borrowing from the dialects—all with a sovereign disregard for the accepted usage. He probably never was certain of his grammar and once wrote, "I respect no Grammar-Norwegian."⁸ Instead he used "Bryst-Norsk" (*i.e.* "Breast-Norwegian"), which flows out of the breast of the one "who feels poetically." He viewed "a successive norwegianizing" of *riksmaal* as "inevitable." But he followed his own pen, for he had to be "true to himself." Thus he stamped the language as it were with his own personality, and refusing to be bound strictly by either *landsmaal* or *riksmaal* he fashioned a vigorous Björnsonian language that has since then become a part of the heritage of the nation. For as Knut Hamsun

⁵ Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 334 *et seq.*

⁶ On this influence see A. Överås, "Björnsson og Romsdalen," *Syn og Segn*, 1932, pp. 452-74.

⁷ One must call him that, though Koht says he was downright "dull" at school and was never able to master spelling. *Syn og Segn*, 1902, p. 454. One wonders if Björnsson's deviations from the norm were deliberate or simply due to failure to learn what was then considered good form.

⁸ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, pp. 1-2. Letter of March 13, 1857, to P. Botten-Hansen.

once said of Björnson's language, "none was as Norwegian as he, not one."⁹

Yet for all his irregular diction Björnson did not give unrestricted play to his personal preferences. On the contrary, in later life at least he definitely tried to adhere as closely as possible in writing to the Norwegian spoken by cultured persons in Norway.¹⁰ Furthermore, for the greater part of his life he was a disciple of Knud Knudsen (1812-95),¹¹ the Norwegian educator and language reformer, who sought to attain a more national language upon the basis of the prevailing urban speech, enriched by the addition of words from the native dialects. Despite the protests of his publisher and of the reading public, Björnson clung for years to the essential principles of Knudsen.¹² It is not the purpose here to examine in detail Björnson's books. Moreover, to seek in them the orthography which was really Björnsonian would prove largely fruitless, for, as he once pointed out,¹³ that could be found best in his private letters. Proof of his books he usually let assistants read and correct, and details of spelling varied from volume to volume. What interested him chiefly was the trend. In the eighties he began to use more of the "hard" consonants,¹⁴ so as to make his spelling conform to Norwegian pronunciation, but he stood virtually alone and eventually tired of this reform. The orthography of his literary works of the nineties was less peculiarly Norwegian. When in 1907 the Norwegian Storting broke with the Danish tradition and authorized a new official spelling, Björnson was delighted that he could use in his last book the orthography which he had borrowed from Knudsen. Privately, he had never abandoned it.¹⁵

By reason both of background and of inclination, Björnson was, then, by no means hostile to language reform; in fact, during his youth he was

⁹ E. Hilsen, *Jubilæumsboken Fra 14 til 14* (Chra., 1914), p. 304.

¹⁰ *Aftenp.*, 1901, no. 575.

¹¹ On Knudsen see Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 273-77. Knudsen advocated a simplified system of spelling and a more extensive use of native words.

¹² L. C. Nielsen, *Frederik V. Hegel*, vol. i (Cphn., 1909), pp. 220-21. *Dagbl.*, 1889, no. 345 and *N.B.L.*, vol. i, p. 639.

¹³ *Aftenp.*, 1901, no. 575.

¹⁴ The so-called "hard" consonants (p, t, k, instead of b, d, g, after a long vowel) are usually considered the most significant characteristic of Norwegian speech as contrasted with Danish.

¹⁵ *N.B.L.*, vol. i, p. 639.

apparently fascinated by the work of Aasen. Although he usually traced his attachment to *landsmaal* to his stay in Bergen (1857-59)¹⁰ he must have been influenced much earlier by boyhood contacts in Romsdal¹⁷ and by student associates, especially A. O. Vinje, in Christiania in the 1850's. As already noted, he was soon drawn to the theater,¹⁸ for which he wrote his first drama, *Valborg*, with characters who spoke dialect. Björnsson was quick to realize that the stage should reflect the actual speech of the people,¹⁹ and in Ivar Aasen's play, *The Heir*, he saw a message for those "who oppose all effort to enrich our poor written language from the gold mines of the dialects."²⁰ Nor must it be forgotten that in the celebrated "theater battle" of 1856 Björnsson had to contend with the Danish language as well as with Danish actors and direction on the Christiania stage.²¹

The year 1857 brought two notable events, the publication of Björnsson's simple story of rural life, *Synnöve Solbakken*, and his removal to Bergen. Charming, idyllic, refreshing, *Synnöve Solbakken* lives today as perhaps its author's best effort in this genre. To readers of today it may seem somewhat romantic, but to contemporaries it was a realistic approach to the *bonde*. So realistic was the language of this story that protests appeared in the press and the poet had to defend his diction.²² This was in October, 1857. One month later Björnsson was in Bergen,²³ where he was to associate closely with ardent advocates of language reform who influenced him strongly in the direction of a pronounced nationalistic program. In Bergen Björnsson found friends in a group of enthusiasts like Jan Prah and Henrik Krohn, who would turn back to Old Norse to create a new Norwegian language.²⁴ Björnsson even went so far as to allow

¹⁰ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. ii, p. 172.

¹⁷ This also is the contention of A. Överås, *Norsk Reising* (Orkanger, 1932), pp. 212-13.

¹⁸ See ch. ii.

¹⁹ *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 71-72.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 79.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 125.

²² *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 142 *et seq.* Although Björnsson drew heavily upon the popular speech, the story contained many Danicisms.

²³ At this time Bergen was the center of *landsmaal* agitation; later the conflict shifted to Christiania, which was always a stronghold for *riksmaal*.

²⁴ Prah's book, *Ny Hungrvekja* (Bergen, 1858), set forth a national program in a language based upon Old Norse but with German interpretations. Björnsson had both praise for and criticism of Prah; see *Bgsp.*, December 17, 1858, and *Gro-Tid*, vol i, p. 96.

Henrik Krohn to alter the language of his play, *Hulda the Lame*, and of his story, *Arne*.²⁵ The first edition of *Arne* represented the extreme in Björnson's approach to *landsmaal*. So radical, in fact, was the orthography of *Arne*, that it was not accepted generally in Norway until after the spelling reform of 1907.²⁶ The poet himself even tried to learn *landsmaal* but found its grammar "too dry." Kristofer Janson tells that as Björnson once sat with his friends in Bergen watching the setting sun he exclaimed, "God knows, if I live to see the day when I can write *landsmaal*." That day never came, for Björnson could not bind himself with the chains of a language that was not his own, no matter how much he admired its beauty.²⁷

Too great stress has been laid upon Björnson's espousal of *landsmaal* during this period. True enough, he traced his own adherence to language reform to the years 1857-58 in Bergen.²⁸ Yet as early as 1855 he had appraised sympathetically Aasen's work,²⁹ and as a boy in Romsdal he had no doubt absorbed much of the characteristic dialect of that area.³⁰ As already mentioned, he used Norwegian dialect in his drama *Valborg*, and on the stage he early realized that the speech of the common people must prevail.³¹ Finally, at the root of his efforts lay not so much the deliberate seeking for a Norwegian national language as the innate striving of a literary genius for self-expression in a medium that was natural to him.³² Each day he followed his own pen.³³ As editor of the local newspaper, *Bergensposten*, he reprinted articles from Vinje's new *landsmaal* organ, *Dölen*. To the language reformers of all types from Vinje to Prahl he gave a sympathetic hearing. Though they were all his friends, his relationship to them, he said, was "exceedingly passive." As he explained to his Danish friend, Clemens Petersen, his thought was, "Let each try his hand. Our Lord will find enough after all." And since the "old language tickles every Norwegian ear, it amuses me," he confessed,

²⁵ Both published at Bergen, 1858 and 1859. *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. xxxv. Krohn was definitely anti-Danish. See Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 326-28.

²⁶ F. Bull, *Norsk Litteraturhistorie*, vol. iv, p. 503. See Burgun, *op. cit.*, ii, pp. 41, 76; and *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. xxxv.

²⁷ K. Janson, *Hvad jeg har oplevet* (Chra., 1913), p. 159.

²⁸ *V.G.*, 1884, no. 7.

²⁹ *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 74-79.

³⁰ In his brochure, *Björnson og Romsdalsmålet* (Orkanger, 1934), Asbjörn Överås stresses this obvious point.

³¹ Above, ch. ii.

³² *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. xxxvi.

³³ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 77.

"to contribute to its spread through my newspaper, leaving it to the Great Sower to determine how much seed He will let lie."³⁴

Inevitably any attempt to develop a Norwegian national language struck a blow at the cultural hegemony of Denmark in Norway. Nor did the Danes overlook this fact, particularly in the early writings of Björnsson. Celebrated is the comment of the Danish editor, Carl St. A. Bille, who attacked the "stark Norwegian idiom" of *Synnöve Solbakken*, the "outlandish dialect" of *Thrond*, and the efforts in *Hulda the lame* to "reform the language."³⁵ The master spinner of tales, Hans Christian Andersen, in his story, *Laserne (Rags)* satirized amusingly the movement for a Norwegian national language, and indicated a reaction against Björnsson's victorious advance in the Danish-Norwegian literary world.³⁶ But the Danes were not alone in disliking Björnsson's ultra-Norwegian language. The latter's own people, too, by no means gave unanimous approval. Foremost among Norwegian critics stood the same A. O. Vinje, to whom Björnsson had opened the columns of his newspaper, *Bergensposten*. When *Arne* appeared, Björnsson wrote to Vinje as his "friend" and "supporter" begging the latter not to give him the "raw treatment" he had often given others.³⁷ The appeal was not successful, for in three slashing articles Vinje reduced *Arne* to "a parody of our national movement."³⁸

It may be said, then, of the period 1857-59, that never again was Björnsson more sympathetic toward *landsmaal* than during these years. But when he proved his faith in the new national language (or rather in his own variant of it) in his literary works, neither the Danes nor his own countrymen were entirely pleased. Yet he felt that his relationship to

³⁴ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. 78. The "most capable" of the language reformers, said Björnsson, was A. O. Vinje.

³⁵ *Dagbladet* (Cphn.), August 18, 1858.

³⁶ V. Waschnitius, *H. C. Andersen's Eventyr "Laserne" og Spørgsmaal: Norsk og Dansk* (Cphn. 1922), pp. 7 and 46. Waschnitius gives the best treatment of the Danish objections to Björnsson's works of this period. The *Undersøgelse* (or *Examination*) of *Arne* by "Janus" published in Copenhagen in 1861 represents a similar effort to overturn Björnsson as a "literary power."

³⁷ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, pp. 89-90.

³⁸ *Dölen*, October 9 and 30, November 6, 1859. Though spiteful, Vinje's review was penetrating, and Björnsson did not ignore it. Collin's theory (*op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 452 *et seq.*) that at this time Vinje did not look with favor upon Björnsson's Norwegian because it competed with Aasen's *landsmaal* appears absurd. For a more rational view see O. Midttun's discussion of Björnsson and Vinje in *Til Gerhard Gran* (Chra., 1916), pp. 219-40.

Denmark was not in the least affected by his connection with the Norwegian language movement.³⁹ Moreover, despite his love of the past, Björnson kept a firm grip on the realities of the present. The Old Norse of the sagas as revived in Bergen could not make him captive. It would not do, he observed in 1857, to employ in our day the language of the sagas. For language must take hold where it stops today, and then carry on further, if possible.⁴⁰ And this meant, of course, building upon the prevailing Dano-Norwegian. By 1859, however, he was, he confessed, "tired of the subject."⁴¹

In the sixties a critical note crept into Björnson's views on *landsmaal*, which by contrast with his enthusiasm of the fifties was, indeed, puzzling.⁴² Although several of his friends in Bergen were definitely anti-Danish, he himself in 1860 had been drawn deeper into a pro-Danish orbit. For in that year his friend, Clemens Petersen, brought him to the Danish publishing house of Gyldendal, then headed by Frederik Hegel. Hegel became the poet's firm friend, a sure support in an uncertain world, to whom he felt ever grateful. Beginning with *King Sverre*, Björnson's entire literary production was henceforth handled by Gyldendal, and to this firm he led other celebrated Norwegians like Henrik Ibsen and Jonas Lie.⁴³ Undoubtedly Björnson's connection with Gyldendal hindered the development of a strong Norwegian publishing house. Though he gained thereby a wider audience which must have satisfied his Pan-Scandinavian longings, he often had to sacrifice such distinctly Norwegian elements as the so-called "hard consonants," in order to meet the demands of his Danish publisher. In print at least, though not in his conversation and never in his private letters, he appeared in a Danish dress, to the irritation of his more rabidly Norwegian compatriots.⁴⁴

³⁹ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. 77. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 54. ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 77-78.

⁴² Note the bewilderment of A. Överås, *Björnson og målspursmålet*, pp. 14-15.

⁴³ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, pp. lix-lx.

⁴⁴ When in 1879 it was complained that the Norwegian poets "wounded the national feeling" by publishing their works in Copenhagen, Björnson retorted that this practice would cease when the poets became so "stupid" as not to go where there was "the greatest turnover." *Opl. Avis*, 1879, no. 2. In 1883 Björnson defended Hegel, particularly against J. Irgens Hansen, who said Norway was "a literary province" of Denmark. See *Dagbl.*, 1883, nos. 171, 180, 181, 191, 192, 202. In 1906 considerable controversy arose regarding the influence of Gyldendal on Björnson's orthography. According to Björnson, his "hard consonants" disappeared because they proved too costly. (*V.G.*, 1906, no. 21). Read *V.G.*, 1906, nos. 16-24, 26, 29, 36; F. Bull, "Gyldendal og Norge," *Tilskueren*, 1920, p. 446 *et seq.*; and Burgun, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 92 *et seq.*

In the early sixties also, the poet spent some three years abroad, during which his interests became more cosmopolitan. He felt the need of learning to speak French and Italian as he did German. Later, he said, must come a knowledge of English, "for the sake of Byron."⁴⁵ It was the world languages that he wanted. It is not strange, therefore, that he turned away from *landsmaal*, which, no matter how alluring, was the literary medium of only a minority. Upon his return home in 1863, Björnsson, ill and discouraged, saw himself forsaken by his friends, who were either tied down in the struggle for existence "in this poor country," or, had become so ultra-Norwegian, particularly with regard to language, that a common ground for conversation no longer existed. "All my friends now," he said, "are Danes."⁴⁶

It was the ultra-Norwegian party which alarmed Björnsson the most in 1863. For it would, he asserted, introduce outright the present-day speech of the *bonde*, or farmer, cut off history and development, and "sew us again in skins." To this party Björnsson was the most dangerous man in the country (or so he thought), since he fortified and continued the existing literary language,⁴⁷ (*riksmaal*) which was the chief cultural bond between the Norwegians and the Danes.

The Danish War of 1864 placed Denmark uppermost in the poet's mind. The defeat of the Danes, however, did not destroy his confidence in the essential unity of the Scandinavian peoples. He sympathized with the stricken Danes, and a visit to Stockholm in the summer of 1866 heightened his appreciation of the Swedes.⁴⁸ Against the background of this Pan-Scandinavian sentiment of the sixties must be weighed Björnsson's subsequent outbursts against language reform in Norway and his efforts to promote a common orthography for the Scandinavian North.

In the first issue for 1867 of *Norsk Folkeblad* Björnsson stated that language reform or a more "popular" diction had been demanded of him. But since his weekly paper as it was had won around six thousand subscribers he saw no need of change. In the fall of the same year *Norsk Folkeblad* published Theodor Kjerulf's challenge in verse to the language reformers.⁴⁹ But to Björnsson's disgust, in the very same issue his editorial staff published a plea for language reform.⁵⁰ When Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* ap-

⁴⁵ *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. 185.

⁴⁶ *Edda*, 1932, p. 451. *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, p. 98.

⁴⁷ *Tidens Tegn*, 1919, no. 150.

⁴⁸ *B-St.*, p. 188.

⁴⁹ "Til Maalstræverne." *N.F.*, 1867, no. 43. Cf. the reply in *Mgbl.* 1867, no. 325.

⁵⁰ Björnsson said it was "beastliness in the press to keep the door open for all opinions." See *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, pp. 231, 236-37.

peared with its familiar satire upon *landsmaal*, Björnson praised it highly and sent an affectionate letter of appreciation to Ibsen.⁵¹ But on the same day that he wrote to Ibsen, November 18, 1867, he informed his colleagues on *Norsk Folkeblad* that he had not intended "to lay an interdict upon the language question." If his brother, Peter Björnson, had a good article on that subject, it should be included. "I only *advised* against it," he said. Denmark to him remained the cultural center, to which he urged Ibsen to cling fast.⁵² In that year of controversy, 1867,⁵³ Björnson gave space to both friend and foe of *landsmaal*. He was too much the Norwegian nationalist to ban *landsmaal* entirely. Yet he was too sincerely the Pan-Scandinavian not to recognize in the new Norwegian language a potential menace to the cultural bond with Denmark, namely, the prevailing Dano-Norwegian.

On January 1, 1868, Björnson served notice upon his colleagues in *Norsk Folkeblad* that this year there should be "combat" with the language reformers. The latter, he alleged, had lost their senses. The literature in the new Norwegian he dismissed with contempt. He feared in Norway a new Loke, a new spirit of discord. He desired an orthography common to the Scandinavian North, and he planned to call a conference to this end. In Knud Knudsen's recent book⁵⁴ he saw a guide for the Norwegians and Danes. Authors and editors, he believed, should follow an accepted norm in spelling. "We must have," he said, "a *Scandinavian orthography*."⁵⁵ On January 2, 1868, although ordinarily a peaceful man, the poet had become so aroused that he called for a "cutthroat conflict" with the Norwegian language reformers. He solicited the aid of the Danes, "from an esthetic standpoint," to demonstrate that through the Norwegian language reformers had come nothing new for which a new language was needed.⁵⁶

Early in 1868 the supporters of *landsmaal* organized two important societies, *Vestmannalaget* at Bergen, and *Det norske Samlaget* at Christiania.⁵⁷ Björnson's organ, *Norsk Folkeblad*, commented upon the founding of these two societies, which, it said, "might have significance."⁵⁸ The poet's friend, Henrik Krohn, was prominent in *Vestmannalaget*,

⁵¹ *N.F.*, 1867, no. 47. *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, pp. 244-46.

⁵² *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, p. 261.

⁵³ See Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 331, footnote 44.

⁵⁴ In 1867 Knudsen published *Det norske maalstræv* (*The Norwegian language struggle*).

⁵⁵ *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, pp. 270-72; p. 273.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 274.

⁵⁷ See Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 331-34.

⁵⁸ *N.F.*, 1868, no. 14.

and Björnsson later attended several of its meetings.⁵⁹ When *Det norske Samlaget* advertised its *landsmaal* books, *Norsk Folkeblad* regretted that they possessed little value except as "specimens of language." It suggested, instead, that the Christiania organization issue a compilation of foreign words used in Norway, together with the substitutes advocated by the language reformers. Then each author, if so minded, could take his choice. Such a program was admittedly that of Knud Knudsen, and the article, though unsigned, is surely from the hand of Björnsson.⁶⁰ In short, despite his declaration of war against *landsmaal*, in the course of the year 1868, the wrath of Björnsson had melted away.⁶¹

In July of 1869 delegates from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark met in the Northern Orthographical Congress at Stockholm. The Norwegian delegates were L. K. Daa, Henrik Ibsen, Knud Knudsen, and Jakob Lökke.⁶² Although he had already advocated such a conference, Björnsson did not attend. The congress had no official status but it did propose certain reforms designed to further a common Scandinavian orthography. Ibsen in his writings ever after respected the decisions reached at Stockholm,⁶³ but Björnsson swung to a further extreme. Much to the annoyance of his Danish publisher he adopted in general the orthography of Knudsen, which, Hegel thought, would never be used in Denmark and by but a small party in Norway.⁶⁴ Björnsson was not altogether consistent, for, having demanded a Scandinavian orthography, he might well have adopted the reforms proposed at Stockholm.⁶⁵ But having no real authority, and deserted by Björnsson, the orthographical congress accomplished virtually nothing.⁶⁶

On December 15, 1869, in a long letter to his friend, Kristofer Janson, the poet unburdened himself upon the language question.⁶⁷ He had uttered no word, he alleged, in public or in private against language re-

⁵⁹ T. Hannaas, *Vestmannalaget* (Bergen, 1918), pp. 82-86.

⁶⁰ *N.F.*, 1868, no. 39. On Knudsen's campaign against foreign words, see Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-76.

⁶¹ Burgun, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 115.

⁶² See J. Lökke, *Beretning om den nordiske Retskrivningsmøde i Stockholm 25 de-30 te Juli 1869* (Chra., 1870). Burgun, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 90 *et seq.*

⁶³ H. Koht and J. Elias, ed., *Breve fra Henrik Ibsen*, vol. i (Cphn., 1904), pp. 195-96, 321, 323. See L. C. Nielsen, *Hegel*, vol. ii, p. 308; this work is referred to hereafter as *Hegel*.

⁶⁴ *Hegel*, vol. i, pp. 220-21. Burgun, *op. cit.*, ii, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁵ See Ibsen's comment, *Hegel*, vol. ii, p. 308. ⁶⁶ See Burgun, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 91.

⁶⁷ *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, pp. 336-47. *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 350.

form.⁶⁸ Indeed, he himself had been a language reformer and had loved the work of Aasen. But when the movement passed beyond the "philological or the idyllic," he grew silent and cursed a bit. Now, however, a new spirit had come into the movement, "the popular spirit of freedom." Excesses, as before, he was willing to overlook. Yet, though he was sympathetic in his approach, he could not see in *landsmaal* anything more than a language of the meager byways, not of the fruitful areas of his country.⁶⁹ Being practical, he saw the Norwegian language problem in its entirety, not from one district alone, like, say, Gudbrandsdal or Telemark.⁷⁰

Knud Knudsen's hand appeared in the third edition of *Sigurd Slembe* (1870), and his influence continued to dominate Björnsonian diction.⁷¹ Björnson could follow Knudsen but not Aasen, for though he saw some good in the latter's movement, he viewed certain of its leaders, notably Vinje, with not a little aristocratic disdain.⁷² When accused by Janson of ignoring the books of the language reformers, he remarked that unless in the main praise could be given, he had never written of the works of others.⁷³ When the complaint drifted in from Bergen that Björnson's newspaper did not review *landsmaal* publications and did not mention *Vestmannalaget*, he restated his views on *landsmaal*. First and foremost the common school must have the benefit of it, next the philologists must work with it, and gifted country folk must employ it in song and story. "What then becomes of it, if it be a language for us, which we have never believed . . . , about that," declared the poet, "we care little." The main thing for Björnson was, that the language controversy had "renewed the

⁶⁸ Which was nonsense. See A. Överås, *Björnson og målspursmålet*, p. 15.

⁶⁹ Ö. Anker, *Edda*, 1932, p. 300 *et seq.*

⁷⁰ With the gradual breakdown of *riksmaal* as the prevailing norm in Norwegian literature, writers of the *landsmaal* group in particular have drawn upon their own dialects, with a resultant variance in the language of their works. Nor was Björnson free from this tendency, although his frequent sentimental references to Romsdal must not tempt one, as A. Överås is tempted, to trace the poet's language exclusively to that locality. Björnson spent many more years outside than he did within Romsdal. As Överås admits, there is something "negative" in his argument in *Björnson og Romsdalsmålet*.

⁷¹ *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, pp. 350, 405.

⁷² Comparing as it were his own magnificent figure with that of the unprepossessing Vinje, he questioned if in the latter flowed the "blood of chieftains." Björnson added nothing to his stature by such gibes at the pathetic but gifted Vinje. See *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, pp. 345, 353.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 352.

love of the deeper strata in the people" and had made the written language "richer and purer." With all this, too, he asserted, had come an increased love of the fatherland. During the struggle for *landsmaal* the language reformers had forgotten that they were Norwegians, but now, he declared, they had united with others in Norway in national pursuits. Finally, with rare insight into the future of the Norwegian language movement, Björnsson pointed out that if the advocates of *landsmaal* believed in their program, then they would have to develop the national spirit, for it was the latter that would bring realization of their aims.⁷⁴

The seventies were years of stress and strain for the poet, during which the *landsmaal* question played only a minor role. He followed in the main Knudsen's orthography in his plays, *A Bankruptcy* and *The Editor*.⁷⁵ He enjoyed Viktor Rydberg's sympathetic account of the Norwegian language movement. He envisioned a similar development in Sweden, but unless bound up as in Norway with a political and social transformation, it struck him as not worth much.⁷⁶ As before, he did not see eye to eye with his publisher, Frederik Hegel, with regard to orthography, although he respected the latter's wishes by allowing his story, *Magnhild*, to appear in the usual Danish spelling.⁷⁷ *Magnhild* brought controversy with the clever Arne Garborg, who saw in Björnsson's work loss of faith "in the people" and a new critical note toward the *bonde*.⁷⁸ To this attack the poet replied vigorously, asking if there was to be a breach anew between himself and the language reformers, headed by Garborg. Carrying out his avowed program of adherence to the truth, Björnsson boldly declared that there had been maintained in Norway too great a cult of the *bonde*. The latter's "great defects," he stated, must not be forgotten. It was time to end the boasting, but not the hope, the work, and the truth.⁷⁹ In reality Björnsson was tearing loose from Norwegian Lutheranism and in particular from the Grundtvigian cult which he had joined.⁸⁰ More significant still, he was turning his back upon that conception of Norwegian nationalism which was narrowly associated with

⁷⁴ *N.F.*, 1870, no. 19A. The strength of *landsmaal* has been in its nationalistic appeal. Burgun, *op. cit.*, ii, pp. 209-10.

⁷⁵ *Hegel*, vol. ii, p. 61. For Knudsen's view of Björnsson's orthography see *Aftenbl.*, 1875, nos. 154, 157, and 195.

⁷⁶ *Brytnings-År*, vol. ii, pp. 8, 299.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 188-89, 316.

⁷⁸ *Fedraheimen*, November 10, 1877.

⁷⁹ *Dagbl.*, 1877, no. 271; and nos. 274, 280. See *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 438 *et seq.*

⁸⁰ See *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 452 *et seq.* *Edda*, 1932, pp. 336-37.

frugality, a national costume, and language reform. Himself hardly frugal—he loved fancy vests and fine horses, and was far from economical—he observed that luxury played a great part in progress. Nor would a national costume exclude luxury. Mankind must have change, and the district which had congealed in a given dress had congealed in a hundred other things.⁸¹ Part and parcel of Björnson's program in the seventies was the elevation of the rural tenants, the so-called *husmænd*, or cotters. From this class, he said, came the question, must we give up something of our language? and in so doing, will we not sacrifice our souls, our personalities? In reply, Björnson would admit no such sacrifice. It was not language alone that would protect and develop the soul, the personality. As for himself, Björnson confessed having no "doctrine" upon this subject. He would learn from life. But, being practical, he suggested that the cultural language, the Dano-Norwegian, be so written as to conform to its pronunciation. Also, as far as possible, he would do away with foreign words. In short, he was still the follower of Knud Knudsen.

Björnson, indeed, had no faith in the "restoration" of the Norwegian language. "We exist," he maintained, "for the sake of progress," not for day dreams and not for doctrines, be they two hundred or two thousand years old. "As the situation has become, so it must be accepted." This was his viewpoint. Furthermore, he had grown more and more certain that the language issue was linked with reaction. With the aid of the *bonde* it would stop the free infusion from lands of culture, overturn the rule of the refined, and introduce the "national," that is, not the genuine, but that corresponding somewhat to "the national costume," an old cultural relic from a remote district.⁸² In the ensuing years Björnson continued to think of *landsmaal* as a bit of a relic, while his friends among the language reformers sighed and, like A. M. St. Arctander, asked if he, the people's poet, had lost faith in the cause of the people. "Nevertheless," said Arctander, "among the people there will live the unforgettable memory of what Björnson has been."⁸³

In an article in *Dagbladet* in March, 1879, Björnson indicated clearly the need of concession by both parties to the Norwegian language con-

⁸¹ One is reminded of the brown shirts of the Nazis by the poet's comment that a national costume or uniform for patriotic gatherings would have a future among the Germanic peoples. See *Opl. Avis*, 1878, no. 102.

⁸² *Opl. Avis*, 1879, no. 10.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1879, nos. 19, 21, 23. This plaint is common to the *landsmaal* group; see A. Överås, *Björnson og målsprøsmålet*, p. 25.

troversy. The *bönder* must share the language used by cultured persons, and the latter must adapt their written language to the spoken Norwegian of the masses. Only thereby could the Norwegians become one people. In relation to the possible goal, the sacrifice involved was, he felt, not great. All that was required was to make the *written* follow the *spoken* language.⁸⁴ The poet viewed both language groups in Norway as seekers after a common end, toward which they should work. And in the schools the youth should learn to know the ideas of Knudsen as well as *landsmaal*.⁸⁵ Altogether, then, although in the midst of bitter strife, Björnson was most conciliatory on the language issue. The king of Sweden and Norway alone remained the object of his wrath. That monarch, the poet complained, would never learn to speak Norwegian otherwise than as a foreigner.⁸⁶

From the language conflict of 1879-80 Björnson took refuge in a lecture tour of the United States. There his religious, and not his linguistic, views met with opposition. Yet, unconsciously no doubt, he was further weaned away from *landsmaal*, in that he attained a working knowledge of English.⁸⁷ Not long after his return to Norway he removed to Paris, where he remained some five years (1882-87). In Paris he devoted himself to purely literary pursuits, save for an occasional blast sent home to the Norwegian press. Such was his letter on the language question to the liberal student society, *Fram*, which appeared in *Verdens Gang*, January 17, 1884. Here as before he struck out vigorously against an outright displacement by *landsmaal* of the prevailing literary language, *riksmaal*. *Landsmaal* had frightened the poet with its "medieval air," reminiscent of a vault unopened for several centuries. But now at last there was, he thought, no more danger of being lost in the musty past, and the language movement could be assured of sound growth in the great national struggle of the present. Of all liberals and especially of the editors, Lars Holst (*Dagbladet*) and Olaus Thommessen (*Verdens Gang*),⁸⁸ Björnson asked support for Knud Knudsen's program, namely, the use in writing, as in speaking, of the hard consonants. Each in his own manner, in school or out, must seek daily the way "toward our own language, as

⁸⁴ *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 52. ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1879, no. 162. ⁸⁶ *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 483.

⁸⁷ To Georg Brandes he wrote of having learned to read Herbert Spencer in the original. *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, p. 253. Björnson's vocabulary reflected the American scene as in the use of the term "farmer" in a typical Norwegian-American fashion. *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 251.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 179.

an expression and a defense of our independence." As a people, he said, the Norwegians will attain that goal only through a common, tireless, daily effort, "phrase by phrase, word by word, letter by letter," developing from the language of today.⁸⁹ It was an evolutionary growth which he espoused.

The year 1887 brought Björnson's first extensive newspaper controversy with the language reformers. It was occasioned by his article on Knud Knudsen's book, *Hvem skal vinne?* (*Who shall win?*),⁹⁰ and his chief opponent was the gifted Arne Garborg. From February into July of that year Garborg and Björnson filled the columns of *Dagbladet* with their articles, of which the more important features were later printed as two separate brochures.⁹¹ A brief summary suffices to indicate the arguments of Björnson, to which Garborg invariably replied as the suave, clever, conciliatory exponent of *landsmaal*. To Björnson, Knudsen's book was like a lamp, which having served its owner well now stood ready to cast its light for all who "preach and teach in the Norwegian language." Who shall win? Those who would build upon the living language of the cultured classes? or those who would abandon it entirely and resort to a medium which might have been the standard centuries ago? Who shall win, the evolutionists or the nihilists? The poet rejected both Vinje and Garborg as examples of what could be done with *landsmaal*. *Landsmaal*, he believed, could not take the place of *riksmaal* as the language of refinement. To Björnson the language of the strife-torn, superstition-ridden past could not serve the free and enlightened present. There was reaction in *landsmaal*, thought Björnson. Moreover, to accept it as the national language would make the Norwegians appear as plebeians to the Swedes. The path to follow in Norway was to adapt the language of culture to that of the countryside. And the man to follow was Knud Knudsen.⁹² Such was Björnson's opening blast. Garborg replied, calmly, that in part both language groups would win, each in proportion to what it was finally able to maintain in the national language which would ultimately develop from the conflict.⁹³

The conflict raged, first Björnson, then Garborg taking part, while occasionally lesser men fired shots from the sidelines.⁹⁴ Not a little nonsense

⁸⁹ *V.G.*, 1884, no. 7; and nos. 12 and 18.

⁹⁰ *Dagbl.*, 1887, no. 46.

⁹¹ Björnson's brochure was entitled *Til dem, som forkynner eller lærer i det norske maal* (Chra., 1887). Garborg's was, *Norsk eller Dansk-norsk? Svar til Björnson* (Bergen, 1888). Garborg's material was better arranged than Björnson's.

⁹² *Dagbl.*, 1887, no. 46. ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1887, no. 50. ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1887, nos. 181, 187.

crept into the argument, particularly when the Norwegian language struggle was likened to that of the Finns or of the Gascons.⁹⁵ It would be tedious to follow in detail the discussion pro and con. But a glance at Björnsson's résumé in *Dagbladet* of June 27, 1887, gives what he thought was established by the controversy. In no other country, claimed the poet, was there a language situation like that in Norway, where state aid was sought for a new national language based upon the dialects, to the prejudice of the accepted cultural medium. The latter was being tapped of its life blood and at the very time when the *bönder* had a majority in the Storting and while the leading author in *landsmaal*⁹⁶ wrote better in the language he persecuted (*riksmaal*) than he did in the one he helped devise. Björnsson published his articles in book form in order, he said, to make them easily available. It was his purpose to provoke discussion, so that it would become an election issue as to whether "our little people with state aid shall rear two common languages."⁹⁷

After 1887 friction with Sweden was on the increase, and as a result Björnsson paid little attention to the Norwegian language question.⁹⁸ But when in 1895 he wrote for *The Forum* on the modern Norwegian literature, the poet told how Dano-Norwegian was improved by means of various "old Norwegian words" borrowed from the spoken language of the common people. Yet not content with this "natural evolution," certain reformers preferred to break entirely with the Danes and their culture and to build, instead, a common language based upon the Norwegian dialects. Björnsson, however, advocated instruction to unite the entire people on the basis of the Dano-Norwegian, combining the slowly accumulated cultural heritage of Norway with the still richer resources of Denmark. For his part the poet suggested that if each Norwegian child could afford to learn two languages, then let him choose English as one of them. English could be useful to Norwegians as sailors, as guides for

⁹⁵ *Dagbl.*, 1887, nos. 158, 188, 208. All such comparisons should be taken with twice the usual grain of salt.

⁹⁶ That is, Garborg. He deserved but disliked this compliment. See *Dagbl.*, 1887, no. 158.

⁹⁷ Björnsson, *Til dem, som forkynner . . .*, p. 35.

⁹⁸ However, in 1895 a speech by H. Koht aroused his ire against *landsmaal*, as he questioned the wisdom of cutting loose the "last bridge" to Denmark (meaning *riksmaal*) in the midst of the struggle with Sweden. See *B. Björnssons og C. Collins Brevveksling, 1889-1909* (Oslo, 1937), p. 142, which will be cited hereafter as *Collin and Björnsson, Brevveksling*.

tourists, and as emigrants. Through this great language would come contact with more culture.

According to Björnson, only two poets worthy of the name had written in *landsmaal*, Vinje and Aasen.⁹⁹ Björnson viewed them both with rare insight and warm appreciation. They were close to nature. They had produced a few immortal songs. But that was all. On the other hand, the literature in *riksmaal* had given birth to poet after poet, beginning with Ibsen and ending with Hamsun.¹⁰⁰

On February 7, 1898, Christen Collin confessed apprehensively to Björnson his feeling that the language strife was nearing "like a storm cloud." Poor Collin had even a "rheumatic impression" of this, and so he asked what Björnson thought of the matter.¹⁰¹ The poet promptly replied, "We cannot afford to let go of Denmark." It was, he thought, up to the Norwegian *bönder* to learn the language of culture, even if this meant exertion. To advise otherwise would be the same as to say to the birds that they must walk on all fours, since the animals cannot fly. As always the poet allowed for the use of *landsmaal* as the speech in childhood of the rural classes. But to make a new language out of it, alongside the *riksmaal*, that was, he charged, "a devilish deed." To be unwilling to follow the development toward refinement in language was, he concluded, like preferring old tunes played on a fiddle to the great music that the world had achieved.¹⁰²

Riksmaal was then admittedly the language of culture in Norway, a designation that obviously could not be applied to its rival. When in 1897 Professor Johan Storm pointed out this fact, Arne Garborg agreed. To Garborg, *landsmaal* was simply an attempt to provide a common medium for the dialects, which should enrich *riksmaal* by giving it a more popular basis.¹⁰³ Yet he claimed that Norway had two languages, the one of which (*landsmaal*) was Norwegian but not yet a language of culture, while the other (*riksmaal*) was a language of culture but not yet "independently Norwegian."¹⁰⁴ The stress upon two languages—if such there were—and upon culture was not original with either Garborg

⁹⁹ Later he added Per Sivle. See *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 412.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 312 *et seq.*

¹⁰¹ Collin and Björnson, *Brevveksling*, p. 188.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 189-90.

¹⁰³ A. Garborg, *Vor Sprogudvikling* (Chra., 1897), pp. 20, 32.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

or Björnsson. The great P. A. Munch before them had toyed with much the same ideas.¹⁰⁵

In 1899 arose the first major conflict in the Norwegian war of language and culture, a war¹⁰⁶ of which traces still remain in the Norway of today. It all began innocently enough with a lecture by Björnsson in Christiania on October 23, 1899, for the benefit of the families of fishermen lost at sea. His subject was, "The Status of the Language Issue in our Cultural Life." Before the smoke of this opening salvo had blown away, even the secluded Ibsen had been drawn into the fray.

Björnsson's speech was rambling and repetitious. As usual he told of his early enthusiasm for *landsmaal*. He was then young and he had, he said, seen paradise in the past. Now he was wedded to progress and to the present. As usual he advocated giving initial instruction in the child's own dialect. But to go further, the language of culture must be adopted. Culture he interpreted in a broad sense as "progress away from the cold, from the slow, from the cumbersome." The poetry and the music of the countryside lacked the joy that came with progress. Next he attacked the laws by which the use of *landsmaal* was promoted, notably the legislation of 1892, whereby the local school boards could decide whether *landsmaal* or *riksmaal* should be used. Such legislation came of the fact that Norway lacked an institution to safeguard its cultural interests. It would not do, he said, to pass by the university.¹⁰⁷ The latter institution, he added, now had a professor (Marius Hægstad) in the new Norwegian language, a "sweet" and "good" man who, however, had declared that the prevailing *riksmaal* must go.¹⁰⁸

It was said, continued the poet, that *landsmaal* was closer to the ancient language of Norway, was more beautiful, more homelike, more Norwegian, than *riksmaal*. All this he questioned. Would those present, he asked, think he was not speaking Norwegian? If so, he could secure testimony from Denmark to the effect that his language was not Dan-

¹⁰⁵ Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 308 *et seq.* But Munch unlike Björnsson rejected the program of Knudsen. *Ibid.*, pp. 312-13.

¹⁰⁶ So Garborg termed it. *Dagbl.*, 1899, no. 313.

¹⁰⁷ Contrast this friendly attitude with his criticism of the university in 1869. *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, pp. 324, 403; Fr. Ordning, *Henrik Ibsens Vennekreds. Det Lærde Holland* (Oslo, 1927), pp. 160-61.

¹⁰⁸ Professor Hægstad promptly denied having made any such statement, defended the *landsmaal* movement, and closed with the plaint that Björnsson, the pioneer in so many national matters, here lagged behind. See *Dagbl.*, 1899, no. 317.

ish.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, on occasion he (Björnson) had shared a platform with a *landsmaal* speaker and had been the better understood of the two. Through its literature in *riksmaal* (he mentioned Ibsen and no doubt included himself) Norway had won recognition among the nations of Europe.¹¹⁰ And exactly this time had been chosen to exterminate this language! Yet he acknowledged that *riksmaal* could be improved, especially as used in framing the laws of the nation. The schools also must be improved, so as to promote ethics, including habits of cleanliness. That would be more important, he declared, than to shut out the language of culture. It would be splendid, he asserted, to introduce English into the elementary schools. As usual, and with reason, he scorned all comparisons of the Norwegian language struggle with that of the Finns, the Bretons, or the Flemish.

After digressing to comment upon a local disaster which might have been averted, had the victims learned to watch the barometer, Björnson returned to the subject of the schools. Better schools were needed. Relations with Denmark, he asserted, must not be broken. "The Danes are the most enlightened people in the world and therefore the most capable. The Norwegians have much to learn from them." Along with kind words for the Danes he held out a friendly hand to the Conservatives in Norway. He had, he claimed, always preached that they, too, were Norwegians. Finally, after the applause had subsided, he observed that as usual he had forgotten his strongest argument. "When Norway contained three million persons, Christiania would have one million. The ratio of its capital to that of the countryside would be three to one; of its intelligence, thirty to one. Here," he explained, "we shall have the stronghold of culture which cannot be conquered."¹¹¹

Significant in the address was the friendly attitude of the poet toward Christiania and the Conservative party, foreshadowing the *rapprochement* with former opponents which characterized the closing decade of his life. More significant still was the stress placed upon *riksmaal* as the

¹⁰⁹ The proponent of *riksmaal* faced precisely this dilemma. *Landsmaal* advocates termed his language *Danish* but the Danes would have none of it.

¹¹⁰ This argument was weak. Ibsen's plays, for instance, won world fame in *translation* and would likely have been as successful if written originally in *landsmaal*, rather than in *riksmaal*.

¹¹¹ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 408-15. Some seven years earlier he had refused to consider Christiania a Norwegian city; A. Överås, *Björnson og målsprursmålet*, pp. 23-24. On Björnson's attitude toward Christiania, see F. Bull, *Studier og streiftog i norsk litteratur* (Oslo, 1931), pp. 80-84.

language of culture. This basic idea was expressed even more eloquently in a long article which appeared in *Verdens Gang* in November, 1899. Culture, declared the poet, was progress away from darkness toward light, and language mirrored the very life of the people. To shift from the language of culture to that of the dialects was like putting out the light and doing without heat in midwinter. For *landsmaal* was for centuries the medium of persons secluded, forgotten, scorned by all save the tax collector. *Rikksmaal*, on the other hand, possessed the changing color, the sparkling light which only the endless usage of large cities gives to a language. One by one he described feelingly the delicate shades of meaning and expression attainable with *rikksmaal* but as yet impossible with *landsmaal*. *Rikksmaal*, he asserted, can in any event give the picture of the language and nature of refined persons. Concerning those trump cards always played by the language reformers, namely, Henrik Wergeland and P. A. Munch, Björnson wagered that were they alive, "both would have placed themselves on the side of culture against this profoundly reactionary nationalistic movement." An oldfashioned language like *landsmaal* lay ready for all kinds of oldfashioned ideas. "See," he warned, "all these figures of the night with bat wings which are already swarming about it, with Christopher Bruun at their head." The light of the day, he added, is in *rikksmaal*. To persuade the *bonde* that his language carried sufficient culture for him and for the rest of the nation, he asserted, was not only "the worst reaction" but would in the end divide the nation into "two peoples."¹¹²

As Björnson divined, nationalism undoubtedly was at the root of the language strife in Norway, dividing the populace into two hostile groups, each claiming to be Norwegian.¹¹³ The Christiania newspapers of 1899 show how the conflict widened to include the leading figures of Norway. When approached by a representative of *Dagbladet*, Henrik Ibsen stated that he was fully and completely in accord with Björnson on the language question.¹¹⁴ To Ibsen's mind this was only a logical development, shown clearly in his works, as in *Peer Gynt*. Here was a target for Arne Garborg. Dr. Henrik Ibsen, he wrote, does not as a rule take part in our public life. It does not interest him. But one thing served to lure this great hermit out of his hidingplace, and that was *landsmaal*. With evident

¹¹² *V.G.*, 1899, nos. 315, 318.

¹¹³ *Dagbl.*, 1899, no. 313.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1899, no. 319. D. A. Seip errs in saying that Ibsen after 1869 never expressed himself publicly on the language question. *Edda*, 1914, pp. 157-58.

bitterness Garborg seized upon the reference made to *Peer Gynt*, in which he claimed that Ibsen called the Norwegian *bonde* a monkey. Then, forgetting in his wrath that a private letter should remain so, Garborg quoted from a personal message of years before in which Björnson "outdid his great colleague," Ibsen, by depicting Garborg's associates in the *landsmaal* organ, *Fedraheimen*, as "hairy cavemen."¹¹⁵ Thereupon the controversy touched a new low. *Aftenposten* carried a fictitious "interview" with Professor Hægstad, in which the latter was tried on all Norwegian dialects but understood only German.¹¹⁶ In Stavanger Johan Bojer was asked for his opinion. From his own experience as a country lad Bojer told of the restrictions implicit in a dialect and of the added freedom in a language of culture.¹¹⁷ Next entered into the fray the malicious Gunnar Heiberg, who depicted Björnson as the "chief occupier" of the love of the Norwegian people and Garborg as the fiercest pretender to the throne. "As is well known," he added, "Björnson, who dislikes that anyone does not like him, wished to win Christiania at any price." Not for nothing, alleged Heiberg, had Björnson been for years the town crier in Norway. "He belongs to a family which must shout. His father was a pastor. He himself is an orator. His son is an actor. Through the generations a family before a full house."¹¹⁸

True though it was that Björnson rarely tried to learn if silence is golden, personal attacks such as Heiberg's might better have been omitted. Björnson generally avoided such tactics. For him the cause, not the person, mattered.¹¹⁹ With characteristic energy he continued his campaign. On November 25, 1899, together with the distinguished philologist, Hjalmar Falk, he addressed the Norwegian Students' Association on the language issue from the cultural viewpoint.¹²⁰ On the same day, together with Sophus Bugge, Gerhard Gran, Hjalmar Falk, Johan Storm, T. H. Aschehoug, Yngvar Nielsen, and O. Thommessen, Björnson issued an invitation to a meeting to be held in the Eldorado at Christiania, on November 28, 1899, in order to adopt a resolution to be submitted to the Storting. The purport of this resolution was that no dialect, or combination of dialects, could be made coordinate with or could displace the language of culture, namely *riksmaal*.

¹¹⁵ *Dagbl.*, 1899, nos. 322, 325; cf. nos. 334, 337 and 347.

¹¹⁶ *Aftenp.*, 1899, no. 781. For Hægstad's own views see *V.G.*, 1899, nos. 334, 341; and *Dagbl.*, 1899, no. 317.

¹¹⁷ *V.G.*, 1899, nos. 315, 318.

¹¹⁹ *Dagbl.*, 1899, no. 344.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1899, no. 312.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1899, no. 350.

The Eldorado gathering, in which various parties were represented, was welcomed by the poet, who stressed that in cultural matters there were no party differences. Answering the question, "What is Norwegian?" Björnson said, "It is what suits us, be it from France or from Hardanger." The most remarkable speech of the evening was that of Sophus Bugge (1833-1907), who pleaded for *riksmaal* as the language "to unite us in harmony toward progress in all that is good." The meeting closed with Björnson's resounding "Long live Norwegian *riksmaal!*"¹²¹

The year 1899 was prolific in controversy, only the highlights of which can be sketched here. Björnson alone took credit for opening the conflict, which Garborg and his followers evidently wished to avoid. Garborg himself wanted no war between "our two nationalities."¹²² Whether there were two nationalities in Norway might be debated. But that there existed two opposing camps was obvious. In Björnson's patent flattery of Christiania and in Garborg's heated defense of the *bonde*, one sees the elements in the clash of cultures, notably in the pitting of the city against the countryside, together with the grave social and political implications which were then but dimly recognized. To Björnson it was clear that political pressure was being brought to bear, although Garborg declared that the compulsory use of *landsmaal* for entrance to the state university was an "impossible idea."¹²³ Even Björnson's old love, the theater, was threatened with invasion by *landsmaal*. Björnson still clung to the cultural bond with Denmark based upon a common written language. When a revised Norwegian orthography was proposed in 1899, the poet announced that much further than the hard consonants he would not go. In any event he wanted to consult the Danes before making any change in the traditional spelling of Norwegian *riksmaal*.¹²⁴ The reaction to the poet's campaign of 1899 against *landsmaal* was both bitter and amusing: characteristic was the brief disposal of his efforts by that bumptious organ, *Namdalens Folkeblad*. Björnson, it noted, had recently opposed "in a bombastic fashion" the language movement but had not thereby managed to slay it. Concluded the editor in his most pontifical manner:

¹²¹ *Aftenp.*, 1899, no. 862; *V.G.*, 1899, no. 342; *Dagbl.*, 1899, no. 358.

¹²² See *Samtiden*, 1900, p. 148 *et seq.*, and *Den Syttende Mai*, August 31, 1900. Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 334 *et seq.*, and Burgun, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 176.

¹²³ *Dagbl.*, 1899, nos. 331, 337. The "impossible" took place in 1907. See Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 494.

¹²⁴ *Dagbl.*, 1899, no. 334.

"Björnson will die, but the work of restoring the Norwegian language will not die."¹²⁵

Björnson was to die, but not in 1899. On the contrary, still very much alive, the poet turned organizer and issued an appeal for a society to further *riksmaal*. Striking out against the alleged duality of nationality, language, and culture in Norway, he called for the defense of *riksmaal* as, next to English, the easiest and most practical language of culture.¹²⁶ In a notice published in January, 1900, the Norwegian *Riksmaal* Society was described as having a dual purpose: first, to counteract the harmful division of the official literary language threatened by the intrusion of "the so-called *landsmaal*" into the schools and by its use in the laws of the land; and, second, to protect the existing literary language and to work for the cultivation of a natural style and expression on the basis of refined Norwegian speech and the adoption of a Norwegian vocabulary. Under the auspices of this society the poet issued a peppery little pamphlet on the language question.¹²⁷ In this work after noting how Norwegian *riksmaal* had developed during the long years under Denmark, Björnson observed that never before had a northern people had so many speculators and so many cranks as had the Norway of his day, especially among the language reformers in the western part of the country. The language reformers, he declared, not content with having their own dialects, wanted to force them upon the rest of the nation. "Having through four hundred years worked up into the present language of culture, we should work to get out of it again!" But to cast overboard the language of culture meant loss, despite the promises given, first, that the *bönder* could get along better with *landsmaal*, and second, that with its adoption the rest of the population would become much more Norwegian. But, contended Björnson, if the *bönder* are to become cultured Norwegians, they must master *riksmaal*. In the most positive manner he reminded his readers that culture was the all-embracing power. "Culture is more than the fatherland. To deny that is like denying the settlement of America." The poet was unable to see the counterpart anywhere of the language struggle in Norway. Nor would he recognize the existence of two languages, two peoples, or two nationalities in Norway. Yet he knew there was a break between past and present which was reflected in

¹²⁵ *Namdalens Folkeblad*, 1899, no. 43. For an amusing account see *Aftenp.*, 1899, no. 896 (from *Trangviksposten*).

¹²⁶ *Aftenp.*, 1899, no. 793 (from *Dagsposten*).

¹²⁷ *En Tale af Björnstjerne Björnson om Maalsagen* (Chra., 1900).

his country's language problem.¹²⁸ In closing the poet examined critically the background of the *bonde* and concluded that the latter's language simply could not replace *riksmaal*.¹²⁹

It was through pamphlets such as Björnsson's and through lectures on the language situation in Norway that the Norwegian *Riksmaal* Society planned to further its ends.¹³⁰ But not depending upon the society alone, Björnsson continued his campaign. He attacked the leaders of the people, especially in the national assembly, for supporting the language schism.¹³¹ He struck out against legislation likely to advance *landsmaal* in the schools. Should not the voters, he asked, be consulted?¹³² Dropping prose, he resorted to poetry, and in the tender verses of *Our Language*, he reiterated his love of the Norwegian language, with which he linked the names of Holberg, Kierkegaard, and Wergeland.¹³³ On May 1, 1900, he protested with vigor against the idea that "the Old Norse literature, poets, and sagas, like all of Norway are the property of the language reformers."¹³⁴ In June of the same year he asserted that the language controversy had come because the *landsmaal* group were not satisfied with speaking and writing their newly-made and wholly unfinished language, but wanted to advance it by acts of coercion and without first having consulted the people in an election.¹³⁵ On July 29, 1900, St. Olaf's Day, he warned that the youth societies in espousing *landsmaal* had taken the wrong way, which could engender "only hatred and contempt."¹³⁶ In November, 1900, he asked that the University of Norway take the lead in counteracting the language movement, which as before he traced directly to nationalism. Nationalism was, he claimed, "the most dangerous enemy of the modern spirit."¹³⁷ Shortly thereafter because of ill health he turned southward to Paris. As often happened, even his opponents could not conceal their admiration for him. In three sincere though crude verses Halvdan Koht saluted the departing poet. Despite his "sharp blows," Björnsson's work for "our Norwegian cause," Koht asserted, would never be forgotten.¹³⁸

¹²⁸ The historian, Ernst Sars, likewise saw *riksmaal* as a break with the past, as was *landsmaal* with the present, of Norway. *Samtiden*, 1901, p. 110.

¹²⁹ Björnsson, *En Tale . . . , passim*. Note E. Sars in *Samtiden*, 1901, p. 105.

¹³⁰ See *Aftenp.*, 1900, no. 63.

¹³¹ *V.G.*, 1900, no. 26.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 1900, no. 94.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 1900, nos. 109 and 121.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1900, no. 111. Cf. no. 113.

¹³⁵ *Mgbl.*, 1900, no. 383 (from *Gudbrandsdölen*).

¹³⁶ *V.G.*, 1900, no. 191.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1900, no. 286.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1900, no. 289.

In the crowded years after 1900, though often ill, Björnson continued energetically in the defense of *riksmaal*. Aside from minor engagements with Ernst Sars and Jörgen Lövland, the poet's chief complaint was that the language reformers had not consulted the Norwegian people.¹³⁹ What we censure, he said, is the legislative activity that would elevate prematurely "a made language" to a level with "our cultural language." On this matter, he asserted, neither the government nor the Storting had any mandate.¹⁴⁰ In his declining years this became his major criticism of the *landsmaal* group. Thus, when his old party, the Left, in 1906 placed the language issue upon its program, Björnson protested at once that the people should first have been consulted in a special election. It was too great an issue to be inserted among five or six others in a party program to be voted upon "en bloc."¹⁴¹

The poet's campaign against *landsmaal* reached its height in 1907. Early in April of that year in a sprightly interview Björnson disclosed his plans for a protest meeting to be held in Christiania on Sunday, April 7, 1907. He had, he said, "been bombarded from all sides" and after having received "so many requests" he was forced to take the initiative. For his part he promised to show what a romantic movement the language struggle really was. There were two other speakers on April 7. But with his introductory remarks and his closing speech, Björnson was the main attraction for the audience of some two thousand persons. The purpose of the gathering, he announced, was to defend "our *riksmaal*, our cultural language." He disclaimed any intention of giving offense to the *bonde* and reminded his listeners that he came of rural stock and had settled among *bønder*. He protested against compelling Norwegian students to pass a test "in what was called *landsmaal*." He denied that there was such a language. The audience applauded when he observed that *landsmaal* was based only on the dialects of western, not of eastern Norway.¹⁴² The latter were not wanted because they were too close to *riksmaal*. Next the poet branded the language revival as a romantic movement, removed from the reality of life, and derived from the dreaming

¹³⁹ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 462-63.

¹⁴⁰ *Aftenp.*, 1903, no. 114. T. Diesen, *Folkeafstemning* (Chra., 1912), pp. 114-19.

¹⁴¹ *V.G.*, 1906, no. 97; no. 190.

¹⁴² Professor D. A. Seip was for some time an able exponent of the language of eastern Norway with the slogan *Östlandsk reising*. Characteristic of Eastern Norwegian is the ending "a," rather than "i," as in western Norway. See D. A. Seip's pamphlets, *Östlandsk Reising—Norsk Samling* (Chra., 1916); and *Ett Mål i Norge* (Chra., 1917), *passim*. *Decorah-Posten*, May 11, 1937, p. 4.

of Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose teachings on equality and justice in nature Darwin had disproved. Rousseau was a sick man, who died insane. So it was with his Norwegian followers, Vinje, Garborg, Aasen; none of these was entirely sound.¹⁴³ Carrying further this type of personal attack, Björnson dissected savagely Jörgen Lövlund, whom he accused of rejecting *riksmaal* after having used it for his own advancement. Finally, after having disapproved of dropping the instruction in German in order to make room for *landsmaal* in the schools, the poet urged that no further change be made until the authorities on the language, together with the people, had been consulted.¹⁴⁴

In 1907 Björnson also issued a small pamphlet entitled *Our Language*, repeating much of what he said at the protest meeting in April, 1907. Language was, he asserted, more than a mere form of communication. It was the highest medium of culture. Now at its highest stage of development, *riksmaal* was being "plundered," and in its stead was offered a *landsmaal* not yet ready for use. But politics unfortunately had entered into the picture. The question, he concluded, must either be postponed or else referred to the people for a decision.¹⁴⁵

In the pamphlet just mentioned the poet's primary appeal was to university students. But in the fall of 1907 he turned to the commercial class for support. In a lecture before the Mercantile Society of Christiania on October 24, 1907, he claimed first of all that language had much to do with practical life. *Landsmaal*, he alleged, was clumsy, heavy, not facile for thought. He wondered at the current tendency to force out all foreign words. "Trade," he said, "takes place precisely in foreign words." They were, he held, an advantage.¹⁴⁶ The youth especially, he thought, should learn English, which he praised as "brief, clear, and straightforward." In closing, he solicited the aid of the merchants in securing a vote of the people upon this issue. This was, he stressed, "a patriotic matter." Though he had spoken somewhat jestingly, there was, he added, true earnestness beneath his words. He was earnest, for he realized that the

¹⁴³ Björnson later explained that he did not mean to say these three men were "not normal." See *Aftenp.*, 1907, no. 212. Vinje and Aasen were certainly a bit odd, gifted though they were. Vinje, however, had a stern sense of reality, born of hunger and despair. Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-17.

¹⁴⁴ See *Aftenp.*, 1907, no. 212; *V.G.*, 1907, no. 97.

¹⁴⁵ *Vort Sprog* (Chra., 1907), *passim*.

¹⁴⁶ Björnson evidently forgot that his mentor in linguistic matters, Knudsen, rejected foreign words galore. See Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-76.

language strife would divide his people, as it has done to this very day.¹⁴⁷

In the summer of 1908 Björnson resumed his campaign against *landsmaal*.¹⁴⁸ His main appeal was for a popular referendum on the language issue. As before, he advocated the learning of English, contended that *riksmaal* was the language of culture in Norway, and, finally, attacked his erstwhile friend, Jörgen Lövland, for upholding *landsmaal*. Pastor Anders Hovden has described vividly the meeting in Krödsherred of August 15-16, 1908, at which Björnson and his friend Olaus Arvesen appeared, wearing broad-brimmed hats and white vests and striding forth with the dignity of "gods from Olympus." The poet attacked the fanaticism of the language reformers and as usual reaped the applause which was perhaps quite as much a tribute to him as to his cause. At Björnson's insistence Pastor Hovden spoke briefly for the opposition, praising Björnson's leadership in the past but contending that "Danish in Norway will never become Norwegian, even if one calls it *riksmaal*."¹⁴⁹ In these talks the poet looked with a critical eye upon the *bonde*, complained that he himself had boasted "a bit too much" of this rural class, and declared that "to industry belongs the future."¹⁵⁰ All that we have of culture, he stated, "lies in *riksmaal*," and culture is more than the fatherland."¹⁵¹ Life, not the philologist, makes the language, was his contention.¹⁵² Carrying his campaign into the capital, on November 28, 1908, the poet addressed a group of teachers, to whom he advocated English as a common bond with Norwegians in America angered by *landsmaal*, which struck them as "a wholly different language."¹⁵³

On March 15, 1909, some ninety-three adherents of *riksmaal* met, or-

¹⁴⁷ *V.G.*, 1907, no. 298; *Aftenp.*, 1907, no. 635. See his address of October 30, 1907, to the Theological Society, in which he advocated the study of English "to simplify and to refine our own language"—and "to slay *landsmaal*." *Aftenp.*, 1907, no. 647.

¹⁴⁸ For reports of his series of talks see *Aftenp.*, 1908, nos. 455, 485, 502, 518, 535, 550, 564; cf. *Aftenp.*, 1910, no. 242.

¹⁴⁹ *V.G.*, 1908, no. 225; *Aftenp.*, 1908, no. 455. Anders Hovden, *Attersyn* (Oslo, 1926), pp. 147-51. Hovden believed that Björnson never forgave him for having maintained that the latter never equaled Vinje's poem *Du gamle mor* (*Thou mother old*).

¹⁵⁰ *Aftenp.*, 1908, no. 502. Collin and Björnson, *Brevveksling*, pp. 400-401.

¹⁵¹ *Aftenp.*, 1908, no. 535.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 1908, no. 564.

¹⁵³ Norwegian-Americans generally are often unable to appreciate *landsmaal*. Thus, although the venerable editor of *Decorah-Posten* obviously favors *landsmaal*, an uproar would result if it were used in this Norwegian-American newspaper.

ganized a society called *Rikksmaalsforbundet*,¹⁵⁴ and chose Björnsson as their leader. The poet responded by wire with his thanks and "warm wishes for our great cause."¹⁵⁵ In spite of a paralytic stroke, during the summer months of 1909 he labored slowly and painfully upon a cantata for the centennial of the Society for Norway's Welfare (*Selskabet for Norges Vel*).¹⁵⁶ In this his last poem he likened the work of this organization to a spring rain making fertile a droughtstricken land. Because, like *landsmaal* itself, the cantata was deeply rooted in life on the soil, it bristled with forms from the vernacular distinctly alien to the conventional *riksmaal*.¹⁵⁷ Yet as the product of a man who as recently as February of 1909 had indignantly rejected¹⁵⁸ the idea that the popular and literary languages of Norway might eventually merge into one common medium, the poem is, indeed, worth noting.

For Björnsson the end was fast approaching. From his last meeting with the poet, Peter Nansen has told how Björnsson complained of not being able to follow the newspapers. But he thought that the Norwegian elections had brought victory for *riksmaal*. "We will not," declared Björnsson, "let ourselves be deprived of the language upon which our modern culture and literature are built."¹⁵⁹ After the poet's death *Morgenbladet* published his "last word" on the language question. It was a scathing attack upon the Storting whose legislation, he said, proclaimed the "low moral pitch" of politics in Norway in the year 1909. The surrender of the teaching staff and of the funds of the state to the control of a minority, which did not follow the wishes of the majority, must cease as soon as possible, if the people were to preserve the self-respect of themselves and of others.¹⁶⁰

Why, after an early enthusiasm for *landsmaal*, did Björnsson reject it? *Rikksmaal*, one may reply, was after all the language that was natural to him. It was the language of his class, and for the most part, of his books. Furthermore, *riksmaal* he sincerely believed was the language of culture

¹⁵⁴ For an appraisal of its work see Fritz Meyen, "*Riksmålsforbundet*" und sein Kampf gegen das Landsmål. Ein Abschnitt aus Norwegens innerer Geschichte (Oslo, 1932).

¹⁵⁵ *V.G.*, 1909, nos. 74, 77.

¹⁵⁶ Collin and Björnsson, *Brevveksling*, p. 419; Björnsson, *Samlede Digte*, vol. ii, pp. 245-48, 301-02. On the Society see Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁵⁷ Such as the spelling *kuu* for cow and many other nouns with the characteristic "a"-ending of Eastern Norwegian. A. Överås, *Björnsson og målspursmålet*, p. 30.

¹⁵⁸ *Aftenp.*, 1909, no. 93; *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 553-56.

¹⁵⁹ *Aftenp.*, 1910, no. 242.

¹⁶⁰ *Mgbl.*, 1910, no. 543.

in Norway. Yet he recognized the right of the *bonde* to his own dialect, though he deplored the use of political pressure to force *landsmaal* upon the entire nation. With a clear eye he perceived that the strength of *landsmaal* lay in its appeal to Norwegian nationalism. But it is doubtful if he realized fully the broad social and economic implications of the language strife. For, basically, it was, and is, class conflict between an urban and a rural group, the latter pushing forward its language claims as part of a frontal attack upon the *riksmaal* adherents who were firmly entrenched in the literature, in the press, in the schools, and in the bureaucracy of Norway.¹⁸¹ It is peculiarly unfortunate that such a conflict should have arisen, especially in such a small state as Norway, which can ill afford the expense of maintaining two official languages carried out, for instance, to the extent of "No Smoking" signs in *landsmaal* and *riksmaal* in public conveyances.

Time only will tell the ultimate influence of Björnson upon the Norwegian language. Much of his campaign against *landsmaal* was futile. Nor was he wholly consistent in attacking the language reformers, since he himself was one, in his selection and use of words from the Norwegian dialects, and particularly in his adoption of the so-called hard consonants. As a literary force he strengthened immeasurably the *riksmaal*. Wishful thinkers have often spoken of an eventual merging of the two conflicting languages into one commonly accepted, standard Norwegian. This view Björnson refused to accept. In a vigorous article published in *Aftenposten* in February, 1909, he called this belief "the great mistake." To him it was unthinkable that without external compulsion "a highly developed language of culture" could give way to an influx from a much lower cultural level. To date he was, he said, not aware that the language reformers had agreed upon any form respected by all. Still less was known as to whether *landsmaal* could be a medium of culture. Under these conditions, he declared, the person who demanded equal rights for *landsmaal* in the state budget and in the state schools was (to the extent that he was not a politician), "either a lover of philology or an optimistic swindler. And whoever assumes that here are two language streams, which sometime will flow together is either the one or the other."¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ For a Marxist interpretation read *Arbeidernes Leksikon*, Bd. v., cols. 442-44. See the valuable discussion in Falnes, *op. cit.*, ch. xxi.

¹⁸² *Aftenp.*, 1909, no. 93.

IV

A NATIONAL ANTHEM, FLAG AND HOLIDAY

EMOTIONAL in essence and replete with symbolism, nationalism itself has often assumed the aspects of a religion.¹ Nationalism has its rites and relics, its holy days and its sacred anthems. Its central object is the fatherland to which all patriots owe devotion. In Norway, as elsewhere for that matter, such devotion has expressed itself concisely in what one is tempted to call the "trinity" of nationalism—namely, the national anthem, the national flag, and the national holiday.

Rarely is it the privilege of the patriot to influence so deeply as did Björnson the symbolic expression of the national feeling of his fellow Norwegians. His is the national song which they prefer; his imprint remains on the national flag; and, during his lifetime, on the national holiday his was more often than not the central figure. For as Georg Brandes has observed, Björnson felt himself the representative of his country and in certain respects rightfully so, since he supplied its national song and was himself "a quintessence of Norwegian qualities."²

Of the aforementioned "trinity" the national holiday had been firmly established just prior to the birth of Björnson. As has already been noted, the Norwegian national holiday commemorates the signing of the Norwegian constitution at Eidsvold on May 17, 1814, after the separation of Norway from Denmark. It is significant that Björnson's first printed article was a stirring appeal to the citizens of Molde not to neglect their "day of freedom," May 17.³ Throughout his entire career it remained the day of days. Whether at home or abroad his voice was then raised on behalf of Norway. It is not essential, however, to follow his various utterances on May 17. As was to be expected they were usually colored by circumstance, for whatever the poet was concerned with at the moment had to be aired. That was characteristic of Björnson. It was appro-

¹ See C. J. H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism*, pp. 93-125. E. Shillito, "The Religion of Nationalism," *The Hibbert Journal*, vol. 30, pp. 20-29.

² *V.G.*, 1890, no. 19.

³ *Romsdals Budstikke*, May 12, 1848.

priate also that he should refer time and again to his great predecessor, Henrik Wergeland, who as a student had been prominent in that affair of 1829 which had consecrated May 17 as the Norwegian national holiday. "‘Hurrah for May 17, 1814’ is the first command which the Norwegian people as a whole receives from Henrik Wergeland," said Björnson.⁴ Like Wergeland, too, he became a popular patriotic orator, his career as a public speaker beginning appropriately enough at Bergen on May 17, 1859. Many of Björnson's speeches, as Francis Bull has aptly observed, are purely patriotic songs in prose, and certain of his national and political poems are little better than agitation in verse.⁵ No celebration of May 17 could be complete without Björnson's contribution; in 1891, for example, he estimated that he had probably delivered more than thirty speeches on May 17.⁶

Not content with the traditional observance of this day, Björnson hit upon a new feature. This was the procession of school children, each bearing a flag—a custom which has lent beauty to the occasion ever since it was first introduced by Björnson in 1870. Viewing such a procession in 1896, he could speak almost with compassion for the Swedes: they had no May 17. Typical is his peroration: ". . . so we do homage to the day with our banners, with our cheers, with our music, and the promise that if need be we shall offer our lives for it. Long live May 17!"⁷

Björnson, however, did not confine his patriotic fervor to this day only. In the nineties, in particular, he agitated for another national holiday—St. Olaf's Day, July 29.⁸ In April, 1897, he accused King Oscar II of preferring July 18—his coronation day—to July 29, the day of Olaf the Holy, "the true founder and builder . . . of the immortal national monument, now called the Cathedral of Trondhjem—once the great shrine wherein our national independence had its holy charter and its lofty symbol."⁹ On May 18, 1897 Björnson wrote to Pastor Krogh-Tonning,¹⁰

⁴ *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 512.

⁵ *Samtiden*, 1920, p. 306.

⁶ *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 185. His last notable effort of this type was his patriotic tribute at Berlin, May 17, 1906, to Richard Nordraach; see *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 503-09.

⁷ *Dagbl.*, 1896, no. 139.

⁸ In memory of the national saint, King Olaf, who lost his life at the battle of Stiklestad, July 29, 1030. Also called *Olsoøk*, this holiday has been supported by many *landsmaal* advocates; Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 349, 355, 356, 362.

⁹ *V.G.*, 1897, no. 94; *Aftenp.*, 1897, no. 291. *Mgbl.*, no. 403, claimed that Björnson was mistaken as to the king's attitude. In 1930 the nation celebrated the 900th anniversary of St. Olaf's martyrdom with imposing ceremonies in the restored nave of the Trondhjem Cathedral. E. Bull, *Arbeider-Avisen*, 1930, nos. 171 and 172.

¹⁰ Lutheran pastor and later a convert to Catholicism.

suggesting that the church sponsor St. Olaf's Day and requesting that he preach in the Cathedral of Trondhjem on July 29.¹¹ The temerity of the poet was remarkable; he had long since left the church and yet he asked that it follow his lead in making *Olsoøk* a national religious festival, in place of *Bededag*, the day of humiliation and prayer. In June, 1897, he called for a great assembly at Trondhjem, where, he said, all friends of the fatherland must meet.¹² Finally, on July 29, Björnsson himself delivered a speech in honor of the day.

Following a eulogy to the just and strong-willed king St. Olaf, Björnsson claimed that with the monarch's death all that he wished came to pass: gone was foreign domination, the country was christianized and his son succeeded to the throne. Olaf in his shrine wrought all this and he became as a matter of course the saint of the people, its representative at the throne of God. Next, Björnsson appealed for the support of the church in again freeing the land from foreign control, as did St. Olaf, and he maintained that had Norway at present her own king his listeners would not have had to stand outside St. Olaf's church. "No, they would have sat inside with their king and heard how Olaf lived and died for the independence of this people." The church, Björnsson believed, could aid in this national cause and would gain in so doing. On St. Olaf's Day he saw Norway's independent past lighting the way to an independent future. "Long live," he cried, "the old and the new Norway!"¹³

Such was Björnsson's great oratorical effort for *Olsoøk*—a skillful sketching of the past as an example for the present and future of his people. As he had used May 17, so also he employed St. Olaf's Day, as an occasion to present his views; thus in 1900 he pleaded for a greater national pride, a greater "feeling of honor" among the Norwegians, as evidenced by less intoxication and greater cleanliness! As yet, he claimed, "we have no national Christianity," but in this holiday he perceived a good broad basis for independence and national culture upon a religious foundation.¹⁴

¹¹ *Tidens Tegn*, 1912, no. 247.

¹² *V.G.*, 1897, no. 148. *Mgbl.*, 1897, nos. 403 and 417. The poet, said *Mgbl.*, no. 403, "ties a bouquet with national colors while beneath the pomp . . . is placed a poisonous dagger intended for King Oscar."

¹³ See *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 367-74. Note his speech at Stiklestad, July 4, 1882, where he complained that Norway lacked a "national king"; see *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 545. His *Hymn on Olaf's Day* (1903) carries a similar thought; see Björnsson's *Samlede Digte*, vol. ii, pp. 227-28, 296. One need hardly add that the historical interpretation by Björnsson of St. Olaf should be taken with caution.

¹⁴ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 426-29.

St. Olaf's Day obviously was not intended to supplant May 17.¹⁵ But by reason of Björnson's eloquence popular reverence for each of these holidays became more firmly instilled among the Norwegians.¹⁶

National holidays call for national songs, and it was the poet's privilege to add to these more than has any other Norwegian. Collin says Björnson's first patriotic song was *Over de høje Fjelde* (*Over the lofty Mountains*),¹⁷ which describes one of the chief motivating forces in the entire history of the Norwegian people, the inner impulse to expansion and the adventurous longing for the great and the distant. This song, originally appearing in *Arne*, dates from that sojourn in Bergen (1857-59), which saw the flowering of his nationalism. But his first national song written for the public was *Der ligger et land* (*There lies a land*), composed for that memorable May 17 in Bergen in 1859. Early in the summer of that same year at Hop near Bergen he wrote the original version of *Ja, vi elsker dette landet* (*Yes, we love this land*), which later in modified form has become Norway's national anthem.

The two patriotic songs mentioned above were revised considerably by the author in 1863, and the changes then made are significant. *There lies a land*¹⁸ originally began with the banal line, "We Norsemen shall sing for Norway a song," for which was substituted the picturesque and sonorous opening verse depicting the land of eternal snow, whose mighty spirit watches like a mother over her children.¹⁹ Still more noteworthy are the alterations in *Yes, we love this land*. Omitted was the one stanza, intended for Charles XV, which glorified the Union with Sweden, and an entirely new closing stanza was added, wherein the initial lines of the first stanza, "Yes, we love this land . . .", are repeated although the thought no longer is directed toward father and mother and the dreams

¹⁵ Björnson thought that May 17 developed from St. Olaf's Day; see *Aftenp.*, 1906, no. 304. May 17 is a legal holiday in Norway but July 29 is not. St. Olaf's Day, Björnson declared in 1901, was Norway's "birthday as an independent realm." See *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 443.

¹⁶ *Olsoķ* is still observed in Norway; E. O. Jesnæs, ed., *Olsoķfester paa Sætersgaard* (Chra., 1922).

¹⁷ Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 308-09. For an English translation see Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-14; and Mark Van Doren, ed., *An Anthology of World Poetry* (New York, 1939), pp. 987-88.

¹⁸ Together with *Yes, we love this land*, it was published in revised form in *Illustreret Nyhedsblad*, 1863, no. 51. For an English translation of each see Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21, 21-23.

¹⁹ Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 358-59; F. Bull, ed., Björnson, *Samlede Digte*, vol. i, pp. xiv-xv.

of sagas of the past but is turned instead toward the future of the land, with the promise that if need be, "We shall take the field in its defense." No translation can do full justice to the original,²⁰ but since it has become the national anthem a brief characterization of its contents will not be amiss. First the poet conjures up the vision of his beloved native land towering ruggedly above the waters. Next follows an array of historic figures—Harold Fairhair, who united the country; Olaf the Saint; King Sverre, who defied Rome; and Tordenskjold, the naval hero. Past is linked to present, not in the spirit of glorification but rather of humble pride: "we were not many but we sufficed . . . sooner would we burn the land than let it fall." Hard times we endured "but in our worst need, blue-eyed freedom to us was born." But "thanks be to God, protector of the land, we won our right."²¹ Then comes the closing stanza—"Yes, we love this land," etc.—which as Francis Bull rightly claims, gives the song its strength, its harmonious unity, "where present and past meet and the future is built on the groundwork of the past." With the inclusion of this stanza, says Bull, the song for the first time became the rallying national anthem.²²

But the national anthem was not complete until a melody had been composed for it by the gifted young Richard Nordraach²³ (1842-66). Originally intended to accompany Björnsson's celebrated *Answer from Norway*, directed at a speaker in the Swedish *Riksdag* who had ridiculed the Norwegian flag, the basic melody was later incorporated by Nordraach in the now familiar musical accompaniment of *Yes, we love this land*.²⁴ Singing it was once likened by Björnsson to looking upward

²⁰ In fact, there are lines in the poem, which defy analysis. See lines 7 and 8 of the first stanza, on the "saga night"; and lines 3 and 4 of the third stanza, which leave the reader wondering exactly what Tordenskjold did.

²¹ This seventh stanza in the original is none too clear. It also carries a religious note which the poet later lost.

²² *Samlede Digte*, vol. i, p. xv. J. Bing, *Norske Digte og Digtere* (Chra., 1898), pp. 1-22; Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, *passim*, especially pp. 313-14 on its relation to *Arne*; and *V.G.*, 1909, no. 160.

²³ The name is also spelled Rikard Nordraak. See Björnsson's tribute to both composer and song in *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 503-09; the melody Björnsson termed "immortal," the song itself "modern" and "intensely Norwegian." Nordraach's letters, *Efterlatte Breve* (W. Moe, ed., Chra. 1921) are tinged with his eccentric but engaging personality; Edvard Grieg wrote (p. 123) that Nordraach and he had hoped to work together to further national art but since this was not granted, Grieg worked on alone.

²⁴ For a comparative study of the melody see Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 489 *et seq.* *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 503-04.

to a mountain, and it owed its strength, he believed, to its timeliness and to its intensely Norwegian character. Though a hymn of peace, it did not deny its origin as a battle song; the same lines which go forth peaceably like a plow in a stone-free soil can also flash like a sword. "The song of our fatherland is that of a peace-loving people but when sung in the hour of danger, then self-assertion stands mailclad in every line."²⁵ With that statement one who has heard the national anthem sung on May 17 in Norway can readily agree. Although it dates from 1859 the Norwegian national song was hardly consecrated as such—with Nordraach's music and with its revised text—until May 17, 1864, when it was sung both at Eidsvold and in Christiania.²⁶ Nordraach, says Edvard Grieg, little thought that it would become the national song, "one of the most beautiful, one of the most original any country possesses."²⁷

While *Yes, we love this land* is the national anthem preferred by the great mass of Norwegians today, certain other Norwegian national songs also deserve mention. From the sojourn of Norwegian students at Copenhagen in the eighteenth century—Norway then had no university of its own—came Johan Nordahl Brun's strident *For Norge, Kjæmpers Fødeland* (*For Norway, Native Land of Heroes*). In 1820 a prize offered for the best national song evoked a flood of patriotic poems, among which the first award was given to H. A. Bjerregaard for his *Sønner af Norge, det ældgamle Rige* (*Sons of Norway, the Age-Old Realm*).²⁸ But these songs have generally been considered ostentatious, flamboyant, with little real or lasting merit. They were written in the prevailing Dano-Norwegian as were also Björnson's patriotic songs of 1859. As national feeling developed, there followed patriotic songs in *landsmaal*, such as: *Millom Bakkar og Berg* (*Midst Mountains and Hills*),²⁹ by Ivar Aasen; *Gud signe vaart dyre fedraland* (*God bless our dear fatherland*), by Elias Blix,³⁰ and *Gud signe Norigs Land* (*God bless the land of Norway*), by Arne Garborg. Possessed of genuine poetic beauty, Garborg's song has become almost the national hymn of *landsmaal* advocates. Thus when such a group assembled in 1899 to meet an attack by Björnson, *Morgenbladet* observed: "And as we in this land are so fortunate as to have two flags and two languages, so also we have at least

²⁵ *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 505.

²⁷ *V.G.*, 1900, no. 104.

²⁹ Published in *Symra*, 1863.

²⁶ Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 495 *et seq.*

²⁸ Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³⁰ Elias Blix (1836-1902), professor in Hebrew at the University of Norway but chiefly remembered, outside academic circles, for his popular hymns in *landsmaal*.

two national anthems. For the language reformers have their own, *Gud signe Norigs Land*, and all of its eight stanzas were sung to the end."³¹ Garborg's song will doubtless live but can hardly supplant Björnsson's *Yes, we love this land*. Finally it must be remembered that Björnsson has endeared himself to the nation not by one patriotic song alone but by many,³² which also have inspired Norwegians to produce compositions that have proved genuine contributions to the music of the country.

A national holiday calls for not only a national song but also a national flag. For in the ritual of the nationalist the importance of the flag can hardly be overestimated, and it has well been termed "nationalism's chief symbol of faith and central object of worship."³³ During the nineteenth century in Norway the flag became, indeed, a vital matter. *Morgenbladet*³⁴ could remark facetiously that Norwegians were "so fortunate as to have two flags,"³⁵ but this view was not that of Björnsson the nationalist. For Björnsson there could be only one Norwegian national flag. This was the so-called "tricolor," the merchant flag of 1821, the "pure" flag for which he agitated in 1879.³⁶ Yet until 1905 this was not the Norwegian national flag. Before 1814 the flag of Denmark was also that of Norway, and after the separation of the two realms the emblem used by the Norwegians was merely the old Danish flag—a white cross on a red field—with Norway's coat of arms (a crowned lion bearing an axe), in the upper square nearest the staff. This flag was flown until 1821 on Norwegian merchant vessels sailing north of Cape Finisterre. Altered by the removal of the lion and by the addition of a blue cross superimposed on the white cross, this flag in accordance with a royal resolution

³¹ *Mgbl.*, 1899, no. 759.

³² Such as: *Brede Seil over Nordsjø* (*Broad Sails over the North Sea*) and *Landkænnning* (*Landsighting*), in which historic episodes involving Olav Trygvason are used to awaken patriotic fervor; *Jeg vil værge mit Land* (*I will defend my Country*), *Norge, Norge* (*Norway, Norway*), and *Syng mig hjem* (*Sing me home*), in which is depicted an attitude of personal devotion to Norway. Mention will be made elsewhere of his flag songs and in particular of his *Answer from Norway*.

³³ C. J. H. Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

³⁴ *Mgbl.*, 1899, no. 759.

³⁵ Actually Norway after 1814 had several flags, which could, however, be classified either as naval flags (used by the navy and the army); or as merchant flags (employed on merchant vessels); such flags in turn might bear a distinguishing mark of the union with Sweden. Article III of the revised Norwegian Constitution declared that Norway should have its own merchant flag; its naval flag was a union flag.

³⁶ This flag consisted of a blue cross within a white border on a red field. It took the name "tricolor" from revolutionary France and Björnsson called it "pure" because it carried no symbol of the union with Sweden. *Kamp-Liv*, vol. ii, p. 10.

of 1821 continued to be employed in similar service and in the same waters until 1838.⁸⁷ Beyond Cape Finisterre Swedish colors had to be flown in order to insure protection from the Barbary pirates.

But with the French occupation of Algiers, the pirates were curbed and the Norwegians began to demand the unrestricted use of the red, white, and blue merchant flag of 1821. The question came to a head in the Storting of 1836, a committee of which, led by the patriots J. A. Hielm and Captain H. H. Foss, sought to remedy this situation. It was pointed out by the Committee that there was "a deeply rooted sympathy between a liberal, independent people and its national colors; and that it wounds the national feeling on its most sensitive side not to show the proper respect for the national colors."⁸⁸ Despite the unanimous request of the Storting it was with reluctance that Carl Johan on April 11, 1838, sanctioned by royal decree the flying of the tricolor of 1821 by Norwegian merchant vessels in all waters—but "at their own risk." Great was the joy in all the land; the flag was free.⁸⁹

Meanwhile, the Norwegian naval flag remained a Swedish flag except for a union-mark⁴⁰ in the upper quarter next the staff. In fact this was hardly a Norwegian flag at all, since three quarters of it were Swedish and the remaining quarter Danish. However, no further change was made in the Norwegian flags, until June 20, 1844, when King Oscar I decreed that both the merchant flag and the naval flag of Norway should consist of the tricolor (red, white and blue) of 1821, but with the addition of a mark of the union.⁴¹ The union-mark, to be sure, was also made a part of the Swedish merchant and naval emblems. Again the Norwegian people were elated, though not as they had been in 1838. But it was regretted that king rather than Storting led the way and that the

⁸⁷ Sars, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, pt. 2, opposite p. 176, illustrates in color the various changes in Norwegian flags from 1814 to 1905. The royal resolution of 1821 had followed similar legislation by the Storting, which Carl Johan refused to sanction; L. M. B. Aubert, *Flag-Resolutionerne af 1821 og 1844* (Chra., 1893), p. 8.

⁸⁸ *Stortingsforhandling*, 1836, v, p. 137. Quoted in *B-St.*, p. 11.

⁸⁹ *Mgbl.*, 1838, no. 116; and H. Koht, *Norske Flagsange* (Chra., 1896), pp. vi-viii, 31 *et seq.*

⁴⁰ This union-mark consisted of a white St. Andrew's Cross on a red field. It differed from the union-mark which Björnson fought in 1879; the latter was a conglomeration of red, white, blue, and yellow.

⁴¹ This union-mark was a combination of both the Swedish and the Norwegian colors—namely, red, white, blue and yellow. It covered that quarter of the flag nearest the staff. It was this symbol of the union which Björnson later urged removing, in order to secure a "pure" flag.

merchant flag had to bear a mark of the union. A writer in *Morgenbladet* pointed out that if but a patch of the merchant flag be replaced by a "foreign mark or color," then the conception that it is "the national flag of an independent people" vanishes instantly.⁴² Nevertheless, although the flag question⁴³ was by no means definitely settled, it failed to stir the people again until some three decades had elapsed. This lull was probably due to the wave of Scandinavianism which passed over Norway during these years, stimulating in certain quarters a love for the union and resulting in a preference for the union flag.⁴⁴

Björnsson in 1844 was too young to enter into any controversy over the flag and it appears that he did not become vitally interested in this issue until 1879. However, during the intervening years interest in the flag did not escape him. Thus, in the winter of 1859-60, when the unfounded rumor spread that on one occasion the Norwegian flag had been raised over the residence of the Swedish-Norwegian Minister in Vienna, there were sharp complaints in Sweden that "Norwegian colors had displaced the Swedish." In the Swedish House of Nobles, Captain C. O. Brakel (1823-80) declared that Norway ought to be "an accessory to Sweden." Rejecting contemptuously any Norwegian desire for equality as shown by the union-mark, he demanded his country's former flag—"the blue-yellow Swedish emblem that waved over Lützen's blood-drenched battlefield."⁴⁵ To this tirade Björnsson replied with his *Answer from Norway*,⁴⁶ a spirited and vigorous defense of the red in Norway's standard and of her own glorious past as opposed to the pretensions of boastful Swedish nobles "flourishing the hat of Charles XII." When Björnsson recited this poem before the Norwegian Society, everyone was enthusiastic; instantly it became the battle song of the Norwegian people, then engaged in a tense struggle with Sweden. Actually the poem was rather

⁴² *Mgbl.*, 1844, no. 26. Koht, *op. cit.* pp. ix-x; see also *Mgbl.*, 1879, nos. 53A, 76A; and *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 67.

⁴³ A careful and comprehensive study is lacking. T. Greni's article in *Björnssonstudier*, pp. 1-70, on Björnsson and the flag question, is too inaccurate to be of value. Most treatments of this subject are marred by bias.

⁴⁴ Koht, *op. cit.*, p. x. This Scandinavian sentiment is reflected in Björnsson's poem of 1870, wherein he describes the Norwegian flag as having the "Swedish blue, the Danish red and white." See F. Bull, ed., Björnsson, *Samlede Digte*, vol. ii, pp. 6 and 252.

⁴⁵ See Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 559 *et seq.*; *Mgbl.*, 1860, no. 53 and *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 67.

⁴⁶ That is, *Har du hørt hvad svensken siger*, first printed in *Aftenbl.*, April 7, 1860, no. 82. *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 503.

a vindication of Norway than of the Norwegian flag; the latter in spite of the union-mark appears not to have aroused the poet's concern during the early sixties. Thus in a speech on May 17, 1864, in honor of the fatherland, he mentioned the flag,⁴⁷ not to criticize its form but to praise it as the "symbol of national power" under which Norwegian cargoes on the seas in but fifty years had more than quadrupled.⁴⁸

Björnson showed no further interest in the flag until 1868, when he noted the dissatisfaction in both realms, and especially in Sweden, with the mark of the union. The latter was criticized, he said, both for esthetic and for nationalistic reasons. The Swedes, he believed, were justified in their discontent at this "dismembering of their ancient standard." Since the union-mark was already being discarded in both countries, he awaited the day when it would "tacitly disappear from all flags that did not require it." But in its stead—and "soon"—must come something not in conflict with the character of the flags, something which each people could love. The union alone should be indicated and as a fitting symbol Björnson suggested a star in the middle of each flag. "A lucky star arose over the two peoples on the day they were united." In foreign ports this symbol, he thought, would be regarded as "the North Star which lights up our winter." Finally, to avoid a clash of colors, the star itself must be either white or red, and preferably the latter, since "red is both a livelier color and more susceptible of a poetic-symbolic interpretation."⁴⁹ Though not without merit, Björnson's proposal found no acceptance.

In the seventies Scandinavianism had definitely subsided and the symbols of the nation rather than of the union again came to the fore in Norway.⁵⁰ As early as 1871 H. E. Berner (1839-1920) discussed the flag question in his newspaper, *Dagbladet*.⁵¹ The radical student publication, *Tiraljören*, carried an article demanding that May 17, 1871, be celebrated without "all these Swedish flags which flap about our ears," for "on this

⁴⁷ As Koht remarks, *op. cit.*, p. v, in Norway May 17 is the day of the flag. A standard subject for the day was Henrik Wergeland; on this very occasion Björnson said that to name Wergeland was to wave "a 17th of May flag." *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 244. But much of the 1864 speech was devoted to a sort of statistical nationalism, stressing the "bigger and better" Norway, which somewhat gratuitously he traced to the Norwegian constitution.

⁴⁸ This fourfold increase shows the importance of the Norwegian merchant flag, which at this time, however, still bore a mark of the union.

⁴⁹ *N.F.*, 1868, no. 32; *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 304-06.

⁵⁰ Koht, *op. cit.*, p. x.

⁵¹ See *Dagbl.*, 1871, no. 155—a plea for the use of the "pure" flag in Norway. On Berner and the flag see *N.B.L.*, vol. i, p. 482 *et seq.*

day we wish to breathe "pure Norwegian air and no mixture."⁵² Many Norwegians felt that the national symbols were being slighted by the government, and when in the fall of 1878 Oscar II presented white standards, reminiscent of the autocracy of the French Bourbons, to Norwegian regiments at Gardermoen, popular indignation was aroused.⁵³ As soon as the Storting assembled in 1879, H. E. Berner solicited the support of Johan Sverdrup for a law establishing the "pure" flag of 1821 as the Norwegian merchant flag, and after some thought, the Liberal leader promised to assist.⁵⁴

It has been alleged that Berner's proposal came quite unexpectedly,⁵⁵ but actually it had been in the offing for years.⁵⁶ Furthermore, it must not be imagined that the movement of 1879 was anti-Swedish, for it was believed that the Swedes also disliked the mark of the union and would welcome a "pure" flag.⁵⁷ In fact, prior to taking any action Berner had written Björnson's friend, the Swedish editor, S. A. Hedlund, and asked if a corresponding motion could not be introduced simultaneously in the Swedish *Riksdag*. But Hedlund delayed and nothing was done in Sweden.⁵⁸ Yet though it was only the natural result of an awakened interest in the national symbols, the proposal was destined to raise a veritable hornet's nest not only in Norway but also in Sweden.

Hardly had the proposal been broached when protests poured in from skippers, seamen, and shipowners. The Seamen's Society of Arendal met on March 1, 1879, and declared that the mark of union should be retained: first, as a point of honor to indicate abroad by a visible token "our joy and pride in the union with Sweden"; next, because "the flag is dear to us" as the banner under which the merchant marine has developed into one of the world's most impressive fleets; and finally because practical considerations speak strongly against any change.⁵⁹ Dur-

⁵² *Tiraljören*, May 13, 1871.

⁵³ *Dagbl.*, 1878, nos. 243, 244; *V.G.*, 1878, nos. 104, 106, 125; and *Mgbl.*, 1878, nos. 301A, 303A.

⁵⁴ H. Koht, *Johan Sverdrup*, vol. ii (Chra., 1922), p. 254.

⁵⁵ *B-St.*, p. 21; Koht, *Norske Flagsange*, p. x.

⁵⁶ See *Dagbl.*, 1912, no. 30, for Berner's explanation.

⁵⁷ *Opl. Avis*, 1880, no. 34 (from *G. H. och S.T.*). The editor of the latter, S. A. Hedlund, said that Berner "declared expressly that he would not knowingly give any offence to Sweden." See Björnson as quoted in *Aftenp.*, 1880, no. 62A.

⁵⁸ *The Sun* (New York), February 12, 1881. Ellen Key in the Björnson *Festskrift*, p. 58.

⁵⁹ *Mgbl.*, 1879, no. 60A. On this issue the Conservative newspapers *Morgenbladet* and *Aftenposten* challenged the Liberal organs, *Dagbladet* and *Verdens Gang*.

ing March various seamen's societies throughout Norway took a stand against the "pure" flag, their resolutions usually finding a haven in *Morgenbladet*.⁶⁰ Opposition to the "pure" flag centered in Christiania, and Berner and his colleagues therefore hit upon the bold stroke of meeting the enemy upon his own ground.

Björnson, then residing at Aulestad, was called into the capital. On March 11 and 12 the local press carried a notice, signed by Björnson and J. E. Sars, of a flag meeting to be held at 8 P.M. on March 13 in Christiania: to explain the history and significance of the question, to protest against expressions already made, and to maintain that the issue was not for certain classes alone but for the entire Norwegian people.⁶¹

Excitement ran high in the capital. In such an atmosphere tense with fanaticism, fact and fancy often became inextricably commingled, providing fertile ground for the growth of legend.⁶² Thus the misleading statement has been made that a certain "N.N.," writing in *Aftenposten*, urged "a sound thrashing" for Björnson and Sars,⁶³ whereas "N.N." really complained of a scarcity of tickets for the meeting and feared a hoax.⁶⁴ Actually, many who had hoped to attend must have been disappointed, for the capacity of the hall was limited. Such a gathering was, indeed, a novelty, and many persons gladly paid for the privilege of either cheering or hooting Björnson.⁶⁵ Noteworthy, too, were the placards posted near the docks on March 13, urging seamen to attend and to protect "our fair and beloved flag" against the "agitators" who scorn it, and closing with "Long live the union with Sweden and our flag" and "Pereat Berner, Sverdrup, Björnson and Sars!"⁶⁶

Under the circumstances it was not surprising that on the evening of March 13, 1879, Björnson faced a large and noisy crowd. Disdainful of the tumult, the poet presided. He had been asked to lead, he said,

⁶⁰ Much of this opposition seems to have been "inspired." See the comment of J. E. Sars in *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 59; *V.G.*, 1879, no. 38.

⁶¹ See *Dagbl.*, 1879, nos. 60 and 61; *V.G.*, 1879, no. 31. *Aftenp.*, 1879, no. 59A, urged getting tickets in time, since a large audience was anticipated.

⁶² For this reason all accounts of this flag meeting must be used with great caution.

⁶³ Koht, *Norske Flagsange*, p. xii; *B-St.*, p. 28; *Opl. Avis*, 1879, no. 27.

⁶⁴ *Aftenp.*, 1879, no. 60A. See the editorial note in *Aftenp.*, 1879, no. 61A.

⁶⁵ Y. Nielsen, *Under Oscar II's Regjering* (Chra., 1912), pp. 57-58. Björnson evidently intended that only sympathizers should attend; see *Dagbl.*, 1884, no. 123.

⁶⁶ *Dagbladet* remarked that "Patriotism" seemed not very well understood near the docks and referred to the anecdote of the longshoreman who when railed at by a seaman replied, "You may call me a thief and a scoundrel but if you call me a patriot I'll fight." *Dagbl.*, 1870, no. 63.

because he was one of the many in Norway who had never hoisted a flag bearing the mark of the union. He was, he stressed, not to be scared out of speaking, and he was a friend of the union and of Sweden. Next he introduced Professor J. E. Sars, who outlined the history of the flag, after which Erik Vullum discussed its symbolic meaning. But Björnsson was the main attraction, and when he made his address the storm broke. Rather tactlessly, perhaps, he began by pointing out that because of his background the king was "willynilly" more Swedish than Norwegian, and then struck out at the "dangerous" tendency of the upper classes in Norway to follow the lead of Sweden, rather than to cultivate truly Norwegian interests. There was some truth in these remarks, but more pertinent was his indictment of the Norwegians as bearing in their minds as in their flags the fatal mark of the union. Björnsson's speech, however, was so badly interrupted that it could convince no one, and after warmly defending Berner and Sverdrup the poet closed abruptly with a hurrah for the "pure" Norwegian flag.⁶⁷

The behavior of the audience was not commendable, but deep passions had been aroused and in the heat of controversy each side blamed the other for the rowdiness which developed. *Morgenbladet*⁶⁸ claimed that Björnsson had secured the aid of the police,⁶⁹ noted the uproar in the hall, but affected to view the affair as being "tolerably quiet," and on the whole "a quite successful evening's entertainment." Björnsson, the newspaper added, was "a good artistic director when it was a question of arranging hubbub and commotion."⁷⁰ Still less creditable than the attitude of the audience was the reaction of the mob in the city, which demonstrated its patriotism by assembling noisily outside Berner's home and by tossing stones through the windows of his innocent neighbors!⁷¹

⁶⁷ The reader may find it entertaining to compare the stories carried by *Morgenbladet* and *Dagbladet*.

⁶⁸ *Mgbl.*, 1879, no. 72B.

⁶⁹ In London the staid *Annual Register* for 1879 (p. 208) reported that "it was found necessary to disperse by military force" the meeting called at the "instigation" of "the national poet," Björnsson.

⁷⁰ Björnsson's followers suspected that a deliberate plan had been laid to break up the meeting. Y. Nielsen (*op. cit.*, p. 64) denied this. But, whether by agreement or not, many apparently attended with such a purpose in mind. Years later Björnsson spoke with scorn of such persons as a "band of disturbers of the peace." See *Dagbl.*, 1884, no. 123.

⁷¹ Berner lived on the third floor and not one of his windows was broken. See his remarks in *Dagbl.*, 1912, no. 30. T. Greni, *B-St.*, p. 39, is misleading in regard to Berner and *Aftenposten*; *Mgbl.*, 1879, nos. 74A, 77A; and *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 65 and 1912, no. 30.

Björnson was bitter. He realized that his speech had been inadequate but said he was hindered by the most vulgar conduct he had ever encountered.⁷² On March 17, 1879 he published in *Dagbladet* a more complete and satisfactory exposition of his views. True, the sting remained and his own wounded vanity stood out when he expressed the belief that it was without parallel that the man who had written the national songs sung by his people should be persecuted because he supported a patriotic proposal. His argument rested upon the broad basis of Norway's equivocal position in the union with Sweden, with the resultant threats to Norwegian independence. The flag question had come to the Norwegians, he wrote, with the same effect as when travelers on a night train, or on a steamboat after seasickness, look into a mirror: "We become quite terrified at what we see." The union-mark stood as the token of division among the people, just as the "pure" flag was the sign of unification for all times. For the union-mark represented the type of union—Great Britain's, for example—which "was not and never should be ours." Despite unpleasant revelations it was worth gold to have this ugly situation brought to light. He hoped that Sweden, whose people he loved, would understand, and ended by paying his respects to the Conservative press in Norway with its "systematic persecution of the national, the Norwegian, the truly independent." Much the same painful discovery was revealed in a letter of April 2, 1879, wherein he observed that "the cultured portion of our people . . . has never felt the need of complete independence and considers talk thereof as *dangerous*."⁷³ Months later, in October, 1879, he confessed it still pained him to think of this matter or to see the flag. It was dreadful, he exclaimed, to belong to a small people! Though spat upon, kicked and despised, he resolved not to lose courage. But as he thought of conditions in his native land he was plainly despondent. Probably recalling the bitter opposition by Norwegian skipper and seamen to the "pure" flag, he made the caustic observation that "our carrying trade, so vaunted, is *chiefly* the buying up and operating of rotten craft, condemned in other countries, but good enough for the working of timber, since in an emergency the crew can float on the cargo." He ended with this short sentence, "I am angry." We can well believe he was.⁷⁴

To Björnson it was clear that his was a divided people. The flag ques-

⁷² *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 63.

⁷³ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, p. 20; *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 85.

⁷⁴ Letter (unpublished) to R. B. Anderson, dated October 8, 1879. R. B. Anderson Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society at Madison.

tion had been raised and in his opinion could no longer be ignored.⁷⁵ Of particular interest was the reaction of the public on May 17, 1879. Ordinarily the children carried only "pure" flags on the national holiday, but this year the union-mark also appeared.⁷⁶ In Trondhjem the yellow of the Swedish flag was flaunted, but the local newspaper, *Trondhjems Adresseavis*, nevertheless thought it reasonable on this day to retain the national colors (*i.e.*, the red, white, and blue of the "pure" flag).⁷⁷ Two crude attempts were made to utilize the name of Henrik Wergeland—rather shabby efforts, indeed, when one recalls the latter's enthusiasm for the "tricolor of the North."⁷⁸ At Hamar a workers' society planned to march under a "pure" flag but when faced with the threat of "no music" abandoned the idea. But the "pure" flag also drew support from various parts of the country; at Sel in Gudbrandsdal a group assembled and declared that a free and independent people should carry only "pure" national colors in its flag.⁷⁹

Norway was not yet ready to change the flag, and in June, 1879, the Storting rejected Berner's proposal.⁸⁰ As Björnson realized, here was work to be done—quietly but always openly, "in the name of the fatherland and of independence." By means of the press, meetings, and publications the mark of union was to be removed not only from the flag but also from the minds of the people.⁸¹ The opening skirmish was lost, but time was to show that this was but a seeming defeat.

Further agitation was necessary, and the brunt of this fell upon Björnson; throughout all Scandinavia he was the center of attack. At Aulestad, where he usually found peace, he met opposition from the teachers at the folk high school of Vonheim. Frits Hansen, for instance, criticized the way in which the flag question was handled, conceded that a more fortunate union-mark could be devised, but spoke bluntly of "all the exaggeration, falsity and humbug" attached to the movement.⁸² In reply, and returning to his own plan of 1868, Björnson said that he would prefer to have the union itself represented by a separate and distinct flag, so

⁷⁵ See *Aftenp.*, 1880, no. 62A (from *G. H. och S.T.*).

⁷⁶ *Mgbl.*, 1879, no. 135A. Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, pp. 69-70.

⁷⁷ Koht, *op. cit.*, pp. xiii-xiv.

⁷⁸ At Christiania the Swedish colors were inserted in the wreath at Wergeland's grave; at Eidsvold on the flagstaff beside the Wergeland monolith was placed a bit of indifferent verse linking Björnson—and Satan! See *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 124; *Mgbl.*, 1879, no. 148A; Koht, *op. cit.*, pp. iii, xiv.

⁷⁹ *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 122.

⁸⁰ Koht, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

⁸¹ *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 63.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1879, no. 92.

that both flags, the Swedish and the Norwegian, could be free and "pure." Nevertheless, this was not feasible—witness the stir made when only the Norwegian merchant flag was at stake. The remedy he found in a steady growth of the feeling of independence in Norway.⁸³ Among Norwegian literary men Arne Garborg supported Björnson in the columns of the *landsmaal* publication, *Fedraheimen*. But Henrik Ibsen flatly opposed any change in the Norwegian flag. Ibsen had no great sympathy for symbols and in his native land he saw only one issue worth fighting for, namely the introduction of modern popular education. Norway, he concluded, was free and independent enough, but much was lacking to permit one to say the same of Norwegian men and women.⁸⁴

Björnson had hoped that the Swedes would understand and take no offense at the demand for a "pure" flag. S. A. Hedlund, however, declared that on this very issue Björnson's popularity was lost in Sweden.⁸⁵ The Swedes in general misinterpreted his statements, and it is doubtful if they ever really understood his attitude on this question.⁸⁶ Björnson's letters to Hedlund reveal his anxiety to dispel the hostility which had developed in Sweden,⁸⁷ but the treatment accorded him was such that he thought seriously of never going there again.⁸⁸ Rebuffed by both Norwegians and Swedes he must have felt completely isolated when his Danish publisher, Frederik Hegel, also frowned upon his activity.⁸⁹ It dawned upon him that even cultured Danes did not understand the issue at stake. Yet he did not lose faith in Scandinavianism.⁹⁰

There was, to repeat, work to be done. Norwegian national feeling was at a low ebb and in the flag question Björnson saw a means to educate his countrymen in freedom and complete independence.⁹¹ Nor could this be done at one stroke. So patent was this that, he confessed, were victory offered him at this time, he would not accept it.⁹² According to Francis Bull, the conflict had taught Björnson that the most dangerous

⁸³ *Opl. Avis*, 1879, nos. 41, 48, 50, 52, 55, 58, 60. *N.F.*, 1868, no. 32.

⁸⁴ *Samtiden*, 1908, p. 95 *et seq.* (July 12, 1879). Ibsen's views, expressed in a private letter, could hardly have influenced the public. But the "rebuff" from Ibsen "wounded" Björnson's "patriotism" and kept the two poets apart. See Björnson's remarks in *Aftenp.*, 1906, no. 473.

⁸⁵ *The Sun*, February 12, 1881.

⁸⁶ Except for a few such as Ellen Key; see the Björnson *Festskrift*, pp. 58-60.

⁸⁷ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, *passim*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 63.

⁸⁹ L. C. Nielsen, *Hegel*, vol. ii, p. 106.

⁹⁰ *Opl. Avis*, 1879, no. 52 (from *Folkevennen*).

⁹¹ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, p. 41.

⁹² *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 40 (May 27, 1879).

foes of Norwegian democracy were partly in the Norwegian bureaucracy and partly in the Swedish group desirous of supremacy in the union.⁹³ Indeed, the "pure" flag could well be used in Norway as a symbol in the agitation for a completely nationalistic program.⁹⁴ In the meantime, being a poet, Björnsson found an outlet in verse. In a series of six poems he extolled the "pure" flag and rejected the union-mark as a "ring of betrothal" binding the two realms together.⁹⁵ In particular he appealed humbly to Sweden to act as if *she* were the smaller nation; would she then let her flag remain divided? ⁹⁶ The flag question, however, was not to be decided by poets but by the steady growth of sentiment favorable to a change in the Norwegian national symbol.

Although the time was not yet ripe, Björnsson tried to revive the flag issue in 1880 but obtained no support from the Storting.⁹⁷ While touring the United States in the winter of 1880-81, the poet also presented his views upon this matter. In a speech at Chicago on December 26, 1880, he traced the history of the Norwegian flag, praised Henrik Wergeland, and pleaded for the removal of the sign of the union since it gave the false impression that "the two countries are *commingled*, about like the United States, not that they are coordinate."⁹⁸ Upon his return to Christiania he spoke at the unveiling of the Wergeland monument on May 17, 1881. It was fitting, says Keilhau, that he should preside at this occasion, for in his view of the symbolism of the flag, as in so much else, Björnsson was, in fact, the successor of Wergeland.⁹⁹

The poet's agitation in the eighties continued unabated but was based on the broader issue of the relationship of Norway to Sweden, which he insisted that the flag should reveal.¹⁰⁰ He had stood, he said, on an ocean liner and had heard Americans, Englishmen, Scots and others, who at the sight of the Norwegian flag, termed it Swedish. For this he

⁹³ *N.B.L.*, vol. i, p. 652.

⁹⁴ See *Opl. Avis*, 1879, no. 58.

⁹⁵ Björnsson, *Samlede Digte*, vol. ii, pp. 118-23; pp. 272-73. In English see Palmer, *Björnsson's Poems and Songs*, pp. 185-90; pp. 257-59.

⁹⁶ This poem addressed *To Sweden!*, which was published in April, 1879, in several Swedish newspapers, provoked a number of replies in verse; Koht, *op. cit.*, p. 72 *et seq.* To these Björnsson rejoined with a final poem directed to C. F. Ridderstad (1807-86), a Swedish journalist prominent in the defense of the union-mark. See Koht's notes, *op. cit.*, pp. 37, 72-73.

⁹⁷ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, pp. xix-xx.

⁹⁸ *Edda*, 1929, pp. 204-05. *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, pp. 95-96.

⁹⁹ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, pp. 70-71.

¹⁰⁰ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, p. 265. *Dagbl.*, 1886, no. 200; 1889, no. 351.

blamed the mark of the union.¹⁰¹ In 1882 in an attempt to learn how the union-mark was regarded abroad he sent an inquiry in the form of a circular to a number of journals in eastern seaports of the United States. The circular stated that Norway and Sweden were bound only by a personal union, similar to that of no other people. The respective flags were next sketched, and it was stressed that the removal of the union-mark was desired, since it implied, falsely, that the two peoples were merged. Finally, it was asked (1) if both Swedish and Norwegian emblems bore no sign of the union, would they not give a clearer conception of the absolute independence of both countries? and (2) would their trade or shipping be injured by the absence of the union-mark? The replies received indicated that the "pure" flag would clarify Norway's status as an independent nation and would entail hardly any loss to her commercial interests.¹⁰² Certain of Björnson's assertions in this circular were debatable, and his opponents were quick to refute them. As Björnson had appealed to America for support, so a certain E. Brönlund, past president of the Seamen's Association of Arendal, appealed to England and inquired of the *London Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*,¹⁰³ as to its interpretation of the union-mark. The reply of the London publication was that the sign in the flag exemplified a political union similar to that of England and Scotland; that its removal was not considered "expedient . . . in order to weaken the effect of the amalgamation of the two Scandinavian kingdoms," and finally that, since Norway's flag had a red and Sweden's a blue background, the one emblem "ought not to be mistaken" for the other. Naturally, much of this was simply opinion, and the setting up of American against English authority, while diverting, by no means settled the issue. Yet each party took what comfort it could from the correspondence with foreign publications, and in the reply given Brönlund, Björnson read a substantiation of his constant claim that abroad the mark of the union meant that Norway was merged with Sweden.¹⁰⁴ The union-mark, said Björnson, gives the Swedish flag "the false honor, that Norway (the smaller) is a part of Sweden, and

¹⁰¹ *Dagbl.*, 1881, no. 257. See *B-St.*, p. 55, for a similar story. This of course proved nothing, except that the Americans, Englishmen *et al.* were obviously ignorant—a fact that apparently did not dawn upon Björnson. Americans, for instance, frequently confuse Norway with Sweden.

¹⁰² See *V.G.*, 1882, no. 89.

¹⁰³ See its issue of August 29, 1882.

¹⁰⁴ He apparently overlooked the sensible English view that flags with *different* backgrounds ought not to be mistaken for each other, as he had claimed they were.

with its shrieking contrast of color it makes the beautiful Swedish flag the ugliest in all ports. We are also certain that the Swedes in the great majority would have joined us in this matter, had not the Norwegian Conservatives had the courage to circulate: (1) that the Norwegian Liberals thereby intended the breaking up of the Union; and (2) that they called the Swedish colors 'soiled' . . ." ¹⁰⁵

In 1889 the poet revived his plan of 1880 to alter the Norwegian constitution in order to secure a "pure" flag. According to H. E. Berner, this proposal came most unexpectedly and he himself could not understand why Björnson suggested the long and tortuous process of a constitutional amendment rather than a simple act of the Storting. Fortunately, thought Berner, Björnson's plan found little support and was "at last quietly buried." ¹⁰⁶

With the nineties the movement for the "pure" flag reached the last phase. In May, 1891, Björnson repeated his familiar argument that the sign of the union meant "amalgamation" with Sweden.¹⁰⁷ In an editorial of October 31, 1891, *Verdens Gang* pointed out that for 350 years Austria and Hungary had been united, the Hapsburgs having inherited Hungary, as the Danish royal house had inherited Norway. Yet the Hungarians carried no sign of the union in their flag. "Norway," concluded the writer, "is the only independent country in the world wherein are found people who will not tolerate seeing the colors of the fatherland when they are not mingled with those of another country." ¹⁰⁸ The Norwegian Students' Association planned to take up the flag question at its meeting of October 31, 1891, and in its issue of October 30, the Liberal newspaper, *Dagbladet*, urged all patriotic students of both parties to attend and to support the "pure" flag. After a thorough discussion the Association decided that the union flag should be hoisted over its building.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, *Dagbladet* contended that the mark of the union had no warrant except in the flag of the navy and that Norway's "pure" flag, the tricolor of 1821, alone "had the right to wave from our public and private structures and from the masts of our ships." ¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ *V.G.*, 1882, no. 109. The term "pure" flag was unfortunate. As Björnson realized, the Swedes could interpret *ren* (*pure* or *clean*) as being the opposite of *smudsig* (*soiled* or *dirty*).

¹⁰⁶ *Dagbl.*, 1912, no. 30. ¹⁰⁷ *Aftenp.*, 1891, no. 376. ¹⁰⁸ *V.G.*, 1891, no. 263.

¹⁰⁹ F. B. Wallem, *Det norske Studentersamfund gjennom 100 aar, 1813-1913*, vol. ii (Chra., 1918), pp. 938-42.

¹¹⁰ *Dagbl.*, 1891, no. 379. *Dagbladet* argued upon the theory that the union-mark was introduced only by royal resolution, not by the Storting, and was therefore illegal. Björnson had much the same view; see *Aftenp.*, 1880, no. 62A.

So far the cause had suffered only defeat, but as Björnson said early in 1892, it had always been his conviction that ultimately victory would emerge from defeat. Once more he attempted to act through the Storting and to attain his objective through an amendment to the Norwegian constitution¹¹¹—a somewhat dubious method which appears to have had no immediate appeal. In December of 1892 the issue was again raised in the capital through the formation of the Christiania Flag Society. This was a private organization which carried on propaganda for the tricolor by means of meetings, publications,¹¹² and the distribution of "pure" flags to school children on May 17. On May 4, 1893, this organization issued an appeal to the Norwegian people on behalf of the tricolor, "the flag which is the symbol of Norway's freedom and independence."¹¹³ Led by Björnson, early in May, 1893, the Christiania Flag Society presented an address to the Storting asking that the "pure" flag of 1821 be legally established as "Norway's national flag and merchant flag." As for indicating the union with Sweden, it was felt that no mark could be placed in the Norwegian flag without being "misconstrued," but consideration for the Swedes demanded "perhaps" that they be given the "proper" period to make a similar alteration in their flag.¹¹⁴ After some deliberation, in the summer of 1893 the Storting did pass a measure based essentially upon the flag legislation of 1821, which the king refused to approve. In four successive issues *Verdens Gang* urged that the "pure" flag be the central theme for May 17, 1893.¹¹⁵ Publicly and privately the "pure" flag came more and more into use.¹¹⁶

In 1896 the flag law of 1893 was again passed by the Storting, and the royal sanction again was denied. Björnson, however, was unable to understand how any Norwegian could wish to have the name of King Oscar II attached to "so national a law." "Let us," he urged, "do without it."¹¹⁷ Some two years later, in November, 1898, the Storting again approved the flag law of 1893 and 1896, whereby the tricolor of 1821 would become

¹¹¹ See his remarks in *V.G.*, 1892, no. 87.

¹¹² Such as the excellent, nationalistic collection of Norwegian flag songs, with the helpful introduction and annotations by Halvdan Koht, *Norske Flagsange* (Chra., 1896).

¹¹³ *V.G.*, 1893, no. 104. The appeal included the stock arguments for the "pure" flag and closed with the suggestion that men and women throughout the land join in flag societies so that "all the citizens of the country can be assembled under our old Norwegian flag."

¹¹⁴ Since both countries used the union-mark, it was only logical that any change should be made by both Swedes and Norwegians.

¹¹⁵ *V.G.*, 1893, nos. 103, 105, 108, 109.

¹¹⁶ *Koht, op. cit.*, pp. xvi-xvii.

¹¹⁷ *Dagbl.*, 1896, no. 123; no. 139.

the merchant flag and the official flag of Norway, except for the army and the navy. The king again refused his sanction but the measure now became a law.¹¹⁸ The conflict had ended. "We have," wrote *Verdens Gang*, "again secured our old national symbol." But, it asserted, "that day will *never* come," when Norway will forget the attitude of King Oscar II. "How significant it is for the position of the royal house in our country," exclaimed the editor, "that this first application of Article 79 concerns the national symbol!"¹¹⁹ Curiously enough, the victory of the "pure" flag was followed by a considerable, though belated, counter agitation in Sweden. In a speech of February 28, 1899, Professor Ernst Trygger of Upsala viewed the flag law as "a breach of contract" by Norway¹²⁰ and suggested that by the passage thrice of the appropriate legislation the Storting could also secure a Norwegian consular service and a separate foreign office.¹²¹

On May 21, 1879, *Morgenbladet* had prophesied that Björnsson would not see the day when the mark of union had disappeared from either the merchant flag or the naval flag of Norway.¹²² Some twenty years later, on August 3, 1899, *Morgenbladet* itself had become almost nationalistic. Thus, it ridiculed the Swedish "heroes of the quill" who had attacked the new Norwegian flag law, and on August 4, it declared that from the standpoint of international law every sovereign state had the right to determine its own national symbols.¹²³ On December 10, 1899, the "pure" flag was legally established in Norway. Shortly thereafter, at Bergen, Björnsson spoke in honor of the event. He came, he said, as a representative from the East to the West of Norway. He wished the

¹¹⁸ In accordance with Article 79 of the Norwegian Constitution, which gave the king only a suspensive veto. The king's veto was apparently based upon unwillingness to change his own father's creation—the union flag; the king also thought the union-mark the best indication of the equality of the two realms. Admittedly, an odd situation resulted when, as he noted, Norway alone removed this token of the union.

¹¹⁹ See the editorial in *V.G.*, 1898, no. 339. However, this was not the first application; see K. Gjerset, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 455.

¹²⁰ E. Trygger, *Flaggfrågan* (Stkml., 1899), p. 15 *et seq.* The "contract" was the royal resolution of 1844, establishing the union flag; R. Kjellén even thought of the "contract" as a sort of "treaty." See R. Kjellén, *Rätt och sanning i flaggfrågan* (Göteborg, 1899), p. 16. The Swedish objections were not without reason; Sars, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, pt. 2, p. 176 *et seq.*

¹²¹ A similar opinion was expressed by R. Kjellén, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24; and by H. L. Rydin, *Om norska flagglagens rättsliga betydelse* (Stkml., 1899), pp. 65-67.

¹²² *Mgbl.*, 1879, no. 138A.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 1899, nos. 538, 541. *Mgbl.* borrowed Björnsson's term "storsvensk." Its attack centered upon the Swedish newspapers, *Vårt Land* and *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*.

Swedes to know that it was not their "old, historic colors" that were objectionable, except as they appeared in the Norwegian flag. Norwegians still wanted a union with Sweden but a union in which they were "an entirely independent people." Extending next a friendly hand to the Norwegian Conservatives, Björnson thanked them for their support on the flag issue. Could not all Norwegian parties unite on the consular question? "We are all," he claimed, "still primarily Norwegians." Twenty years had been spent fighting for the "pure" flag but it was not all that had been won. Greater still, "we have won a richer national feeling," more courage as a people, more joy in being Norwegians. As yet, he pointed out, only one flag is free, and if the Americans and the French can manage with one flag alone, the Norwegians ought to be able to do likewise. For Björnson, as always, an objective attained was not in itself enough. The Norwegian people, he stressed, must go forward and must obtain that which as yet was lacking.¹²⁴

Go forward the Norwegian people did. When the tricolor had finally been assured to Norway, there were grave misgivings felt in Sweden. Count Ludvig Douglas, the Swedish foreign minister, refused to notify foreign powers of the change in the Norwegian flag and had to be replaced by the more amenable Alfred Lagerheim.¹²⁵ Rudolf Kjellén saw in the change a direct attack on the life of the union; to him there had come the final parting of the ways. The "pure" flag, he thought, was "the beginning of the end."¹²⁶ In the two chapters that follow we shall see to what extent Kjellén's fears were justifiable.

¹²⁴ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 419-25.

¹²⁶ R. Kjellén, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹²⁵ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 394.

V

NATIONAL AUTONOMY

WRITING of his native Norway for an American audience, Björnson said, "We began in 1814 as a small, impoverished nation, new to the use of political liberty."¹ In this "small, impoverished nation," newly released from Danish control, the wonder is that centuries of rule from Copenhagen had not completely smothered Norwegian national feeling. Yet it persisted and was vitally stimulated at this critical period by the gallant but weak Christian Frederick—the last Dane to reign in Norway until 1905. Danish influence, to be sure, continued after 1814. But as Björnson said, "What was Norwegian could not be made Danish."² Beginning with that year the Norwegians were also subjected to Swedish influence. Moreover, although in theory the Norwegians and the Swedes were equals in the union, in practice Norway appeared to be a dependency of Sweden. The very nature of the union between the two realms was differently interpreted, the Swedes basing it upon the treaty of Kiel, which the Norwegians refused to recognize.³ That there was no real equality seems certain, and it is clear that Norway was not completely independent. The resultant confusion in thought can well be seen in Björnson's own words. In 1889 the poet said, "We are an independent nation, we have our own parliament, we make our own laws . . . In fact we only have the king in common with Sweden." Yet at the same time he admitted, "Open sea—that is to say, full independence—Norway has not yet reached."⁴

Granted that the exact nature of the union was debatable, what possibilities were open to the Norwegians after 1814? One of two courses might be followed: either Norway might seek an amalgamation with Sweden, submerging her national identity in a larger unit—perhaps even, ultimately, in a Scandinavian North.⁵ Or, Norway might seek emancipation from Swe-

¹ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 78 (1889), p. 802. ² *Ibid.*, vol. 78, p. 648.

³ See footnote 1, K. Gjerset, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 451. Falnes, *op. cit.*, p. 34 and p. 40, footnote 63.

⁴ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 78, pp. 802-04.

⁵ Björnson's intimate friend Clemens Petersen wrote an interesting appeal for

den, rejecting the *statholder* and other evidences of dependency until she had become in fact as in name a free and independent nation. This goal eventually was reached in 1905 when Norway broke away from Sweden. But during the nineteenth century amalgamation was by no means a dead issue.

What was Björnson's attitude toward amalgamation with Sweden? Despite his lifelong insistence upon some form of cooperation with the Swedes, he declared that "the day will never come that sees Norway merged in Sweden."⁶ It was, indeed, difficult to understand how the two peoples could readily be welded into one compact nation. As Björnson once said, they had no history in common, political or cultural. Norway was democratic, Sweden aristocratic. Socially and economically the Norwegians and the Swedes differed from each other and lacked that community of interests and traditions requisite to a unified national state. In the year of parting, in 1905, Björnson still felt that the two countries did not have "the elements of a complete and actual union."⁷ It was, then, not amalgamation with Sweden but eventual independence for Norway which was Björnson's objective. Yet no matter how bitter the conflict with Sweden, he appears at no time to have envisaged the Norwegians as standing alone but rather as being allied with the Swedes. A free Norway, he believed, could be fitted into a Pan-Scandinavian alignment.⁸

One constant factor had to be reckoned with in all plans for an independent Norway, namely Sweden. During the nineteenth century Sweden overshadowed Norway politically much as Denmark did culturally, and it was the task of the Norwegian nationalist to free his country from both Danish and Swedish influence. Sweden, then, was bound to become a national, political issue in Norway, and the relationship between the two realms was scrutinized by both Norwegian and Swedish patriots. But before discussing the chief points of contention between the two countries, an inquiry into Björnson's attitude toward Sweden is essential.⁹

such a state, ending with the idea that there will be a Scandinavia "laid out on the map as a country to which a letter can be addressed." See *The Galaxy*, vol. xvii (New York, 1874), p. 778.

⁶ *Scribner's (Century) Magazine*, vol. 21, p. 610.

⁷ See Björnson's analysis in *Dagbl.*, 1892, no. 67; and *Harper's Weekly*, vol. 49 (1905), p. 1082 *et seq.* Gjerset *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 452-53.

⁸ *Skandinaven og Amerika*, September 23, 1873.

⁹ On Björnson and Sweden see Francis Bull's valuable discussion in *Björnson-Studier*, pp. 173-281; and Ellen Key's article in the *Björnson Festskrift*, pp. 41-69; also John Landquist, *Nordens Kalender* 1933, pp. 25-33.

Early in life Björnsson was impressed by the glorious episodes in the history of Sweden; Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII were his heroes.¹⁰ He recalled with pride that as a boy when once asked which country other than Norway he loved the most his answer was Sweden. This came, he added, of reading the history of Sweden.¹¹ But the history of Norway taught him also that for centuries the Swedes had been a menace to his native land. In 1814 they had come "with murder and fire" and that, he declared, the Norwegians "must never forget."¹² Yet he was careful not to indict the Swedish people as a whole but rather to attack only their leaders, the nobility, and in particular the royal house of the Bernadottes. Already as a schoolboy at Molde he had become an ardent republican and a critic of Carl Johan,¹³ and when that "sick old republican, Harro Harring" was deported from Norway in 1850, young Björnsson was incensed at Oscar I. Altogether, the Bernadottes found little favor with the poet, and it is probable that he did not always do them justice.

Of special significance, however, in developing Björnsson's understanding of Sweden was the Scandinavian student excursion to Upsala in 1856, in which he participated as the eager and naïve young correspondent for *Morgenbladet*.¹⁴ That sojourn in Sweden was like opening the door of a magic realm of chivalry and romance. "Gallantry," he observed, "is a national color in the Swedish character."¹⁵ He was deeply impressed by the glorious memories of the Swedish people, he reported faithfully the eloquent pleas made for brotherhood in the North, and he left with the conviction that "first and foremost we all constitute one large family, and that we must stick together!" Basically unchanged, the buoyant Scandinavianism nurtured during the happy days of 1856 remained with Björnsson throughout his entire career and influenced profoundly his attitude toward the Swedes. But the poet was not blind to the fact that the Norwegians had "not yet completely become a nation." For this reason, he believed, Scandinavianism had met with "less goodwill" among them.¹⁶ "All nationality," he observed in 1855, "must be interpreted as an eternal progress."¹⁷ In Norway such progress, we may add, was bound to lead away from all signs of dependency in the union with Sweden—such as the presence of a *statholder*—to a complete control by the Norwegians of their own affairs, both internal and ex-

¹⁰ *Mgbl.*, 1856, no. 182. ¹¹ *Dagbl.*, 1881, no. 164. ¹² *Ibid.*, 1893, no. 27.

¹³ Björnsson was consistently critical of Carl Johan but his attitude toward the other Bernadotte rulers of Sweden wavered between praise and blame.

¹⁴ See his articles in *Mgbl.*, 1856, nos. 177, 179, 182, 184, 188, 191, 202.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1856, no. 188. ¹⁶ *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 118. ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 71.

ternal. So comprehensive a program was still largely in the future and as yet hardly understood by Björnson. It entailed almost of necessity the formation of a Norwegian political party (the Liberal), which, as already indicated, should make the bond with Sweden a national issue and should challenge the control of Norway by an entrenched bureaucracy. Their position threatened, these bureaucrats in turn would form another party (the Conservative) to protect their own special interests. With the Conservatives Björnson as a leading Liberal was to wage some of his fiercest conflicts. Yet, such is the irony of life, the poet himself died practically a Conservative. But his objective, national independence, had by then been attained.

The ultimate emergence of party conflict in Norway on the issue of the bond with Sweden was strikingly foreshadowed in Björnson's activity in Bergen (1857-59). In 1857 the Storting had rejected two proposals designed to draw Norway and Sweden more closely together.¹⁸ Bergen's four representatives had voted for these proposals, and in the columns of the local newspaper, *Bergensposten*, of which he became editor in December, 1858, Björnson demanded therefore that all four be replaced by new men. The union, he wrote, was "for mutual security." But in matters of trade and the like Sweden was to be treated as was any other country. There could be, he asserted, "no brotherliness in a game of cards."¹⁹ In the press and on the platform he agitated intensely for a political party with the definite program of Norwegian independence, as opposed to "peaceful amalgamation" with Sweden, the only kind to be feared but in any event "the most dangerous."²⁰ The Bergen campaign of March and April, 1859, proved a remarkable exhibition of nationalistic fervor.²¹ An innovation for the country at large, it set an example for the future and demonstrated the power of the ardent young patriot-poet. Björnson triumphed, not by logic but by emotion. "The national instinct," he proclaimed, "is the loftiest a nation can possess both for defense and for attack, and woe to the man who does not possess it!"²² Björnson was particularly active among the working classes and in addressing assemblies of voters in the city. Indeed, it was his belief that "all larger gatherings are a baptism in national spirit. In the presence

¹⁸ One dealt with tariffs; the other, with judicial decisions.

¹⁹ *Bgsp.*, 1859, no. 32.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1859, no. 23.

²¹ See H. Christensen, *Bergen og Norge* (Bergen, 1921), p. 75 *et seq.*; *B-St.*, p. 180 *et seq.*; *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 184-85; Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 339 *et seq.*; and *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

²² *Bgsp.*, 1859, no. 31. Read the trenchant criticism of H. Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 79 *et seq.*

of the people in a body all unwarranted opinions become shamefaced and lapse into silence; it is only the greater and freer words which can be heard."²³ Characteristic also was his suggestion that the election be held on May 17, for on that day there would hardly be chosen any man who had voted, spoken, or worked for a closer union than already existed with Sweden. Hereafter, he asked, why should not the members of the Storting always be elected on May 17?²⁴

Björnsson's candidates won by an overwhelming majority. Moreover, he had foreseen correctly the danger in amalgamation, which at this time was viewed with favor by many in both realms as well as by the ruling house.²⁵ For in 1859 a firm believer in Scandinavianism ascended the throne as Charles XV. Björnsson was attracted by the new king, and when the Storting opened on October 1, 1859, he published his patriotic song, *Yes, we love this land*, in honor of Charles XV.²⁶ After mention of past wars with Sweden the poet dealt with the present in an optimistic stanza, wherein the monarch himself was described as a frontier guard with the union as his best weapon.²⁷ Conducive also to good feeling in Norway was the tacit understanding that the king would sanction the abolition of the office of *statholder*, which had been vacant since 1855.

On December 9, 1859, the Storting passed a bill to abolish the position of *statholder*, and in *Aftenbladet* of the same day Björnsson reported that its action had already been promised approval by the king.²⁸ The poet's statement was accurate enough but he might better have kept silent.²⁹ For in Sweden bitter voices were raised demanding supremacy over Norway, and there followed an intense anti-Norwegian campaign in the Swedish press. Sweden's consent, it was said, had to be secured in order to abolish the office of *statholder*, and it was declared that the Act of Union itself must be revised.³⁰ Charles XV spent an unhappy Christmas, torn between his two peoples, but in the end he yielded to Swedish pressure and refused to sanction the Norwegian measure. As *Morgenbladet* observed,³¹ Sweden had

²³ *Bgsp.*, 1859, no. 29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1859, no. 23.

²⁵ See *B-St.*, pp. 181-82; Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

²⁶ *Aftenbl.*, 1859, no. 228.

²⁷ Omitted in the revised version, the present national anthem of Norway.

²⁸ *Aftenbl.*, 1859, no. 287.

²⁹ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. ix, p. 224 *et seq.* See O. Arvesen, *Oplevelser og Erindringer* (Chra., 1912), pp. 97-99; but cf. the devastating criticism of Arvesen's account by C. Collin, *Björnsson*, vol. ii (revised ed., Chra., 1923), p. 259 *et seq.*

³⁰ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. ix, p. 222 *et seq.* Cf. Gjerset, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 523-25.

³¹ *Mgbl.*, 1860, no. 113.

triumphed, but "the hope of a better understanding between the two realms is unfortunately also lost for a very long time."⁸²

Morgenbladet had been humble, the Swedish press hostile on this issue, and in a series of articles in *Aftenbladet* Björnson took both severely to task.⁸³ The Swedes in particular surprised and grieved him in three matters: they were not so sincere as had often been asserted in regard to "freedom and equality in the union"; they had a strong desire to meddle in Norwegian affairs; and they spoke of the demands of Norway as "revolution," as if she were subject to Sweden. To eliminate the *statholder* would, Björnson declared, free the Norwegian nation from a disagreeable "sham" and "lie"; of this act the Swedes were spectators and their press could therefore cease its clamor at once.⁸⁴ Since the Swedish *Riksdag*, however, persisted in viewing the question as its affair also, Björnson advised an untiring struggle by his people for this program: "The union precious, but independence more precious." Norwegians must fight openly, he declared, in order to awaken love of the fatherland and to promote national cohesion. "Patriotism must always be strengthened," he said, and "every significant patriotic cause must be used." The rule for the future, he stated, must be that every step Sweden takes against Norwegian independence in order to strengthen the union, simply weakens it. This rule was to be learned and repeated until it became a part of the national consciousness in Norway.⁸⁵

Such bold and vigorous speech alarmed many of his countrymen, and as a result the poet was forced to leave the editorial staff of *Aftenbladet* in January, 1860. It had become too uncomfortable for him in Christiania. But before going abroad he published his *Answer from Norway*—a poem glowing with indignation at the insults so recently showered upon Norway in the Swedish *Riksdag* and stressing that his people also had their saga and in the past had been quite able to cope with the Swedes. Yet relying upon the justice of his cause and singling out his opponents as only the Swedish nobility "waving the hat of Charles XII," he ended with characteristic optimism on the note, not of hatred, but of love between the two peoples.⁸⁶

⁸² The office of *statholder* was finally abolished in 1873 by the Storting, with the approval of the king. Björnson thought it a "worthless royal prerogative." See *Brytnings-Ar*, vol. i, pp. 62-63; and *Skandinaven og Amerika*, September 23, 1873.

⁸³ *Aftenbl.*, 1859, nos. 296-301, December 20-27.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1859, no. 298.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1859, no. 303.

⁸⁶ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. ix, p. 230.

Like the hero in his rural idyll, *A Happy Boy*,³⁷ for Björnsson hope beamed anew even in the midst of defeat.

Three years the poet remained outside of Norway, forsaking politics and devoting himself to literature. In 1863 he turned homeward, just as trouble was brewing in Schleswig-Holstein. Scandinavianism was at stake; would the three peoples of the North stand solidly against the foe?³⁸ To Sweden Björnsson appealed, "Lift thou thine ancient yellow-bluel" Sweden with its stirring past must lead the onslaught.³⁹ But all his eloquence failed to stir either of the united realms into action. Denmark was crushed, Scandinavianism discredited. Easter of 1864 found him bitter.⁴⁰ The blame for the catastrophe he laid at the door of Charles XV: "he is the traitor!"⁴¹ Norway's role in the Danish crisis was, he complained, "so humiliating for the national feeling that national songs have come to a stop as if of their own accord." Norway was plainly but a province of Sweden, and though the king could "play soldier," he lacked "moral courage." Indeed, Björnsson had lost faith in the royal house and looked forward to a republican Scandinavia.⁴² The "spirit of the North," he asserted, "is not yet dead."⁴³ But when he alluded to Denmark in his verses written for the fiftieth anniversary of the union with Sweden—November 4, 1864—he was told that his poem was "too Scandinavian." The "spirit of the North" could not embrace the stricken Danish brother"; to do so might offend the Swedes!⁴⁴

The next few years saw peace between the Norwegians and the Swedes. The union seemed firm in the public favor, and Björnsson could even joke about the issues which in the past had separated the two peoples.⁴⁵ On the whole, during this period Scandinavianism appears to have obscured his national feeling.⁴⁶ The summer of 1866 he spent in Stockholm, where he

³⁷ Written during this period and published serially in *Aftenbladet*, this story reflects the author's own struggles; Collin *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 574 *et seq.*

³⁸ On both Norwegian and Swedish politics during this crisis, see H. Koht, *Die Stellung Norwegens und Schwedens im deutsch-dänischen Konflikt, zumal während der Jahre 1863 und 1864* (Chra., 1908).

³⁹ See F. Bull, ed., Björnsson's *Samlede Digte*, vol. i, pp. 106-08; *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, *passim*, for his attitude on the Danish question.

⁴⁰ See his poem "When Norway Would Not Help," *Samlede Digte*, vol. i, pp. 110-13.

⁴¹ *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, p. 117.

⁴² *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 130.

⁴³ F. Bull, ed., Björnsson's *Samlede Digte*, vol. i, pp. 116-18.

⁴⁴ On this episode see F. Bull's notes, Björnsson's *Samlede Digte*, vol. i, pp. 236-37.

⁴⁵ See the second stanza of his poem, "For the North," dated November 4, 1866; *Samlede Digte*, vol. i, p. 143.

⁴⁶ *B-St.*, p. 187. See his speech for the North, May 17, 1867. *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 279-81.

was enthusiastically received, made many friends—whose political influence he probably overrated—and aroused attention by his warmth of feeling for the Swedes. The latter, he realized, had a place in his dreams for the Scandinavian North.⁴⁷

Seemingly crushed when Denmark met defeat in 1864, Scandinavianism in the ensuing years had actually become more of a threat than ever before to Norwegian independence. The supporters of the movement planned to strengthen the union between Norway and Sweden, hoping later to draw Denmark into the ultimate Scandinavian superstate. Such a state was the aim of the Scandinavian Society in Christiania, established in May, 1864. Bernhard Dunker⁴⁸ and Björnson, however, protested, and set up the counter-program of three wholly independent Scandinavian nations.⁴⁹ "First and foremost," said the poet, "we should be Norwegians, and then Scandinavians. Individuality each of the three peoples must possess in order to have something to exchange with the others."⁵⁰

In March, 1866, Björnson became editor of *Norsk Folkeblad*, a weekly which soon became the chief organ of the Norwegian opposition to a closer union with Sweden. The opening attack was directed against the Scandinavian Society, the "stronghold" of the party favoring amalgamation. Dunker and Björnson were grateful for the good done by Carl Johan, but they insisted on freeing Norway from dependence on Sweden. The charge brought against them of hating the Swedes they vigorously refuted.⁵¹ When the king's daughter Louise became engaged to Crown Prince Frederick of Denmark, Björnson gave vent in verse to the hope that the match would bring about a united North. At the close of the sixties he was in fact quite sympathetic toward the ruling house of Sweden-Norway.⁵²

During the winter of 1866-67 the Scandinavian Society in Christiania was very active in promoting sentiment favorable to the amalgamation of Norway and Sweden. In the spring of 1867 appeared the draft of a new Act of Union, upon which a joint Norwegian and Swedish committee had labored since 1865; this document if adopted would have led to a federal union with an assured Swedish supremacy.⁵³ Professor T. H. Aschehoug, the unionist leader, advocated a new Act of Union. Against him were ar-

⁴⁷ *B-St.*, pp. 187-88; *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. lxx.

⁴⁸ On Bernhard Dunker (1809-70) see *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 285-94; 353-56.

⁴⁹ *B-St.*, p. 188.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 325. See *N.F.*, 1869, no. 6, for a similar thought.

⁵¹ *N.F.*, 1867, no. 35.

⁵² *B-St.*, pp. 189-90. Björnson even planned a bridal gift.

⁵³ Despite the later stand of his newspaper, *Norsk Folkeblad*, Björnson appears to have been favorably impressed with this proposal. See *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. lxx; vol. ii, pp. 236-37, 242.

rayed such diverse personalities as the bourgeois Liberals, Johan Sverdrup and Bernhard Dunker, the historian J. E. Sars, the agrarian leader, Sören Jaabæk, and former antagonists like Björnson and A. O. Vinje—all united, young or old, on a national issue. Together with the newly-founded Liberal newspaper, *Dagbladet*, and the short-lived organ of the younger patriots, *Vort Land*, *Norsk Folkeblad* campaigned against any closer ties with Sweden. Björnson's popularity declined, he was forced to relinquish his position in the Christiania Theater, but he continued the struggle. It was as much a victory for him as for his cause when on April 17, 1871, by a vote of 92 to 17, the Storting rejected the proposal for a more intimate union with Sweden. The Scandinavianism which aimed at merging the peoples of Norway and Sweden had been decisively defeated by the rising tide of Norwegian nationalism. Henceforth the latter was to dominate the scene.

The Franco-Prussian war revived hopes in the Scandinavian North of regaining Schleswig, and in his newspaper Björnson advocated a "third" war for that purpose.⁵⁴ "Our cause is Schleswig," he asserted. Pointing out that the Norwegian flag carried both "the Swedish blue, the Danish red and white," he now held that it was Norway's duty to lead the united North against Prussia.⁵⁵ Already, he claimed, in her constitution and in her development Norway served as a model for her neighbors.⁵⁶ Only the bureaucracy favored amalgamation, and as a counterweight he sought the support of the democracy in Denmark and Sweden.⁵⁷ In the winter of 1871-72 he traveled and lectured in Sweden, meeting a most favorable public response. Upon his return to Christiania he left *Norsk Folkeblad*. In his farewell article he noted that first of all the relationship of Norway to Sweden had since the fifties prompted his political activity; while in the second place came his campaign for complete, popular self-government. Now, he thought, progress was assured.⁵⁸

Björnson's reliance upon the democratic forces in Scandinavia doubtless reflected his continued lack of faith in the Bernadotte dynasty. Oscar II, who succeeded Charles XV in 1872, though "personally lovable," proved a disappointment to Björnson.⁵⁹ The poet's plans for a conference in 1872 of the leading Scandinavian Liberals miscarried, but he hoped for political

⁵⁴ *N.F.*, 1871, nos. 30A, 31. He believed (No. 30A) that by entering the war Norway could divert 100,000 Prussian troops.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1871, no. 32A.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1871, no. 38.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1871, no. 39.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1871, no. 52.

⁵⁹ *Skandinaven og Amerika*, May 6, 1873; September 23, 1873.

progress through the cooperation of the Liberal parties which around 1870 had begun to develop in the North. Important also in these years was his friendship with S. A. Hedlund, the Swedish Liberal editor of Gothenburg.⁶⁰ However, toward the close of 1871 he felt that for the time being his "mission" had ended. He was, he said, a man for "crises."⁶¹ The balance of the decade he devoted to travel, to his literary efforts, and to religious questions. Not until 1879 did he again concern himself seriously with Norwegian politics.

After 1879 the union with Sweden became the dominant issue in Norwegian political life, and with Björnson in the lead, the Liberals advanced steadily toward a completely independent Norway. For the poet Scandinavianism by and large faded out of the picture, remaining chiefly a cherished aspiration—until the events of 1905 provided a new basis for cooperation in the North.⁶² The attempt in 1879 to remove the mark of the union from the Norwegian merchant flag has been discussed in the preceding chapter. Here it will suffice to repeat that Björnson was in no sense animated by anti-Swedish feeling, and that he was deeply shocked to discover that his people were branded with the mark of the union, not only in their flags but also in their minds. It irked him that Sweden should constantly be used as a threat to hinder the Norwegians—as when, he said, "we wish the flag which alone can express our complete independence" . . . or as "when we wish a more consistent self-rule as security for development in national spirit," or simply "hold a republican lecture." Should this attitude continue, he asserted, the day would come at last when every clear-sighted Norwegian must become a republican in order to abolish the existing form of the union, since the latter must "at no point be able to hinder our development."⁶³

Since youth Björnson had been an ardent republican, and during the intervening years he lost no opportunity to air his views.⁶⁴ In his judgment there was "no country on the face of the earth so qualified for a republic as Norway."⁶⁵ But in 1881 a republic seemed remote. A more immediate and pressing issue was at hand, namely the establishment of a parliamentary system, for which Johan Sverdrup and Björnson had long fought. On May 29, 1880, for the third time Oscar II refused to sanction a Norwegian

⁶⁰ *Bryttings-Ar*, vol. i, p. xxxi *et seq.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 64.

⁶² *B-St.*, pp. 197-99.

⁶³ *Dagbl.*, 1880, no. 16.

⁶⁴ See his republican treatise, *Af mine Foredrag om Republikken* (Chra., 1880). As 1905 proved, he was not for a republic through thick and thin; at times he appears to have used it simply as a stalking-horse.

⁶⁵ *Scribner's (Century) Magazine*, vol. 21 (1881), p. 610.

constitutional amendment providing for ministerial responsibility to the parliament. But on June 9 of the same year the Storting declared by a large majority that its measure should be proclaimed as legally enacted. The fundamental law of Norway was at stake, and authorities were therefore divided as to the nature of the king's veto power.⁶⁶ Conservatives claimed that the king had an absolute veto on amendments to the constitution, but the Liberals, including Björnson, denied him any such power.⁶⁷ To Björnson it was clear that the conflict would end with the next Norwegian election, when the voters would decide "whether we ourselves, or the king—who is also the Swedish king and who lives in Sweden—should control our constitution."⁶⁸ At a celebration in honor of the Storting resolution of June 9, 1880, the poet referred to both royalists and republicans as being united by "something loftier," namely "the fatherland." The people, he asserted, were the supreme law of the land.⁶⁹ For the ultimate settlement of the veto question, he looked to the *Riksrret*, a special tribunal composed of members of the Storting and of the Norwegian Supreme Court.⁷⁰

During the summer and fall of 1881 Björnson engaged in constant republican agitation designed to weaken the hold of the monarchy upon the Norwegian people and to prepare the way for a Liberal victory in the elections of 1882. Noteworthy in this period was his speech of June 25, 1881, at Lillestrømmen, on the relationship of Norway to Sweden, which he characterized as a central factor in Norwegian politics.⁷¹ Disclaiming as usual any personal hatred for the Swedes, he showed that the union with them had been no unmixed blessing for the Norwegians. As for Norway, abroad it was viewed as a part of Sweden. The royal house was Swedish. "Not one of the king's children had received a Norwegian name." The king himself came to Christiania almost as an itinerant visitor.⁷² But king or no king,

⁶⁶ Gjerset, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 536-39.

⁶⁷ Björnson's ideas are found in *V.G.*, 1880, nos. 62, 63, 72. The poet had no hesitation in challenging the interpretations by learned jurists of the constitution; in general he had little respect for the legal profession. He was also opposed to a suspensive royal veto on constitutional matters; see *V.G.*, 1880, no. 76.

⁶⁸ *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 496.

⁶⁹ *V.G.*, 1880, no. 76, July 1. For his doctrine of popular sovereignty read his *Om Folkesuveraniteten eller det Norske Folks Husbondsret* (Chra., 1882).

⁷⁰ *Scribner's (Century) Magazine*, vol. 21, pp. 610-11; *V.G.*, 1880, no. 82; Gjerset, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 541 *et seq.*

⁷¹ *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 525-38. *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, pp. 264-65.

⁷² The writer has heard Professor Francis Bull describe the impression made upon him as a youth by the darkened palace in the Norwegian capital.

the union would stand fast. Its form might change, but common interests and mutual respect would bind the two peoples together. For, as his closing resolution put it, the more freedom there was among the Norwegians and the Swedes, the more securely their union would stand. His letters to S. A. Hedlund during the summer of 1881 reveal a growing conviction that the existing form of the union could not endure.⁷³ The Norwegian people, he declared, were the "living constitution" of the land, and he showed how "groundless" was the prevalent "fear of the majority."⁷⁴ Urging both parties in Norway to speak openly, he contrasted their programs. The Conservatives, he said, would prefer Swedish domination to the complete self-rule demanded by the Liberals.⁷⁵ "A small people like ours," he observed, "whose administration *as yet* is not in its hands, so that it is not *as yet* filled with the spirit of the people, is injured in its nationality and delayed in its development."⁷⁶

The acute political crisis gave particular impetus in 1881 to the formation of numerous rifle clubs throughout Norway. Ostensibly organized to strengthen national defense, such clubs were by no means new. But it was feared, especially among Conservatives, that they might become the nucleus of an army to support the Storting.⁷⁷ Such a purpose, in fact, was boldly proclaimed on September 15, 1881, in Björnson's vigorous song for the Norwegian rifle clubs,⁷⁸ in which "the oldster in the Storting" was pictured as voting bravely and securely behind the "rifle-ring" of youth.⁷⁹ When taken to task because of this song, Björnson contended that the Storting and not the king was the highest expression of freedom and independence. Its struggle gripped the mind of youth, and in order to defend its free deliberations and to encourage its feeling of security and independence, the rifles were to crack from every dale within an otherwise quiet land. It was his hope and belief that no one would threaten the liberty of the national assembly. But to the end that this might never occur, the drilling would continue. This, Björnson said, was the truth. Unlike certain others he was too honest not to acknowledge the prime purpose for which

⁷³ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, pp. 265, 269, 270-71, 272-73.

⁷⁴ *Dagbl.*, 1881, no. 209.

⁷⁵ See *V.G.*, 1881, nos. 146, 147, 149, and the summary in no. 151.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1881, no. 149.

⁷⁷ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, pp. 113-14.

⁷⁸ First published in *V.G.*, 1881, no. 108. See Björnson's *Samlede Digte*, vol. ii, pp. 147, 279-80; and Palmer, Björnson's *Poems and Songs*, pp. 210-11.

⁷⁹ See Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, pp. 130-31, for reproductions from Jon Hol's pamphlet of 1884, based on Björnson's poem.

the riflemen could be used.⁸⁰ The riflemen, however, were never called upon to defend the Storting, though the latter remained a center of contention.

On May 17, 1882, at Eidsvold, the birthplace of the Norwegian constitution, Björnsson spoke on the familiar cry, "Long Live the King, the Union—and the Fatherland!" To Björnsson the Fatherland could not come last, as if an afterthought. It must stand first and foremost: in relation to it both the King and the Union were small. For the Fatherland is the eternal, the abiding, "all that we cherish, the heritage of the past and the hope of the future."⁸¹ Still more significant was his superb oratory at Stiklestad, where the national saint, Olaf, had met his death. At this historic spot on July 4, 1882, his countrymen had gathered by the thousands to hear him. With flags flying and with patriotic music filling the air, it was a nationalist celebration throughout.⁸² As befitted the occasion, Björnsson's address was a fervent appeal to Norway's independence in the past as a stirring challenge for the present.⁸³ Centuries of allegiance to the king of another country—first to Denmark's, then to Sweden's monarch—had left the Norwegians lacking in independence, viewed in the world at large as merely a sort of appendage to Sweden. There was wanting a national, a Norwegian leader. The king was Swedish. For this king was demanded, moreover, an absolute veto. But if the monarchy could not relinquish this demand, then the Norwegian people must relinquish the monarchy. "The Swede can glory in being Swedish, for Sweden is a glorious land. But for the Norwegian it is a shame to be Swedish, for then he has nothing for himself." Therefore, "the Norwegian must battle for his own national independence." Sooner or later, he declared, victory would be won.

Time and again in the year 1882 Björnsson lent his mighty voice to agitation for the Liberal cause, and the success of that party in the elections was due in no small measure to his eloquence. But despite defeat at the polls the Conservative ministry did not retire, and, therefore, early in 1883 its members were impeached by the special tribunal known as the *Riksrret*. Since 1880 Björnsson had maintained that the Norwegian people would

⁸⁰ *V.G.*, 1882, no. 2; *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, pp. 284-85 and vol. ii, pp. 319-20.

⁸¹ *Leve Kongen, Unionen—og Fædrelandet!*; this speech was reported in *V.G.*, 1882, no. 62 and *Dagbl.*, 1882, no. 123 and published separately as a brochure (Chra., 1882). The account in *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 539-42, is incomplete.

⁸² See *V.G.*, 1882, no. 80. *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, p. xxxiv.

⁸³ For the text see *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 543-51; *B-St.*, p. 214 *et seq.*

decide in 1882 whether or not this procedure should be adopted.⁸⁴ It was his contention that the verdict of this tribunal would be the verdict of the people and not of the jurists.⁸⁵ The trial which followed was long and complicated. But when it ended in February of 1884 all the ministers involved were found guilty. On March 11 of the same year the king dismissed the Norwegian minister of state, C. A. Selmer. The king, however, used sharp words anent the *Riksrret*, and its champion, Björnson, replied in even sharper terms. In rapid succession the poet, who was then in Paris, sent home three vigorous articles assailing King Oscar II in such fashion that he was accused of *lèse majesté*.⁸⁶ But the charge was not pressed, and Björnson was deprived of the pleasure he had looked forward to—of sitting in prison and of having a new opportunity to sing *Yes, we love this land*.⁸⁷ What had annoyed him most was Oscar II's assertion that first and foremost he was the "union-king." This the poet termed "impossible."⁸⁸ In January, 1884, Björnson had warned against a "hurrah" for the king and the union until it was deserved. He had, he said, never sought the breaking of the union with Sweden. But without it he believed that the current conflict would have been, if not impossible, at least different. "We are," he concluded, "a people fighting for our national independence. Nothing less is at stake. Let us see if the union stands the test. Then we shall cry hurrah for it."⁸⁹

In the meantime the poet became increasingly critical of the king and of his supporters in Norway.⁹⁰ When the pathetic C. A. Selmer was decorated with the Swedish Order of the Seraphim, Björnson could not restrain his joy. Selmer's services had found their "necessary conclusion," and nothing could better explain the nature of his work in Norway. Why not, suggested the poet, have *all* prominent Norwegian Conservatives receive a Swedish

⁸⁴ See *V.G.*, 1880, nos. 73, 82; *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, pp. 170-71.

⁸⁵ *V.G.*, 1883, nos. 108, 111, 115. *Kamp-Liv*, vol. ii, pp. 133, 334. Since his first political campaign in Bergen, Björnson had fought the Norwegian jurists; his distrust of them, moreover, was shared by many of his countrymen. See *V.G.*, 1883, no. 116 and Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 117.

⁸⁶ *V.G.*, 1884, nos. 36, 41, 42; nos. 36 and 41 are reprinted in *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 18-23.

⁸⁷ His only fear was that Friele might be confined with him and that he, Björnson, who had such a good conscience and could sleep so heartily, would be disturbed by hearing the editor gnash his teeth. *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 23.

⁸⁸ *V.G.*, 1884, no. 14.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1884, no. 9. See *Kamp-Liv*, vol. ii, pp. 187-88, where Björnson compares the union to a threatening "mitrailleuse."

⁹⁰ See *V.G.*, 1884, nos. 31, 35, 42, 46, 58.

reward, say, a yellow ribbon to be worn about the neck? ⁹¹ But minority rule, looking to the monarchy for support, was rapidly nearing its end in Norway. Yet much as Björnsson was disturbed by the actions of the Norwegian Conservatives and their ally, the king, he was soon almost equally perturbed by the concessions of the majority, the Liberals, who came into power under Johan Sverdrup in June of 1884. For Sverdrup had consented to a compromise whereby Oscar II was spared humiliation and yet in essence sanctioned the parliamentary principle. This Björnsson could not condone: "we needed no compromise," said he. ⁹² However, as the eventful year of 1884 drew to a close, he was again optimistic. The union apparently had stood the test. The Swedish people, respecting the independence of Norway, even furnished men—like Adolf Hedin and above all S. A. Hedlund—to aid whenever it was endangered. ⁹³

Immediately after the Liberal victory of 1884 the union did appear more secure than it had been for years. ⁹⁴ But there were ominous signs of further difficulty in the future. The triumph of parliamentary responsibility in Norway was also the triumph of Norwegian nationalism, for the king against whom the battle was waged was thought of as being Swedish, ⁹⁵ while his Conservative ministry was viewed as clinging to office under him despite obvious repudiation by the majority of the Norwegian people. Would not the victorious, nationalistic Liberals now press onward and attack the union itself? Moreover, in the following year, 1885, both the Norwegians and the Swedes took certain steps which ultimately helped bring about a separation of the two peoples. To the Norwegians, who often felt the need of direct representation abroad, it was a further humiliation when the Swedish foreign minister, who was also perforce theirs, was brought more definitely under the control of the Swedish Parliament. ⁹⁶ To the Swedes, who counted especially upon the armed forces of both realms for defense, it was a grave disappointment when the Norwegian army was so reorganized as to reduce radically the contingent which could be used by Sweden. ⁹⁷ Finally, during the late eighties Sweden turned to

⁹¹ *V.G.*, 1884, no. 35. The yellow was a color in the Swedish flag.

⁹² *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 25; *V.G.*, 1884, no. 81. For the subsequent controversy on political compromises see *Dagbl.*, 1884, nos. 239, 252, 267, 270, 279, 310. *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, pp. xliii-xliv; vol. ii, pp. 235, 343.

⁹³ *Dagbl.*, 1884, no. 432.

⁹⁴ *B-St.*, p. 219.

⁹⁵ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 117, states that Oscar II had spent too little time in Norway to gain any position as a "Norwegian king."

⁹⁶ Further details will be given below, in Ch. VI.

⁹⁷ The address presented to the king by the Swedish Parliament in 1905 stressed "a

protectionism, while Norway adopted free trade; thus there could be no community of commercial and economic interests.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, despite an uncertain future for the union, Björnson's objective, self-rule—national autonomy—had been attained. No longer could a minority, with the support of the king, defy the majority of the Norwegian people. According to Professor Nils Edén of Upsala, "The last vestige of the independence of the royal authority disappeared in 1884, when the Storting ruthlessly convicted the ministers of the King through the means of a . . . court of impeachment. . . . From this time Norway, in the insistence on its independence, begins to attack the very kernel of the Union: the unity of the two countries in their relations to foreign powers."⁹⁹ To this development, which led directly to the complete independence of Norway, we now turn.

safe frontier to the west" as the principal object of Sweden in establishing the Union; therefore, as "a peremptory condition" it was believed that "the organized powers of defence of the two Kingdoms should be at the entire disposal of the Union-King for repulsing attacks on the Scandinavian Peninsula." See *The Union between Sweden and Norway* (Stkln., 1905), p. 9. However (*Ibid.*, pp. 10-11), after 1885 the "common defence" was crippled by lack of support from Norway; see also N. Edén, *Sweden for Peace* (Upsala, 1905), p. 7.

⁹⁸ See P. Drachmann and H. Westergaard, *The Industrial Development and Commercial Policies of the Three Scandinavian Countries* (New York, 1915), pp. 58-59, 89-90. Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 372 *et seq.* and *B-St.*, p. 225.

⁹⁹ N. Edén, *op. cit.*, p. 7. The court of impeachment was the *Riksrät*.

VI

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

THE FIRST Bernadotte, Charles XIV (Carl Johan), had been largely his own minister for foreign affairs for Norway and Sweden. In theory he and his successors guided the diplomacy of both realms, but in practice made use generally of the Swedish foreign office. Though disliked by many Norwegians this arrangement was tacitly tolerated as a convenient, temporary solution of a ticklish problem. The celebrated Bodö affair,¹ in which Norwegian interests were undeniably slighted, stimulated the demand for a more direct and responsible representation of Norway in foreign affairs.² This demand was in part satisfied in 1835 by a royal decree providing for the presence of a Norwegian representative in Stockholm during the consideration of diplomatic questions of particular importance to Norway.³ But in 1885 the Swedish constitution was amended, so that the king was bound to employ exclusively the Swedish foreign minister to report all foreign affairs in the Cabinet Council, to which was added another Swedish member.⁴ Thus, Sweden had three representatives to Norway's one, and the change of 1885, however justifiable, seemed to Norwegians a deliberate attempt to curb their influence in foreign affairs. As Sars has strikingly pointed out, although the control of foreign relations had hitherto actually fallen into the hands of a Swedish official, yet since this control could also technically be exercised by the common king Norway's shame was hidden behind a fig leaf. But now even the fig leaf was torn away.⁵

¹ This affair, which involved certain English smugglers operating flagrantly in Norway, has been set in its true perspective by G. M. Gathorne Hardy, *Bodö-saken. British diplomatic Correspondence relating to the Bodö affair* (Oslo, 1926). Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. viii, p. 401 *et seq.* Björnson had the usual Norwegian interpretation of this episode: in 1905 he recalled it to indicate the "reprehensible conduct of the Swedish Foreign Office." See *The Independent*, vol. 59, pp. 92-93.

² Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. viii, p. 405; vol. x, pp. 205-06.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. viii, p. 407.

⁴ See Sars, *op. cit.*, vol. v, 2, p. 54 *et seq.*; Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 206 *et seq.* One important effect of the change was to make the Swedish foreign office more directly responsible to the Swedish Parliament than to the king.

⁵ Sars, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, 2, p. 57.

It is possible that Björnson hardly understood the significance of this new arrangement in 1885.⁶ Yet as early as 1879 he outlined Norway's development toward complete independence in her relations with other powers. For in that year he took up the struggle to make the Norwegian flag "pure"; in other words, to free the Norwegian national emblem of the Swedish colors so as to represent properly the status of Norway. Upon this issue he envisaged a great "national revival," and with this goal gained, the demands could be arranged. Not only Norway's own consular service and responsibility for her interests abroad were involved, he said, but closer still her own government. For Norway had no government of her own until it enjoyed the confidence of the Storting.⁷ The latter objective was attained with the establishment in 1884 of ministerial responsibility to the Norwegian Parliament. But direct representation abroad was not secured, significantly enough, until the union had been broken in 1905. Björnson summed up the situation still more concisely at Eidsvold on May 17, 1882. First among Norway's representatives in foreign parts, said the poet, "we have the king." But born and reared in Sweden, the king cannot be a national, Norwegian leader. He cannot in fact "represent our freedom and independence."⁸ As for the Storting it represents independence internally, not externally. Abroad, in the English or German press, its acts are interpreted as "revolt against Sweden!" If "we had a Norwegian diplomatic service," that interpretation would obviously be corrected. But the diplomatic service is Swedish. Finally, the Norwegian flag with its mark of the union appears to the foreigner as "Swedish!" All of which led the poet to conclude that "abroad we have as yet no representative whatever of our freedom and independence."⁹

The union did not give Norway an equal voice with Sweden, and by 1884 its shortcomings were so evident that Björnson was "absolutely through with it."¹⁰ The rising tide of anti-Norwegian feeling among the Swedes did not escape him: "everyone," he observed, "who loves his fatherland has followed with increasing attention the movement against us in Sweden."¹¹ As a result he had fewer warm words for the bond between

⁶ *B-St.*, p. 220.

⁷ *Dagbl.*, 1879, no. 85.

⁸ Though Björnson was certain that there had not yet been a Swedish king as anxious as was Oscar II to represent Norway.

⁹ *Dagbl.*, 1882, no. 123.

¹⁰ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. ii, p. 217. Letter of April 20, 1884 to J. E. Sars.

¹¹ *V.G.*, 1885, no. 435. Cf. *Ibid.*, 1885, no. 56 (*Tillæg*), with its suggestion that Norwegians shun further conversation with Swedes who remark it a pity or shame

the two realms. On June 5, 1886, in a speech at the Tivoli in Christiania he declared that Norway was not yet sufficiently Norwegian. Impeded by dead years under Denmark, Norwegian national feeling was still not fully developed. The Norwegians, for instance, had acquiesced in being guided in foreign affairs by General Björnstjerna,¹² who considered Norway a Swedish protectorate much like Madagascar under the French.¹³ When the Liberals met at Hamar in September, 1886, Björnsson supported a resolution directed against any extension of joint ties with Sweden, even if offered on a basis of equality. Although it was not then adopted, this resolution finally appeared on the program of the Pure Liberals in 1888.¹⁴ After 1884 the poet of the nation, who had so frequently praised as the "patriot" par excellence the Liberal chieftain, Johan Sverdrup, turned against him.¹⁵ In Björnsson's opinion Sverdrup had played the traitor in his negotiations with the Swedes, who after 1885 sought to have the Swedish minister for foreign affairs legally established as the representative of both kingdoms. On November 18, 1886, Björnsson attacked vigorously Sverdrup's proposal that the foreign minister be either Norwegian or Swedish but responsible to a "Delegation," in which the national assemblies of both realms should be equally represented. This, Björnsson feared, would mean a genuine amalgamation of both peoples.¹⁶ Such a proposal, he asserted, should have been submitted to the Norwegian people so that it could be decided upon in the next election. In the meantime he urged letting the injustice in the existing arrangement "further educate our national feeling."¹⁷

The injustice remained and further weakened the ministry of Johan Sverdrup. The latter's failure to cope with the Swedish maneuver of 1885 told heavily against him, and, coupled with troublesome domestic issues,¹⁸ left him no longer the leader of a united Liberal party. By the summer of 1887 the Liberals had split into three factions—a radical group, the Pure

that Carl Johan in 1814 did not make Norway a Swedish province; the poet urged this to foster "national self-respect" among his people.

¹² O. M. F. Björnstjerna, Swedish minister for foreign affairs, 1872-80.

¹³ *V.G.*, 1886, no. 66.

¹⁴ The Pure Liberals, led by Johannes Steen and Björnsson, were the Liberals who repudiated the leadership of Johan Sverdrup. On the resolution see Sars, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, 2, p. 72.

¹⁵ The poet had long been critical of Johan Sverdrup; see Koht, *Johan Sverdrup*, vol. iii, pp. 253-54.

¹⁶ *V.G.*, 1886, no. 136; also no. 137. See Koht, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 348; and Sars, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, 2, pp. 76-77.

¹⁷ *V.G.*, 1886, no. 140.

¹⁸ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 212 *et seq.*

Liberals, headed by Björnson and Johannes Steen; the Moderate Liberals who supported Johan Sverdrup;¹⁹ and finally a few individuals, known as "the Nomads," who tried to keep on good terms with the other two groups of the shattered party.²⁰ Thus disrupted, the Liberals entered the election of 1888, with Björnson supporting the Pure Liberals and attacking Johan Sverdrup.²¹ The Conservatives reaped the most from this dissension, and with fifty-one elected members they became the largest party in the Storting. Johan Sverdrup managed to hang on for a time. But in the summer of 1889 he had to give way to a Conservative ministry headed by Emil Stang.²²

During the spring of 1888 Björnson lectured to appreciative audiences in Sweden and, deeply grateful, bade a touching farewell to Stockholm. Yet, however sincere his love for the Swedes, it was increasingly evident to him that they and the Norwegians were steadily drawing apart. When Ibsen, for instance, had spoken in Stockholm, on September 24, 1887, of the "great fortune" in having a "greater fatherland," Björnson rebuked him with the statement that this "greater fatherland" the Norwegians could find within themselves and within their own borders. "The difference," he maintained, "between the Swedes and us is not decreasing but increasing." Furthermore, since the Swedes had set their hearts upon a perpetual protectorate over the Norwegians, progress must be, as Björnson saw it, away from rather than toward Sweden.²³ By 1888 it was clear that the control of foreign relations had become a vital, national issue in both Norway and Sweden. The result was, in the words of Francis Bull, "a conflict between two peoples."²⁴

In 1889 Björnson aired at length the differences between Norway and

¹⁹ Prominent in this faction were the followers of Pastor Lars Oftedal; the witty Kielland dubbed them "rabbits" and gave a classic description of their methods in his novel *St. Hansfest* (1887). For Björnson's views on Oftedal read *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 207-10.

²⁰ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 216.

²¹ The campaign against Johan Sverdrup was most bitter. Some blamed him, others Björnson, for the suicide in June, 1888, of the poet's old friend, Ole Richter, the Norwegian minister of state in Stockholm.

²² Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, pp. 203-21. Keilhau's appraisal of Johan Sverdrup is interesting but not always convincing; the stress upon the "blood of southern France" in Sverdrup and Oscar II (p. 229) is hardly warranted. *Ibid.*, vol. x, pp. 222-30.

²³ *Dagbl.*, 1887, no. 330; also in *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 81-82. *V.G.* 1889, no. 208.

²⁴ *B-St.*, p. 226. According to Bull, Björnson could not see that the Swedes, whether liberal or conservative, were moved by national considerations to resist the Norwegian demand for a separate foreign office.

Sweden. He contrasted cleverly "the great democracy of Norway" with Sweden, a nation "closely linked to monarchy, nobility, and old traditions." Though the union hindered the "progress" of the Norwegians, they did not, he claimed, wish its "dissolution." All they wanted was a "federation with the Swedish people, prompted by natural conditions, mutual interests, and the near kinship of the two peoples."²⁵ Yet despite the optimism shown by suggesting a federation between Norway and Sweden, during 1889 Björnsson became increasingly bitter in his comment upon the Swedish leaders. In October of that year he issued a special reprint of his series of articles called *Tiggerposen* (*The Beggar's Wallet*), in which he declared that Norway was opposed by the newspapers representing the leading classes of Sweden. (With rare humor he even listed *Stockholms Dagblad*, a newspaper whose "specialty" was hating Björnsson.) Were a protectorate necessary, the Norwegians would apply to England or to America, not to Sweden. "We shall," he said, "have full equality in the union, or we shall withdraw from it." This was, he said, the opinion of the majority of thinking Norwegians, regardless of party affiliations. Björnsson had only caustic comment concerning the Swedish attitude toward Norway. What could there be to offend or to harm the Swedes, he asked, in the Norwegian demand for a separate minister of foreign affairs? "We need," he said, "our own foreign minister with a patriotic temperament and a complete insight into commerce and industry. Under him a corps of our own consuls—higher diplomatic positions we do not need, for we have no other interests abroad to watch—and our mercantile marine and our products will attain an increase in the markets, where they now either have the worst of it, or have not been able to reach at all." There was every inch of the independent, patriotic Norwegian in the poet's ringing declaration: "No man is my master, when I do not permit him to be that." Yet Björnsson was still enough of a Pan-Scandinavian to confess that he could not think of the Norwegians and Swedes otherwise than as joined in a "fraternal league."²⁶

Björnsson was a pioneer in demanding a separate foreign office for Norway. It was his hope, first, to unify the Norwegian people in behalf of such a program, and then, once it was realized, to utilize the Norwegian ministry of foreign affairs in the interest of world peace.²⁷ When the Liberal

²⁵ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 78 (1889), pp. 804-05.

²⁶ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 132-41, *passim*. These articles appeared first in *Dagbladet*.

²⁷ L. Hamilton, *Fredrik Borg* (Stkml., 1910), p. 265; and *B-St.*, p. 233.

party met in January, 1891, to plan for the coming election, Björnson was active in setting up a separate Norwegian foreign minister as the ultimate objective. He realized fully the power inherent in a patriotic cause. "Let us," he urged, "be scorned and persecuted because of our patriotism. Nothing can make us stronger."²⁸ During this period he was, he said, "only a politician."²⁹ As such in the summer of 1891 he spoke at more than fifty popular meetings and published numerous articles dealing with the union of Norway and Sweden. In a speech on May 17, 1891, he frankly disclosed his republican leanings. Yet, he said, he would prefer winning complete independence within the union, a goal which he thought could be attained were the foreign affairs of Norway fully separated from "the unworthy and in part dangerous Swedish guardianship." More than half the Norwegian people were now ready, he believed, to work for their own foreign minister, for their own consuls, and for complete equality in a union with the Swedish people under the same king. In short, he looked forward to a personal union. As always, however, he distinguished carefully between the Swedes who were hostile to Norway, the so-called "Storsvensker," and the Swedish people at large from whom he hoped for a friendly understanding.³⁰ But he continued to view with suspicion the prevailing Swedish foreign policy, which he feared might draw Norway and Sweden into a possible war between Germany and Russia.³¹

By 1892 Björnson had become almost pessimistic in his attitude toward Sweden and the union. Constant bickering with the Swedes made him think of the union as "a necessary evil," and he resolved to "loosen" the bond between Norway and Sweden.³² As usual the poet had advocated a policy of gradual rather than of revolutionary change in the relations between the Norwegians and the Swedes. He had, accordingly, advised the Steen ministry of 1891 against pressing the demand for Norwegian consuls, since it was bound to irritate the Swedes.³³ But no attention was paid to his warning of danger ahead. Instead, the Storting appointed a bipartisan committee to investigate the consular question, which in 1891 reported that Norway's maritime and commercial interests necessitated: (1) complete control by Norway of her own consular service; and (2) the appointment

²⁸ *Dagbl.*, 1891, no. 41.

²⁹ *Aftenp.*, 1891, no. 665.

³⁰ *Dagbl.*, 1891, no. 155; *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 186-87.

³¹ *Dagbl.*, 1891, no. 333. *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 191-92. See also *Dagbl.*, 1891, nos. 346, 382; and *Aftenp.*, 1891, no. 702.

³² *V.G.*, 1892, no. 54. *B-St.*, p. 241.

³³ *B-St.*, p. 242.

of Norwegians only to the more important consular positions.⁸⁴ Behind the action of this committee may be discerned the influence of the Norwegian shipping interests seeking the appointment of Norwegian consuls. Although at this time Norway in tonnage far outranked Sweden on the seven seas, the consulates were largely staffed with Swedes. In foreign trade, however, thanks to a greater population and greater resources, Sweden surpassed Norway. Yet since the Swedes adopted protectionism in 1888, while the Norwegians clung to free trade, it was only natural that Norwegian business men should desire alert Norwegian consular agents who could develop new markets.⁸⁵ But the consular service as it then existed had been jointly administered for almost eighty years, and even if Norway had the right to have separate consuls, the issue involved was by no means purely Norwegian. Some consideration had to be given to Sweden.

Although he also realized that due regard must be shown for Sweden's interests, Björnsson maintained that Norway must have her own consuls and even her own diplomats. Personally he preferred having only consuls, for he viewed a "permanent diplomatic corps" as "a luxury which should be dispensed with."⁸⁶ During 1892 he wrote extensively on the conflict in the union, utilizing such publications as the *Review of Reviews*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *The Speaker*, *Vossische Zeitung*, *Berliner Tageblatt*, *Le Temps*, and the Danish liberal organ, *Politikøen*.⁸⁷ Such articles were usually clever appeals for sympathy, which contrasted Norwegian democracy with Swedish aristocracy, casting doubt all the while upon the ultimate end of Swedish foreign policy. But to reassure the Swedes he added that if Sweden were attacked, Norway would go to her assistance. Precisely for that reason, Norway must have her own diplomats so as to know what was being done.⁸⁸ Fortunately, in the summer of 1892 the Storting and the Norwegian government agreed upon a temporary armistice on the consular issue, which was thereby postponed but not solved. For Björnsson this was welcome, indeed, for as a pacifist he desired no action that might provoke war, an eventuality at which the Swedes had already hinted.⁸⁹

Regardless of the truce, there remained a distinct feeling of inferiority

⁸⁴ Christian Michelsen was the only Liberal on the committee. A. Garborg, *Norges Selvstændighedskamp* (Fagerstrand, 1894), pp. 67-69.

⁸⁵ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 378 *et seq.*

⁸⁶ See *Dagbl.*, 1893, no. 27. Björnsson's ideas on consuls and diplomats were rather vague.

⁸⁷ *Mgbl.*, 1892, nos. 143, 429; *Dagbl.*, 1892, nos. 272, 382.

⁸⁸ *Dagbl.*, 1892, no. 34.

⁸⁹ *B-St.*, p. 248.

in the union which irked the Norwegians. The union, claimed Björnson, was "disadvantageous for the smaller nation," that is, Norway, a nation which he felt was superior in many respects to Sweden. Nor would he countenance for a moment the suggestion of the London *Times* that Norway should remain subordinate to Sweden.⁴⁰ But so personal and so bitter had become the relations between the two countries that Swedes and Norwegians could no longer look upon the union objectively. Thus, in 1893, although Professor Harald Hjärne, the Swedish historian, and Björnson began a correspondence on the most friendly basis, in which Norway's right to equality in the union was recognized, the two men ended their exchange of views in a storm of personal abuse.⁴¹ More significant was Björnson's estrangement in 1893 from his former party fellows. He had never questioned the patriotism of his opponents, and he realized that it would not do to face a united Sweden with a cause which, he thought, had the support of hardly fifty per cent of the Norwegians. Acting from this standpoint he devoted himself henceforth to achieving national unity in Norway on the issue of the relationship to Sweden, an objective which was attained some ten years later, in 1903.⁴² Throughout March and April of 1893 the poet engaged in sharp debate in the columns of *Verdens Gang*. He was willing to negotiate with the Swedes. But he viewed "with the greatest abhorrence" any politics that might lead to war. As for the dissolution of the union, that he believed could be obtained under favorable conditions by a united or practically united Norwegian people. For what would Sweden do with a union that was not wanted by the second party to it? ⁴³ With age he had become more considerate, and as always he saw in Sweden a fellow member in a future Pan-Scandinavian federation. For the moment he sought to promote peace, although he realized that his work was useless. The powers to which he appealed were, he felt, not yet in existence. Discouraged, in the fall of 1893 Björnson took refuge in Italy.⁴⁴

In 1894 the political situation in Norway grew more critical, as the Storting took steps to terminate the joint consular service with Sweden,

⁴⁰ See his article in the New York *Herald*, February 11, 1893. Read *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 264-65 for a similar protest against the French description of Norwegians as "Sous-Suédois."

⁴¹ See *B-St.*, p. 249; and *V.G.*, 1893, no. 47. Hjärne alleged that "a European necessity" and "Sweden's duty" justified a Swedish "protectorate" over Norway.

⁴² *V.G.*, 1893, no. 60. See *B-St.*, p. 251.

⁴³ *V.G.*, 1893, nos. 65, 67; see also nos. 57, 60, 61-63, 68, 70-72, 74, 79.

⁴⁴ See *Aftenp.*, 1893, nos. 283, 373; and *B-St.*, pp. 253-54.

effective January 1, 1895. Upon his return from Italy in the spring of 1894 Björnson found himself for a time muzzled by his own party, banned from its press, and not even allowed to speak on May 17. For the voluble Björnson this was punishment, indeed, although in the course of the summer his articles again were permitted to appear. In January, 1895, a cabinet crisis was precipitated in Norway by the resignation of the Conservative ministry of Emil Stang. In May the Swedish government announced that the customs union with Norway would be terminated, and in June, 1895, the truculent Count Douglas took over the Swedish ministry of foreign affairs. Threats of war were heard and on May 17, 1895, the Swedish Parliament voted a large war credit. It became increasingly clear that certain groups in Sweden thought of employing armed force against Norway. In the face of this serious situation, which Björnson had foreseen years before when he had counseled caution, the Norwegian extremists retreated. During the crisis of 1895 Björnson was tolerably quiet. But he did issue a small pamphlet, in which he urged that a court, preferably Danish, arbitrate the dispute between Norway and Sweden.⁴⁵ In the fall of 1895 the poet issued a call for the formation of a "national party" with the independence of Norway as its sole program. But without giving up the consular issue he urged returning to the original Norwegian demand for a separate foreign office, which could work for courts of arbitration with all sovereign peoples—"first and foremost with Russia." He had harsh words for the twenty-four "boiling hot" Liberals who had voted against the Storting resolution of June 7, 1895, providing for negotiations with Sweden. Finally, after noting how the Swedish Parliament on May 17—of all days—voted funds for war, he asked how any reasonable Norwegian, man or woman, could hereafter place any faith in the Swedes?⁴⁶

After 1895 the relations between Norway and Sweden entered upon a new phase. Lest Norway again be caught unprepared, the nation embarked upon an extensive defense program.⁴⁷ Björnson himself explained the new Norwegian armaments by stating frankly that "the Swedish government knows as well as we do, that Norway is arming because Sweden has meddled in our internal affairs, and that with reason we fear that this meddling may pass over into violence."⁴⁸ More alarming to the Swedes than such

⁴⁵ *Voldgift* (Chra., 1895).

⁴⁶ *V.G.*, 1895, nos. 216-19; *Bergens Tidende*, December 8, 1902.

⁴⁷ For details read O. J. Falnes, *Norway and the Nobel Peace Prize* (New York, 1938), pp. 94-96. This useful work will be cited hereafter as *Norway and Nobel*.

⁴⁸ *Dagbl.*, 1896, no. 341.

frankness was the series of articles from his pen which first began to appear in the Russian press in 1896.⁴⁹ For some two years the poet attacked the foreign policy of Sweden, and Count Douglas in particular. Yet he maintained that his sole objective was to get Sweden to join Norway in the work for arbitration treaties. He did not share the Swedish fears of Russia, and when in the summer of 1898 the Tsar issued the appeal which led to the first Hague Conference, Björnson felt that his Russian letters could cease. The Tsar, he said, offered what Sweden would not request.⁵⁰

In the Norwegian elections of 1897 the poet took an active part, as a punishment, he claimed, for the "nastiness" of the Conservative newspapers.⁵¹ The Liberals won by a safe majority, and in February, 1898, Johannes Steen replaced G. F. Hagerup as the head of the Norwegian government. Although in 1897 Björnson had criticized King Oscar II for slighting St. Olaf's Day, on the whole the poet was friendlier than usual toward the royal house and toward Sweden.⁵² His republican ardor had cooled, and in 1898 he went so far as to suggest placing a Bernadotte prince upon the Norwegian throne.⁵³ He was not alone in this conciliatory attitude, for at the close of the century both Norway and Sweden were anxious to preserve peace and the *status quo*.⁵⁴ Björnson himself was heartened at the prospect of unity and peace in the Scandinavian North. But, as already observed, the poet's Pan-Scandinavianism meant three independent nations, not a merger. "The Danes," he explained, "perhaps do not understand what sets Norwegian nationalists on fire, when they are told that they constitute a single people, together with the Danes and the Swedes. The Danes do not recall that when the Norwegians were under Denmark, Danish political leadership aimed at a unity which would wipe out Norway. And now," he said, "Swedish political leadership has the same aim." The three Scandinavian nations, he felt, must stick together. Norway, he concluded, needed Denmark and Sweden quite as much as she was needed by them.⁵⁵

To become completely independent, like Denmark and Sweden, Norway must have national unity. Such unity, Björnson believed, must be achieved first of all upon the consular issue. To this end, in 1901, he called for action. In his opinion the time was ripe, for the fate of Finland had taught the

⁴⁹ These letters were later published under the title *Mine Brev til Petersburgskija Vjedomosti* (Chra., 1898), in both a Swedish and a Norwegian edition.

⁵⁰ *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 397.

⁵¹ *Dagbl.*, 1897, no. 216.

⁵² *V.G.*, 1897, no. 176.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 1898, no. 290; 1899, no. 72.

⁵⁴ See *B-St.*, pp. 265-66.

⁵⁵ *V.G.*, 1900, no. 221; *Dagbl.*, 1900, no. 251.

Swedes that they must keep peace with the Norwegians.⁵⁶ The poet made friendly overtures to the Norwegian Conservatives, whom he was anxious to bring to a common stand with the Norwegian Liberals. On May 17, 1901, he heard and talked with the Swedish-Norwegian crown prince Gustaf (the present king of Sweden), by whom he was favorably impressed. As Francis Bull has observed, throughout 1901 and 1902 Björnson's articles were marked by a conciliatory and a kindly attitude toward the royal house, toward Sweden, and toward the Norwegian Conservatives. Yet he did not abandon in any degree the Norwegian demand for a separate consular service.⁵⁷

On December 8, 1902, Björnson celebrated his seventieth birthday amid almost universal acclaim and friendly greetings—even from Sweden. Age, perhaps fame, had mellowed him. He made friends with former opponents. He wrote and acted like a benign patriarch. He contributed to the Conservative newspaper, *Aftenposten*. By 1902 also, *Morgenbladet* itself had almost become reconciled to Björnson.⁵⁸ The stage was being set for the last act in the drama involving Norway, Sweden, and Björnson. Björnson, the former Liberal, was about to join the Conservatives in the so-called Coalition party of 1903.⁵⁹

At the opening of the twentieth century the Liberal party was in power in Norway. A grim reminder of the troublesome dispute over the consular question—culminating in the crisis of 1895—could be seen in the chain of Norwegian frontier forts, whose guns pointed ominously toward Sweden. But the agitation for separate Norwegian consuls, however necessary or desirable they might be, was quiescent. The issue lay like a sleeping volcano, waiting until time and circumstance should combine for another eruption. It was not long in coming, for in January, 1902, Alfred Lagerheim, the Swedish minister of foreign affairs, revived the consular question, by a proposal that a joint Swedish-Norwegian Committee should be appointed to determine how a separate consular service for each nation might be devised. Such a committee composed of two Swedes and two Norwegians was appointed, and on July 26, 1902, it reported in sub-

⁵⁶ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 435-38.

⁵⁷ *B-St.*, p. 268. *V.G.*, 1901, no. 137; 1902, nos. 99, 194.

⁵⁸ See *Mgbl.* of December 7, 1902, no. 721. In an appreciative article on Björnson appeared only this editorial reservation: "We have not forgotten his severe blows against much of what has been dear to us."

⁵⁹ Except for Björnson and a few others like Edvard Grieg and Christian Michelsen, this was actually a Conservative group, headed by Professor G. F. Hagerup.

stance that separate Norwegian and Swedish consuls, responsible to their respective governments, could be secured without serious difficulty.⁶⁰

In 1902 Björnson wrote much in *Norske Intelligenssedler*, a Liberal Christiania newspaper, which advertised itself as "cheap, succinct, independent, and straightforward."⁶¹ In its columns the poet had a field day, speculating about King Sverre, recommending Sabatier's biography of St. Francis of Assisi, arguing like a good Norwegian patriot against the placing of a statue of Rodin in the capital.⁶² He proclaimed himself "a socialist." But when he advocated establishing banks to assist Norwegian fishermen, it was private enterprise to which he appealed. "Should we in Norway," he asked, "apply to the State for everything?"⁶³ Space will not permit further illustration of the patriotic, conservative, almost bourgeois Björnson of this period. It will suffice for the purposes of this study to take note of the clarification of viewpoints which took place in March, April, and May, 1902, between the press and the leaders of the Pure Liberals on the one side, and Björnson on the other. The latter, it was evident, was at the parting of the ways with his former personal friends and political allies, as he championed the necessity of a united front against Sweden, while simultaneously he preached in the Scandinavian press the gospel of neutrality for the northern nations. A sample of his attitude can be seen in his appraisal of the Liberal leader, Johannes Steen, who, aged and worn, had retired in 1902. Steen, said Björnson, had become "the prey of intrigue," and was dominated by the *bønder* of the Storting.⁶⁴ The policy of declared neutrality for the Scandinavian states, which the Norwegian Parliament had considered early in 1902, was favored by Björnson.⁶⁵ Even if the existing union were broken, the future was unthinkable without a league of defense between Norway and Sweden.⁶⁶

Björnson's break of 1903 with the Pure Liberals, which had long been in the making, may be traced to his basic Pan-Scandinavianism. Of sig-

⁶⁰ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 430 *et seq.*; Sars, *op. cit.*, vi, 2, pp. 189-91. The question of a separate Norwegian foreign office was expressly deferred.

⁶¹ *N.Int.*, 1902, no. 65. It took pride in having Björnson as a contributor.

⁶² To which the witty Frits Thaulow replied that "Christiania would not lose its nationality if it got a little good art within its walls." See F. Thaulow, *I Kamp og i Fest* (Chra., 1908), pp. 136-38; *N.Int.*, 1902, nos. 66, 75, 86; *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 455-56.

⁶³ *N.Int.*, 1902, nos. 52, 278.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1902, nos. 92, 93. *Dagbl.*, 1902, no. 112.

⁶⁵ Koht, *Freds-tanken i Noregs-sogo* (Oslo, 1906), p. 130 *et seq.* See Björnson's article in *Aftenp.*, 1902, no. 623, and the critical analysis by the editor in no. 627.

⁶⁶ *N.Int.*, 1902, nos. 90, 99; *Aftenp.*, 1902, no. 598.

nificance also was his fear of the Norwegian separatist tendencies fostered by the Pure Liberals in their support of *landsmaal*.⁶⁷ In April, and May, 1903, the poet attacked the proposed party platform of the Pure Liberals as showing both defiance and distrust of Sweden, which in the so-called Communiqué of March 24, 1903, had laid down a preliminary basis for the creation of a separate consular service for each country.⁶⁸ *Morgenbladet* on June 3, 1903, carried an open letter to Björnson, asking why he did not join the Conservatives. He did practically that, for in the summer of 1903 he allied himself with the Coalition party. The program of this party was "negotiation, only negotiation" with Sweden, a program well calculated to win votes among a peace-loving people.⁶⁹

The poet took an active part in the campaign of 1903, to the dismay of his former friends on the Liberal side. Typically Björnsonian was the charge made by him that Carl Berner and his Liberal colleagues had been in power too long and had thus "injured their moral health." Somewhat unjustly Björnson accused the patriotic Georg Stang (1858-1907), of being an aggressive fanatic.⁷⁰ With characteristic optimism Björnson asserted that his people were facing "a new Sweden," a Sweden determined to keep the peace and to grant what was due to Norway, completely.⁷¹ Time was to prove him overly sanguine in this matter. But in the election of 1903 the Coalition party won by a slender majority (62 of 117 seats in the Storting.) The Liberal ministry of Otto Blehr thereupon resigned and was replaced by that of G. F. Hagerup. In December, 1903, Björnson received what his enemies maliciously termed his "reward." The Swedish Academy, which previously he had maligned, presented him with the Nobel Prize for Literature. For the first time he met personally the Swedish

⁶⁷ *B-St.*, pp. 269-70.

⁶⁸ See *N.Int.*, 1903, nos. 84, 91, 101, 107, 108; *V.G.*, 1903, no. 157, and *Dagbl.*, 1903, no. 127. In *N.Int.*, 1903, no. 91, Björnson likened his position to that of some ten years before when, also because of his tolerant and peaceful attitude toward Sweden, he took issue with the leaders of his own party. Cf. *Aftenp.*, 1903, no. 517.

⁶⁹ See *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 470-78 for selections from the campaign of 1903. *Aftenp.*, 1903, nos. 260, 278, 313, 480, 487; and *Dagbl.*, 1903, nos. 163, 164, 167, 171, 174, 175, 180, 185, 187-189, 201, 205. *Dagbladet*, 1903, no. 163, termed Björnson and his followers "renegades."

⁷⁰ *N.Int.*, 1903, nos. 123, 140, 141; *Aftenp.*, 1903, no. 383; *Aftenp.*, 1904, no. 91; and *V.G.*, 1904, nos. 52 and 53. More than any other man, Stang had made Norway prepared at this juncture to meet any threat of military intervention such as had come from Sweden in 1895. On Stang see Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, pp. 424-29. See also *Aftenp.*, 1904, nos. 56, 81; and *Mgbl.*, 1904, no. 80.

⁷¹ *Aftenp.*, 1903, no. 383; and no. 391.

king, whom he had also maligned—and the two found themselves good friends. The Swedes, to their credit, overlooked the unpleasant past and touched the poet deeply by their genuine elation. All of which was most flattering. Influenced by the fate of Finland, Björnson declared that the Norwegians and the Swedes faced the same future and the same peril. Indeed, in his opinion neither a separate Norwegian consular service nor a separate foreign minister was worth the risk of war in the North.⁷²

In 1904, however, the relations between Norway and Sweden took a turn for the worse. Alfred Lagerheim, who was thought friendly to the Norwegians, retired from office in October, 1904, because of a disagreement with the Swedish prime minister, E. G. Boström. The latter, who now took a leading hand in the negotiations on the consular issue, appears to have believed that for economic reasons the Norwegians would take no decisive action.⁷³ In any event Boström attached to the proposed consular arrangement of the two realms certain reservations which appeared to place Norway in the position of a dependency. Nothing more was needed to bring the crisis to a head and to unite all Norwegians, regardless of party, in a common stand.

No attempt will be made here to present a definitive history of the fateful year 1905. The complete story of that period remains to be written. Only the general outline of events and Björnson's reaction to them will be given here.⁷⁴ Björnson had been abroad during the years prior to 1905, and he was unable wholly to follow the shift in public opinion at home. Moreover, as Francis Bull has observed, Björnson's cosmopolitan interests to some degree overshadowed his national feeling. Thus, there was both strength and weakness in the stand he took in 1905.⁷⁵ He would not allow himself, he said, to be drawn into a "transient national passion."⁷⁶ At the opening of the year he considered the situation "hopeless." If the negotia-

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1903, nos. 714, 730; also nos. 718, 719, 727; and 1904, no. 59. See *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 482-85, 489-91.

⁷³ Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 438. F. Bull also suggests that the Swedes altered their note because of Russia's involvement with Japan, and that Boström sought to regain his popularity among the Swedish Conservatives. See *B-St.*, p. 272.

⁷⁴ Not even the role of Björnson is entirely clear, since his as well as other significant papers of the period are unavailable. For an interesting appraisal from a Norwegian standpoint see Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, pp. 437-78. In the flood of literature provoked by the crisis of 1905 may be mentioned two worthwhile works, that of the Swede, Nils Edén, *Sweden for Peace* (Upsala, 1905); and that of the Norwegian, Fridtjof Nansen, *Norway and the Union with Sweden* (London, 1905).

⁷⁵ *B-St.*, p. 273.

⁷⁶ *Aftenp.*, 1905, no. 81.

tions failed (as they finally did) he thought that the next step would be the dissolution of the union. But this step must be carried out peacefully as a prelude to a defensive league embracing Denmark as well as Norway and Sweden. He appears not to have trusted the Swedes, especially in view of Boström's "faithlessness," and he advocated, therefore, a unanimous statement by the Storting terminating the Act of Union between the two realms.⁷⁷ An accompanying plebiscite of the Norwegian people on the question would, in his opinion, bring victory and leave no doubt in Sweden or elsewhere as to the will of the nation. For the first time since 1814, Björnsson claimed, Norway was united.⁷⁸

In March, 1905, Norway had a new leader in Christian Michelsen, the same Michelsen from Bergen who had served on the committee of 1891 which had recommended a separate Norwegian consular service.⁷⁹ During the tense spring of 1905 Björnsson had kind words for Sweden both at home and abroad.⁸⁰ But the demand in Norway was for action. Even *Morgenbladet* was hardly distinguishable from a Liberal newspaper. In May, 1905, the Storting passed a bill, providing for a separate Norwegian consular system, effective April 1, 1906. The king vetoed it and refused to accept the resignations of his Norwegian ministers. *Verdens Gang* warned the Norwegian people to be quiet and to hold no demonstrations of any kind.⁸¹ In Copenhagen in response to a friendly ovation Björnsson admitted that he did not like the method being used in Norway. But it would, he thought, lead to Norwegian independence and to a league of the three Scandinavian nations.⁸² On June 7, 1905, in a short and solemn session the Storting declared that the union with Sweden was ended.

In an article, dated June 12, 1905, Björnsson wrote that the dissolution of the union was "the desire of all Norwegians," the majority of whom he claimed were "republican." He approved the offer of the Norwegian throne to a Bernadotte prince.⁸³ But, continued Björnsson, if the Bernadottes

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1905, nos. 81, 83. But see *V.G.*, 1905, no. 31; and *B-St.*, p. 274, footnote no. 5.

⁷⁸ *Aftenp.*, 1905, nos. 115, 194. The plebiscite was eventually employed on August 13, 1905. *B-St.*, p. 275.

⁷⁹ *V.G.*, 1905, no. 52; cf. no. 53. On Christian Michelsen see Keilhau's article in *Aftenp.*, 1930, no. 288.

⁸⁰ *B-St.*, p. 275.

⁸¹ *V.G.*, 1905, no. 148.

⁸² *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 498-99.

⁸³ This was a concession by Björnsson, although since 1903 he had been friendly toward the royal house of Sweden. In 1884 he had predicted that an alliance between the Bernadottes and the Norwegian people would never be effected. *Kamp-Liv*, vol. ii, p. 254. Apparently a few Norwegians wanted Björnsson as king, which is the burden

proved unwilling, "then a National Assembly will be called, and will no doubt adopt a republican form of government on the model of Switzerland."⁸⁴ Clearly the poet had not yet decided for a monarchical form of government. In the meantime the action taken by the Storting on June 7 had to be ratified by a plebiscite set for August 13, 1905. The time was short, and Björnson entered loyally into the campaign, urging the young to help the old take part in this national referendum.⁸⁵ *Aftenposten* admonished the citizens of the capital not to let other cities and districts in Norway make a better showing than theirs on August 13, and a similar appeal was made to the rural electorate by *Den 17 de Mai*. All Norwegian newspapers carried appeals and sample ballots reading "Yes."⁸⁶ A certain unfortunate teacher in Drammen, Winther by name, spoke a word for Sweden and felt at once the full force of public disapproval.⁸⁷ On August 13, 1905, in Östre Gausdal Björnson presided as was fitting at his own little burial ceremony for the union upon which he had lavished so much verbiage in the past. It was Sunday and out of consideration for the great national referendum the local pastor had transferred the church service to the voting place. Here as elsewhere in Norway the balloting was preceded

of the following popular ditty, for which I am indebted to Miss Guri Back of Sioux City, Iowa (July 17, 1932):

"Gud sign vår konge kjekk
Giv ham et dyktig knekk
i marg og ben;
Styrt ham fra tronen ned
Sett Björnson i hans sted
Så får vi ro og fred
og enighed."

Fortunately, Björnson was satisfied to remain "Norway's uncrowned king."

⁸⁴ *Daily Chronicle* (London), June 17, 1905.

⁸⁵ *Aftenp.*, 1905, no. 423 (from *Guðbrandsdölen*).

⁸⁶ An affirmative vote appears to have been assumed; in fact, on August 13, only 184 negative votes were recorded. See *Mgbl.*, 1905, no. 214 *et seq.* for sample ballots and appeals, which were published daily until August 13. Amid this patriotic display *Morgenbladet* found space for an advertisement featuring Christian Michelsen pictured between two Norwegian flags, with the message that "Michelsen for Norwegians is an indispensable Cigar—Price 15 Öre." See *Mgbl.*, 1905, no. 409.

⁸⁷ *Mgbl.*, 1905, nos. 404, 407, had to search for words with which to condemn Winther. Björnson suggested an "amnesty" for the poor fellow (*Aftenp.*, 1905, no. 444), while the malicious Knut Hamsun pitied Winther because he had not changed his opinions in time as had certain Norwegian newspapers that had long served Swedish interests but now "were no longer like other publicans." See *Dagbl.*, 1905, no. 217.

by a patriotic, religious discourse.⁸⁸ Next followed Björnsson, who preached his own little sermon on love of the fatherland. He recited his hymn to St. Olaf,⁸⁹ and spoke sentimentally of "bringing home our king," who for five hundred years had remained in another land. He recalled his own part in the long struggle with the Swedes, but he disclaimed any hatred of them. He thought the Norwegians had lost their king for five centuries because they did not understand how to stick together. He suggested that the present unity serve as a consecration for the youth of the future. Do not, he warned, let too many of them run away to America. "Give them land," he urged. "Land that will cling fast to the soles of their feet." Ending his speech with the customary "Long live the fatherland," he placed his ballot in the urn.⁹⁰

The unity of August 13, 1905, did not last. The Swedes accepted the plebiscite as final. But they demanded concessions, notably the razing of the Norwegian frontier forts and the submitting of future disputes to arbitration. Like others in Norway, Björnsson felt hurt by the Swedish stand, particularly with respect to the forts.⁹¹ But when the question arose as to whether Norway was to become a republic or a monarchy, then the unity of August 13 was indeed lost. Pastor Anders Hovden was disgusted with the ardent courting of royal candidates, first in Sweden and then in Denmark. "Our own blood was not fine enough or blue enough," he complained, to place "one of our own" in the seat of honor "as president or king."⁹² After having prated for years of the republican virtues and

⁸⁸ Anders Hovden carried a flag into the pulpit "to preach with him." *Attersyn*, p. 136. For a scene from Christiania read R. Claparède, *Un Nouvel État Européen, La Norvège Indépendante* (Paris, 1906), pp. 20-21.

⁸⁹ Patron saint of Norway. The spelling "Olaf" has been used for consistency in this study. But in 1905 at the request of the Norwegian Department of Justice, Professors Sophus Bugge and Marius Hægstad stated that "the old and the new correct pronunciation is Olav." See *V.G.*, 1905, no. 371.

⁹⁰ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 499-502. This was said to have been his first political vote, which if true was significant for a man who had harangued the voters for years and who had advocated universal suffrage.

⁹¹ *Aftenp.*, 1905, nos. 429, 556. The Swedish poet, Verner von Heidenstam, wisely observed that had the Norwegian forts been allowed to stand, Sweden would have had to build similar defenses, resulting in new hatred and distrust. *V.G.*, 1905, no. 237; *Aftenp.*, 1905, no. 465.

⁹² A. Hovden, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-39. Hovden even threatened to migrate to the United States. Björnsson's former friend, Christopher Bruun, had similar difficulties because he termed the action of June 7, 1905, "a revolution." See his two pamphlets, *Til det norske Folk* (Cphn., 1905, and Chra., 1906).

after having predicted as recently as June, 1905, that Norway would become a republic, Björnson came out for a monarchy.⁹³ In an open letter to the Norwegian statesman, Jørgen Løvland, dated September 29, 1905, Björnson expressed his preference for "a dynasty with powerful connections" as opposed to "dangerous solitude in a republic." "For us two old republicans," he concluded, "there is thus nothing else to be done, other than what Garibaldi did: after having served the republic for his entire life, he chose to serve the king."⁹⁴ The prospective king (Prince Carl of Denmark) was an excellent choice in Björnson's eyes, since the Danish prince had married Princess Maud, daughter of Edward VII of England. Prince Carl was willing to accept the throne, provided the Norwegian people gave their approval in a general plebiscite. Accordingly the Storting ordered a plebiscite for November 12-13, 1905.

A bitter contest ensued between republicans and monarchists, in which Björnson took a prominent but pathetic role, his arguments frequently bordering upon the absurd. He feared the Swedes and he feared the Russian "spirit of conquest." He had even read threats of war among the great powers over the Moroccan question. The times, he intimated, were ominous for "an isolated republic." A republic did not mean much for art. But a monarchy fostered art.⁹⁵ *Morgenbladet* favored "a national monarchy." It reported unfailingly all republican meetings as "fiascos," while royalists seemingly always met "with great enthusiasm."⁹⁶ *Aftenposten* advocated a monarchy and cast doubts upon the supposed inexpensive nature of a republic. What did it matter that a president cost very little, if as in America enormous sums were spent to get him elected? *Aftenposten* also managed to sell advertising of windows from which, for a price, democratic Norwegians could see the entry of the king into the capital.⁹⁷ Among the newspapers on the republican side were *Bergens Tidende*, *Dagbladet*, *Social-Demokraten*, and *Den 17 de Mai*. *Dagbladet*, for instance, reported the respective meetings of monarchists and republicans. Thus, on Novem-

⁹³ This abrupt change in his views, while not yet fully explained, was foreshadowed in his recent friendliness toward the king. As early as 1896 he had denied that the Norwegians intended to set up a republic; see *V.G.*, 1896, no. 252.

⁹⁴ See the brochure, *Norges Statsforfatning* (Chra., 1905).

⁹⁵ See *Mgbl.*, 1905, nos. 581, 584.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1905, *passim*. *Mgbl.* also published a sample ballot marked "Yes."

⁹⁷ *Aftenp.*, 1905, no. 630. After the choice of a king was assured, business boomed and single seats in the windows along the main street, Carl Johansgate, sold at 15 kroner. *Ibid.*, 1905, no. 661.

ber 5, 1905, it stated that Halvdan Koht had spoken twice in Modum, and "by reference to the teachings of history he had emphasized that the monarchy now being offered us, cannot become national, and that the dynastic connections could become dangerous for the country."⁹⁸ Björnsson himself placed great faith in the "dynastic connections" of Prince Carl. As an example of the value of such assets he asserted that King George I of Greece, though he lost a war with Turkey, gained Crete because of his influential royal relations, among whom were included the Tsar of Russia. As a historian Koht protested against such nonsense.⁹⁹ However, it was probably Björnsson's name and fame, rather than his flimsy arguments, that influenced the Norwegians. Furthermore, a republic for Norway would have been a new and untried form of government, whereas the Norwegians had always had a king, albeit he had been for almost a century a Swede and, before 1814, a Dane.¹⁰⁰

The second plebiscite of 1905 resulted in victory for the monarchists. On November 18, 1905, the necessary constitutional changes were completed, and by a unanimous vote the Storting offered the Norwegian throne to Prince Carl of Denmark. The latter telegraphed his acceptance at once, announcing that he would assume the title of Haakon VII, while his son would take the name Olav. Norway had at last secured complete national independence—thanks in no small measure to the unremitting efforts of Björnstjerne Björnsson.

⁹⁸ *Dagbl.*, 1905, no. 301. This was the same Koht who later served (until recently) as minister of foreign affairs under King Haakon VII, accompanying him to London after the Nazis gained complete control of Norway.

⁹⁹ Björnsson was unabashed, and Koht finally took refuge in the obvious fact that he was "a historian, not a poet." See *Aftenp.*, 1905, nos. 568, 626, 630, 635, 638, 640.

¹⁰⁰ In 1889, when Björnsson was younger and more suspicious of royalty, he charged the Swedes with attempting to control Norway in a "roundabout way" by placing a younger son of the Swedish royal house on the Norwegian throne, exactly, he said, as Denmark had thought to do in 1814 by means of Christian Frederick. Norway, he added, had always had good and solicitous "brothers." See *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 140. In 1905 the new Norwegian king was a Dane and his wife was English. But Norwegian patriots could console themselves with the thought that the crown prince, then a babe in arms, would be reared as a Norwegian.

VII

BEYOND NATIONALISM

BJÖRNSSON was far more than the outstanding modern Norwegian nationalist. He was also the champion of subject nationalities—Hungarians, Icelanders, Slesvigians, Finns, Slovaks. As a youth he had fallen under the spell of Scandinavianism, which with him as with Ibsen developed into Pan-Germanism. He became interested in the problems of the working classes and termed himself a believer in socialism. Finally, he emerged as an ardent pacifist. He was, in short, a cosmopolitan character who could and did look beyond the frontiers of his own country in an unceasing effort to aid his fellow men.

Björnsson's enthusiasm for struggling nationalities may be traced to the year 1848. The February revolution in France stirred him, and like Ibsen he hailed the Hungarians in their revolt against the Habsburgs.¹ Then, like many another young liberal, he saw his bright hopes dimmed in the darkness of reaction. In 1850 Björnsson came to Christiania, where he lived with an uncle interested in the labor movement. In that very year, Norway was stirred by her first modern labor leader, Marcus Thrane (1817-90). Thrane sought to organize the Norwegian proletariat, and his agitation must have influenced young Björnsson, if only indirectly.² More important, in 1850 Björnsson was thrown into direct contact with the very personification of revolutionary republicanism, Harro Harring (1798-1870), who had fought with the Greeks against the Turks and with the Poles against the Russians.³ In the spring of 1850 Harring dwelt quietly in the same house with the impressionable youth from Romsdal. But the uneasy king of Sweden and Norway was worried by the presence in Christiania of this friend of Garibaldi and Mazzini. Accordingly at seven in the morning of

¹ Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 113-14.

² T. Hegna, *op. cit.*, p. 15. On Thrane read T. C. Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America 1825-1860* (Northfield, 1931), p. 323 *et seq.*

³ See A. H. Everett's sketch in *The United States Magazine, and Democratic Review*, New Series, vol. xv (New York, 1844), pp. 337-47, 462-75, 561-79. Blegen, *op. cit.*, pp. 330-31.

May 29, 1850, Haring was arrested and deported by the Norwegian police.⁴ Against this action both Björnsson and Ibsen protested in a public demonstration.⁵

By 1850, then, Björnsson had already manifested a lively interest in the struggling nationalities of Europe. In his native land he had also observed the growing pains of the Norwegian labor movement. But the revolutionary winds of 1848 soon died down, and the young poet was again simply a Norwegian nationalist. Fundamentally, to be sure, he remained such throughout his career, his nationalism being essentially the warm love of a great heart for the fatherland.⁶ Yet at the same time he was moved, in varying degree, by cosmopolitan interests, which grew stronger as he became older and was drawn further away, in spirit as in the flesh, from his beloved Norway. It is difficult at best to dissociate such cosmopolitan aspects in a life so active and varied as that of Björnsson. With this qualification in mind let us sketch here the broad pattern of the larger movements in which the poet took part.

First and foremost Björnsson was a Pan-Scandinavian and was led thereby to a sympathetic interest in the Icelanders, the Slesvigians, and later, the Finns. Subsequently he was a Pan-German, and a pacifist, but also a visionary socialist. Finally, he became a champion of the oppressed, notably of the Czechs and the Slovaks. As a youth he had praised the Hungarians in their fight for freedom. As an old man he condemned them for denying that freedom to others. Such in brief compass was the cosmopolitan Björnsson.

Björnsson's adherence to Scandinavianism was patent and outspoken. It began in the glow of student days in June, 1856. Sweden's glorious past captivated him, just as in the following winter of 1856-57, Denmark impressed him with its culture.⁷ But for Björnsson Scandinavianism meant simply cooperation among the Danes, the Swedes, and the Norwegians acting as independent peoples. It did not mean amalgamation. The poet's Scandinavianism of the fifties and sixties had, however, a decided Danish tinge. It was highly personal, for Björnsson had made warm friends in Copenhagen. But it was also cultural and practical, for from 1861 his lit-

⁴ For Haring's protest see *Mgbl.*, 1850, no. 186; also nos. 23, 155, 157. Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. ix, pp. 186-88.

⁵ Collin, *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 145-46.

⁶ Seen best perhaps in his deeply patriotic poems, such as *Der ligger et land*.

⁷ See the interesting articles by Edvard Stang and Francis Bull in *Nordens Kalender* 1933, pp. 9-13, 34-38.

erary works were published by the Danish firm of Gyldendal. The poet's love for Denmark reached its climax during the Danish War of 1864, when to his despair the Danes, unaided, went down to defeat in "the holy cause of the North."⁸

The Franco-Prussian war revived momentarily the poet's hope of a restoration of Schleswig to Denmark. That was why he then favored the French,⁹ in spite of the fact that the Germans as "good moral people" actually stood closer to his heart. The unexpected collapse of France forced him to look more realistically upon the Scandinavian situation. Schleswig, he came to hold, would be regained, if at all, by spiritual and not by material weapons. It was not, Björnson asserted, the well-trained Prussian army which had defeated the French. It was simply "German intelligence and enthusiasm."¹⁰ Like his friends, S. A. Hedlund and Johan Sverdrup, Björnson became more and more convinced that Schleswig should be divided on a language basis, and that the ultimate recovery of the lost Danish lands depended upon a policy of friendship toward Germany.¹¹ But no policy of friendship toward Germany could possibly make Björnson forget the Danes suffering under German rule in Schleswig. Their cause was his, always.¹²

Though he had grown friendlier toward the Germans, in the early seventies Björnson became increasingly critical of the Danes. The Danes, he felt, had been unjust to the Icelanders, in withholding the constitution promised to Iceland more than twenty years before. After 1814 Iceland as well as Greenland was separated from Norway, and the subsequent Danish administration of these island possessions had often been criticized by Norwegian patriots, especially in *landsmaal* circles.¹³ As for Björnson, as early as 1864 he had noted that Norwegians had a "predilection for Iceland."¹⁴ Iceland, he believed, would find "its natural trade route" via

⁸ *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, p. 112. On the crisis of 1864, see Carl Hallendorff, *Illusioner och Verklighet* (Stkln., 1914).

⁹ On Björnson and France read Jean Lescoffier, *Björnson et la France* (Oslo, 1936). See H. Koht, *Brytnings-År*, vol. i, p. xxxvi.

¹⁰ *Brytnings-År*, vol. i, pp. 70-71.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. xxxvi et seq.

¹² The leader of the Danes in Schleswig, H. P. Hanssen, has written appreciatively of the unceasing support received from Björnson, who himself was forbidden by the Germans to lecture in that province. See Hanssen's articles in *Nordens Kalender*, 1933, pp. 14-17; and in *Åskov Lærlinge. Aarskrift*, 1927, pp. 9-48.

¹³ Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 357-58.

¹⁴ *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, pp. 132-33. One must, however, question the "inborn sympathy" which Koht says he had for the Icelanders. See his unflattering comments upon the Icelanders in *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, pp. 132-33, 226-27, and in *Brytnings-År*, vol. i, pp. 150-51.

Norway, and he urged that hindrances to such a development be removed.¹⁵ But the Danes did nothing. Accordingly, in 1870 Björnson began to agitate, in *Norsk Folkeblad*, on behalf of the Icelanders. Iceland, he said, should be united with Norway,¹⁶ and he announced that he would show how the Icelanders had been maltreated under the Danes.¹⁷ During the Franco-Prussian war, out of consideration for the Danes Björnson dropped the Icelandic issue. But in the fall of 1871 he revived the controversy. Through men like Carl Ploug, Denmark, he said, had been sharp in fixing the responsibility of Norway with respect to Schleswig. Yet the Danes had overlooked their own responsibility with regard to Iceland, which was also a Northern country suffering from an old injustice. Björnson thanked the gods for having escaped the Scandinavianism of the Danish National Liberals, which, he felt, was clearly designed for the occasion (the crisis in Schleswig). Finally he appealed to democratic Danes on behalf of a separate responsible minister or governor for Iceland.¹⁸ Until Iceland had been treated fairly, Denmark, the poet thought, could not demand justice in Schleswig.¹⁹

In a deeply personal letter of February 15, 1871, to his Danish friend, Margrete Rode, Björnson revealed how closely the problems of Schleswig and Iceland were bound up with his own Scandinavianism, which in intensity was itself almost a religious belief. The letter also showed how critically he had come to look upon Denmark and the Danes. At school, he remarked, the pettiness of Danish history had made him strongly anti-Scandinavian. Then he had gone to Denmark, where he made friends, joined with Grundtvig, and was carried away by the spirit of the North. Moved by this spirit he had demanded aid for Schleswig, help for Iceland. But the Danes of Copenhagen had rebuffed him, so that he had lost all special interest in them. But he promised to turn again to the cause of Iceland, and if Denmark would not grant a free constitution and material aid, then Iceland must become Norwegian. Connections to this end had, he asserted, already been made, and his friends in Bergen had already begun to draw Iceland in that direction.²⁰ Iceland, Björnson concluded, was the

¹⁵ *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, pp. 239-40. Letter of November 11, 1867, to his friend, H. Finsen, then a Danish official in Iceland. See *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 380.

¹⁶ *N.F.*, 1870, no. 10. He later denied ever having worked for the transfer of Iceland to Norway. See *N.F.*, 1871, no. 43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1870, no. 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1871, no. 43; note no. 46.

¹⁹ H. Koht, *Brytnings-År*, vol. i, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

²⁰ In 1870 Björnson had corresponded with Jón Sigurdsson, the scholarly leader of

best test that could be found of Danish Scandinavianism, freedom of mind, and popular feeling. He asked if "a single Danish voice" had been raised for Iceland. His own answer was "NO!!!!!!!"²¹

Strikingly similar to the viewpoint of certain anti-Danish *landsmaal* advocates in contemporary Norway was the indictment of Danish policy drawn up by Björnson in 1872. As a people the Danes, in his opinion, were petty to an unbelievable degree. He mentioned, specifically, the slave trade with St. Thomas, their treatment of the Germans, of Iceland and Norway in the past, and of Iceland in the present. Out of his own knowledge of all this he intended to write a little book about Iceland and to have it translated for foreign readers.²² In the following year, 1873, he continued his campaign, urging that Viktor Rydberg, the Swedish journalist, write a book about Iceland, which should be translated at once into *landsmaal*.²³ It is significant that Björnson sought the support of *landsmaal* advocates in his Icelandic program, for it is precisely a *landsmaal* group, abetted by fishing and whaling interests, which in our day has sponsored a Norse imperialism designed to draw the peoples of Iceland and the Faroes into closer ties with Norway.²⁴ Norway was once the mistress of the northern seas, and it was only natural that Norwegian nationalists should resent having their former dependencies such as Iceland, the land of the sagas, remain under Danish rule.²⁵ Writing to a Danish friend in December, 1873, Björnson declared that it was to the "eternal disgrace" of the Danes that they had failed to reconcile the Icelanders, who were still under despotic rule.²⁶

the Icelanders. See *Brytnings-Ar*, vol. i, pp. 112, 288. In 1870 Björnson's friend Henrik Krohn founded an Icelandic Trade Association. Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 328-29.

²¹ *Brytnings-Ar*, vol. i, pp. 3-7.

²² *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 93-94. Nothing came of this plan.

²³ *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 147, 150-51.

²⁴ For a good summary of this movement, largely cultural, see Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 360-64.

²⁵ Iceland, at present occupied temporarily by American and British forces, has cast off the personal union with Denmark. See *Decorah-Posten*, May 23, 1941. An interesting sidelight on the entire question of Norway's former possessions in the North Atlantic is the revival of Norse imperialism championed by the notorious Major Vidkun Quisling, whose propagandist minister, the late Dr. Gulbrand Lunde, once dangled Iceland, the Faroes, and Greenland (not to mention the Orkney and Shetland Islands and the South Pole) before Norwegians seeking that Nazi goal, "Lebensraum." See *Decorah-Posten*, October 25, 1940.

²⁶ *Brytnings-Ar*, vol. i, p. 169. The Icelandic question was settled for the time being by the granting of the constitution of January 5, 1874. Björnson, however, called it "a caricature." See *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 27.

The strained relations between Björnson and the Danes which had developed over Iceland reached the breaking point when in his striving to solve the problem of Schleswig the poet suggested that the Danes adopt a policy of friendship rather than of hate toward the Germans. Thus was provoked the celebrated "signal-feud" (*signalfeiden*), of which only the broad outlines will be given here.²⁷ Björnson had just completed an article on Iceland when the news reached him of the death, on September 2, 1872, of N. F. S. Grundtvig.²⁸ The latter's followers had already planned a meeting of "friends," which had been set for the day following Grundtvig's burial, September 12, 1872. Björnson took part in the funeral services, mingled with old friends, and disturbed them all with the news that he was about to proclaim a new policy of friendship toward the Germans.²⁹ Came the meeting and Björnson spoke, eloquently and appreciatively, of old Grundtvig, who "could love even his enemies." In Grundtvig's name the poet pleaded for Christian and brotherly love toward the German people from whom had come Luther's great work. "We can, I believe," said he, "gain more with the hand of the friend than we can ever with the hand of the enemy."³⁰ There was immediate dissent in the gathering, for the Danes were then hardly inclined to consider the Germans as friends. Björnson returned home a disappointed man. Disappointed but not deterred, for he withdrew his article on Iceland, and published instead in the Hamar newspaper, *Oplandenes Avis*, (September 21 and 25, 1872) an article raising the question, "Is it with France or Russia that we have a future? or is it with Germany?" It was here he asserted that "the signals must be changed." The poet wanted the Christian people of the Scandinavian North to abandon their hatred of and to seek instead a league with the Germans. Thus began the bitter debate in the course of which virtually all of Björnson's friends in Denmark and in Norway turned against him, terming him pro-German, anti-Danish, a traitor to the cause of the North. Only S. A. Hedlund supported him.³¹

²⁷ The name arose from Björnson's demand that the "signals" toward Germany be changed. The controversy produced a flood of newspaper articles and a few brochures. See Birger Knudsen's sketchy but helpful account in *B-St.*, pp. 321-51. Though useful, Collin and Eitrem's material on this period is marred by a number of inaccuracies. See *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 357-88.

²⁸ On Grundtvig and Björnson see Ö. Anker's excellent study in *Edda*, 1932, pp. 273-338.

²⁹ *Bryttings-År*, vol. i, pp. xl-xli.

³⁰ *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 360-62; J. K. Madsen, *N.F.S. Grundtvigs Jordefærd* (Cphn., 1872), pp. 94-104.

³¹ *Bryttings-År*, vol. i, pp. xli-xlv.

For Björnson the "signal-feud" marked an expansion of his deep-seated Scandinavianism into a virtual Pan-Germanism. In this development there was nothing startling, and little that was original with Björnson. Grundtvig before him in 1861 had advocated reconciliation with the Germans, and to that end had urged the abandonment of the Danish claim to Holstein. The object of this reconciliation was to combine the Germanic peoples against the two perils, the Slavs in the East and the "Romans" in the West.⁸² It is safe to assume that much of the poet's Pan-Germanism may be traced to Grundtvig, whom significantly enough Björnson mentioned in the very first paragraph of his sensational article on the future of the Scandinavian peoples. A brief summary of this article⁸³ will serve to clarify Björnson's views.

Where, asked the poet, lay the future of the North? with the French or with the Germans? with the Slavs or with the Germans? Though the question was serious for all three Scandinavian peoples, the most important or at least preliminary aspect concerned Denmark. Denmark had to be the first to answer the question. In this as in so many other matters, he observed, the peoples of the North had lived without a program. The pathway of the Scandinavian peoples, Björnson believed, must inevitably lead to the Germans, "with whom we have blood and Christianity in common." Furthermore, this answer was not weakened in the least by the possibility that England would one day be subject to the same interaction. Accordingly, Denmark's relationship to Germany must change. Denmark must recognize past errors. "It is the signals," he declared, "which must be changed." Björnson next launched into enthusiastic praise of the new united German nation. Bismarck, Moltke, and the Prussian monarch were, he contended, only the "able instruments" of German popular feeling. He counseled against relying upon a future French or Russian victory over Germany as a means to regain Schleswig. "French spirit and morals," especially as revealed in the Franco-Prussian war, the poet found shocking.⁸⁴

The struggle with Germany must continue, but with spiritual weapons

⁸² See *Edda*, 1932, p. 297; and *B-St.*, p. 325.

⁸³ *Opl. Avis*, 1872, nos. 24 and 25. The poet signed himself "A Norwegian," although he realized that his identity was obvious.

⁸⁴ Björnson required less than two weeks in Paris in 1863 (his first visit there) to discover how "immoral" were the French. See *Gro-Tid*, vol. i, p. xlix; and vol. ii, p. 86 *et seq.* *B-St.*, pp. 329-30. For a scholarly French view of Björnson's Pan-Germanism, read P. G. La Chesnais, *Revue de Paris*, Année 24 (1917), tome 2, pp. 423-48.

and with the help of God. As to whether the desired goal could be reached, Björnsson was sanguine, for he relied upon the growing strength of nationalism. Also, once a friendly basis had been secured, it would be easier to see that the Scandinavians were the only natural allies of the Germans against the great common peril, the Slavs. The Germans, he thought, would appreciate a friendly gesture from the Danes. The poet believed this because he had faith in the spiritual weapons of Christianity. Such weapons, he felt, were stronger than hate and cannons—even if the cannons were made by Krupp.

Both Grundtvig and P. A. Munch, said Björnsson, had spoken and written of a large German (Gothic) league, in which, according to Grundtvig, England should lead. But, added Björnsson, as long as England kept her hands in the property of other peoples all over the world, it would not do to enter into an alliance with her that sooner or later would bring about dissension.⁸⁵ Germany on the other hand (but not Austria) occupied a much clearer position: foreign elements were held only in Posen and in North Schleswig. (The poet considered Alsace-Lorraine, both land and people, as German.) The question of Posen was tied to such "a remote possibility" as the restoration of Poland, to which, in his opinion, Germany in the fulness of time "would hardly object—quite the contrary!" But there were, he conceded, many types of alliances, and as a foundation for future development, he would assure the Germans a free hand in the event of a war with France and support in the event of an attack by the Slavs.

After inveighing in a deeply religious vein against the futility of the Danes hating the Germans (for hatred is "a misfortune for the individual as for a people") Björnsson concluded with a résumé of his attitude toward the German question. As early as 1868 he had realized that "with France we gain nothing," whereas from Germany's national feeling, once it is in bloom, "it is possible that we shall." He had wavered somewhat during the Franco-Prussian war, hoping that France would win "for the sake of our cause." But the "French spirit" worried him, and though he wished France well, he would not follow her. "Our road lies with ourselves and thence curves to our kinsfolk, who have like us suffered under the same French spirit." The road, in short, led to Germany. "We choose," proclaimed the poet, "the great thoroughfares, upon which we have still gotten our most and best."⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Björnsson, however, despite occasional criticism of the English, always included them and the Americans in his proposed Pan-Germanic league.

⁸⁶ *Opl. Avis*, 1872, nos. 24 and 25. *A.T.*, vol. i, pp. 362-73.

Such was Björnson's plea for a change in signals, eloquent, fervent, indubitably sincere in its emphasis upon the common bond in blood and in religion between Germany and the Scandinavian North. The immediate effect of his articles, however, was simply to raise a storm of protest.⁸⁷

In 1873 the poet also appealed to the Scandinavians in the United States, utilizing the Chicago newspaper, *Skandinaven og Amerika*. In this organ he elaborated upon the thesis of a conflict between the "Roman" and the "German" spirit. Despite Luther's "destruction" of the world language of the Romans (Latin), the Roman spirit, he noted, was allowed to linger in the German schools, depriving the German child of "fantasy" and independence of thought, and making it instead a cold, critical individual in the service of the state. A "German, Anglo-Saxon school" would change all that. But, alas, Björnson found "less understanding" of such matters in Germany than in Scandinavia. Yet the Scandinavian North (and especially Norway) with "the old literature, gods, and language" must surely some day help Germany in the task of freeing "the truly Germanic" from its "Roman prison."⁸⁸ The Germans and the Anglo-Saxons, he declared, constituted the great race of freedom and enlightenment, which among other exploits, both material and spiritual, had crushed the Roman Empire, broken the power of the papacy, established the first republic, and brought about the extermination of slavery and the separation of Church and State. In one final burst the poet exclaimed that perhaps some day all over the world this race would constitute a single league. All other leagues, as with Russia or with France, were, in his opinion, only casual. But this bond was of the blood and of the spirit, and it could therefore be expected to last. "I am," Björnson concluded, "among those who believe that this feeling at some time will assemble all Germans and Anglo-Saxons and that it will thereby become their task to care for the future of the work in a great world peace."⁸⁹

Thus had Björnson progressed from Norwegian nationalism through Scandinavianism to a Pan-Germanism bringing peace to the entire world. At bottom, however, he remained a staunch Norwegian patriot with a firm faith in Scandinavianism, which had already led him to battle for Icelanders and Schleswigers and was later, as will be shown below, to lead him also to fight for the Finns.⁴⁰ Yet as Björnson broadened his interests, so likewise

⁸⁷ See *B-St.*, p. 334 *et seq.*

⁸⁸ *Skandinaven og Amerika*, October 14, 1873.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, September 23, 1873.

⁴⁰ Linguistically the Finns are not Germanic, but they are always thought of as belonging in the Scandinavian orbit.

his Pan-Germanism was modified to embrace not only peace among the peoples of the world but also justice in the relationships—social, political, economic—of man to man. Since it was comprehensive and none too well defined, it is not strange, therefore, that on occasion the poet's Pan-Germanism appeared "hazy," somewhat "improvised," and, like Björnsson himself, "not a little naïve."⁴¹

From the vantage point of the present it is easy to note the naïve, and even the nonsensical, in Björnsson's Pan-German program. It was as unlikely in his day that the Danes could overlook the loss of Schleswig as it is that the Norwegians of our day can forget what the Nazis have done to their country. The concept of a German spirit opposed to a Roman spirit had about as little validity as the theory that the Germans and Anglo-Saxons made up one race, which was bound to clash with the Slavs. The role of Luther the poet appears to have misunderstood, and when he spoke of Germany as Protestant he evidently overlooked the fact that almost half of all Germans remained Catholic despite the Reformation. As to a restored Poland, he could not of course have foreseen the more recent misfortunes of that unhappy land. Yet within his own lifetime the current of events and his own changing views played havoc with the stand he had taken at Grundtvig's decease. At the close of the seventies Björnsson no longer stood upon the firm Christian foundation which had characterized his utterances of 1872. With loss of faith in Christianity came disappointment in the development of the new Germany. True, his hopes were raised momentarily by Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* against the Catholic Church.⁴² But his hopes were soon blasted, for Germany remained a bureaucratic, militaristic state.⁴³ To the end Björnsson clung to Pan-Germanism but with distinct qualifications: Germany must be free, the Scandinavian nations must join her as should preferably also the United States and Great Britain, and the great goal of the resulting Germanic league must be world peace.⁴⁴ When the union of Norway and Sweden broke in 1905, Björnsson at once urged a Pan-Scandinavian alliance as a prelude to a Pan-Germanic league dedicated to world peace.⁴⁵ In his last address on the future of the North, delivered in

⁴¹ E. Stang, *Nordens Kalender*, 1933, p. 12.

⁴² See *Brytnings-År*, vol. ii, pp. 82-83, 117-18, 122-24; and *Aftenp.*, 1876, no. 43 (from the *Nationalzeitung*).

⁴³ *B-St.*, pp. 349-50. It irked Björnsson in 1898 to discover that in Germany he was considered anti-German. See *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 395-96.

⁴⁴ *B-St.*, p. 350.

⁴⁵ *Aftenp.*, 1905, no. 411. But the sudden snapping of the bond between Norway

Denmark on June 4, 1906, there were bitter traces of 1905.⁴⁶ But brighter than these was his faith—still strong—in Scandinavianism and in Pan-Germanism.⁴⁷

Part and parcel of Björnson's Pan-Germanism was the quest for peace and for justice, which led Björnson into many movements—social, economic, political. Here only the highlights will be presented, for after 1870 the poet's activities became at times so complex as to require, if treated fully, not one volume but several. Bearing in mind that Björnson had many interests and was almost always in a state of unrest because of some cause that had captured his heart, we shall trace first his career as a friend of the worker and as a self-termed socialist. Next we propose to treat of him as a pacifist, particularly during the nineties. Finally, we shall examine the closing decade of his life, when he fought for Finns, Poles, and Slovaks, but above all else for world peace.⁴⁸

Björnson was not of the working class. In fact, except for some exposure to Marcus Thrane, prior to the eighties he hardly thought of the workers except as supporters of the Norwegian Liberal party. True enough, in 1868 he had observed thoughtfully that in the so-called Bergen "potato-war" a single class, the working class, had arisen and asserted itself. The poet inveighed against the cleavage, especially in the cities, between the workers and the upper classes. It was, he wrote, a "national disgrace" that in Bergen merchants with weapons had faced workers with knives and stones. Here was "something serious," for which Björnson offered two remedies. The schools must teach the dignity of labor and the workers must be given the right of suffrage.⁴⁹

Björnson's approach to the labor problem was primarily that of the republican agitator, reacting against the entrenched power and privilege of

and Sweden precluded any such plan at the time. See F. Bull, *Nordens Kalender*, 1933, p. 38.

⁴⁶ As in the indictment of Sweden for not having taken its proper role and for having demanded the destruction of the frontier fortifications, coupled with the dubious assertion that because of fear of the wrath of the Swedes, the Norwegians dared not establish a republic and had to seek a king who with his connections could defend them.

⁴⁷ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 510-18. See also the *Daily Chronicle*, June 17, 1905.

⁴⁸ See F. C. Wildhagen's article, "Björnson and Europe," *Nordisk Tidsskrift (Litteraturskå Föreningen, Stkln., 1925)*, pp. 561-73.

⁴⁹ *N.F.*, 1868, no. 37. The poet also suggested possible legislation to cope with the high price of potatoes, the factor behind this "war."

a monarchy.⁵⁰ His drama *The King* (1877) was a frontal attack upon royalty and Christianity, upon the standing army and "its vices," upon the state church, and upon the class system. In this play the entire hierarchy which Björnson opposed was represented by such "pillars of society" as the general, the pastor, the sheriff, and the merchant.⁵¹ In the late seventies Björnson cut loose from orthodox Christianity. But at heart a believer, he simply took up a new set of beliefs. Thus, he became an evolutionist, a humanitarian, and a visionary socialist. To Georg Brandes⁵² he wrote in 1879 asking for a "good survey" of socialism, for in breaking away from his former religious milieu Björnson found the Danish literary critic a helpful guide.⁵³ The poet's sojourn of 1880-81 in the United States must have further stimulated his interest in socialism and in the working classes.⁵⁴ Among his American visitors was the learned Viennese Jew, Nathan Ganz, who impressed Björnson deeply with his definition of modern socialism as a system whereby property could not be used by any individual to oppress or to injure others.⁵⁵ And in the Middle West he saw what former members of the Norwegian rural proletariat (*husmænd*) could accomplish with land of their own. He admired them, he confessed, "inebriated though they were and alarmed though they became upon learning that the poet was an unbeliever."⁵⁶

After his return to Europe and his removal to Paris Björnson entered enthusiastically into the social, political, moral, and religious questions of the day. Anti-clericalism, agnosticism, socialism, pacifism, republicanism—all these movements occupied his thoughts in the eighties. Even at his beloved Aulestad he confessed that he lived more in England and France than at home in Norway.⁵⁷ In Paris the poet was impressed by Gambetta's struggle with entrenched wealth. He read the Parisian "boulevard news-

⁵⁰ T. Hegna, *op. cit.*, p. 26 *et seq.*

⁵¹ On *The King* read Bull, Paasche, and Winsnes, *Norsk Litteraturhistorie*, vol. iv, pp. 602-08. See *Dagbl.*, 1880, no. 70, for Björnson's views on this drama.

⁵² For the influence of Brandes on Björnson, especially in 1877-78, see J. Lescoffier, *Edda*, 1932, pp. 339-50.

⁵³ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, p. 48; also p. 58.

⁵⁴ He even noticed the diet of the Scandinavian workers in Worcester, Massachusetts, and in his letters to *Dagbladet* he wrote with admiration of their homes.

⁵⁵ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, pp. 211-12.

⁵⁶ *Aftenp.*, 1881, no. 100A. Read *Dagbl.* of April 6, 1881, in which Björnson noted the opportunity for Norwegian *husmænd* in the Red River Valley. In 1885 he urged that the Norwegian state grant loans to the *husmænd* for the purchase of land. See *V.G.*, 1885, no. 28; *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 502; and *V.G.*, 1880, no. 94.

⁵⁷ *Kamp-Liv*, vol. i, p. 297.

papers," the organs of great wealth, and he noted that because they had to support the *status quo*, they supported all that was "rotten" in the state, in society, religion, and scholarship.⁵⁸ He admired the France of 1883, despite its poor government. "There," he said, "the church was already powerless against the majority, the anarchists had become ridiculous, and the socialists were an orderly party, which had its learning and its sympathies spread over all classes, in a great and imposing growth."⁵⁹ In 1884 he asked where "in the entire world" the king served as "a connecting link between the classes." "We know, I think," he observed, "too many examples of kings who have used, or have suffered themselves to be used by, one class or several classes to oppress another or all others." In the Scandinavian realms he charged that "the monarchy fights in the ranks of bureaucracy against the great majority of the people."⁶⁰

Illustrative of Björnson's growing interest in social questions was his Christiania lecture of September 18, 1886, on the French republic and socialism. The task in France, said the poet, was to change the country gradually from a state for the great capitalists into a state solely for the workers. In his novel, *Germinal*, Zola had revealed the actual conditions in France, and it was not for nothing that time after time the French workers had revolted. Poverty in Norway, he asserted, could not be compared with poverty abroad, where the glaring contrast between excessive luxury and utter need was such that a basic change was imperative. "He who did not feel this had no heart." Björnson could not understand how Christians could turn away so easily from this situation. For it was not asked that they give all to the poor, but that they allow the workers to confer and to agree upon what must be done. Ears and hearts must be opened, he urged, to this the greatest cause of the day. At least those most closely concerned, the workers, must be allowed to talk about it. Those few advocates of violence, the anarchists, he dismissed lightly. True, at least once a month they deposed God. But no one bothered about that. Next, Björnson spoke of the socialists and their aims. Real socialism to him was "a series of dreams," which with greater or lesser difficulty would find realization. The abolition of war was one of

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 48-50.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 177-78. See *Dagbl.*, 1883, no. 377, in which he said that the French socialists were "prominent in all political groups, even in the most royalist." Obviously, he thought of a socialist simply as one who was socially minded but not necessarily a member of a class-conscious Marxist party.

⁶⁰ *Scandinavia*, vol. i (1884), pp. 225-26. In 1884 Björnson also took up the ideas of Henry George; see *Kamp-Liv*, vol. ii, pp. 198, 217-18.

socialism's objectives. War, he said, was the worst enemy of the worker. Together with war, the tariff system, a blind, unjust form of taxation, must be abolished. Finally, the socialists demanded a normal work day. Decisive for the poet was the interpretation of "the only completely modern statesman," Gambetta, who spoke not of socialism as such, but of a series of social questions to be solved, leading to the social state. "We must not," declared Björnson, "go about with a secret fear that the socialists are half insane, half criminal." No, many of their demands, he asserted, were allied with the future.⁶¹

To labor and its problems Björnson directed his mighty energy at the close of the eighties. The time was ripe: the international labor movement was reviving, and in Norway in 1887 there was organized the Norwegian Labor party.⁶² Björnson supported the Norwegian workers in their demand for the right to vote. At Christiania on May 17, 1888, he delivered a deeply patriotic address, in which he pleaded eloquently for universal suffrage in Norway.⁶³ In the following year labor unrest developed in the country. Strikes broke out, first in the printing establishments and later in the match factories. The striking girl workers of the match factories in Christiania drew the sympathy and support of Björnson in the fall of 1889. The poet agitated in the press and on the platform in their behalf, and he organized a benefit to raise money for their cause. A glimpse at one of his speeches will indicate his attitude. First of all, he accused the management of overcharging for its services. The most refractory among the employers were foreigners, he said, but behind them was the capitalistic "ring" which dominated the capital and had its henchmen in the press. He had harsh words for the Christians and the clergy who termed the strike "a revolt against the authorities," not realizing that here were involved not slaves but free persons seeking to obtain their rights. This strike, Björnson thought, would serve as an appeal, which at length would touch the Norwegian hearts that as yet were concerned with only the Zulu mission. The poet closed with an eloquent plea for faith in the ultimate triumph of goodness, of truth, and of justice.⁶⁴ *Morgenbladet* frothed at the mouth at such plain speaking. Acting as "the most violent agitator," Björnson, it alleged,

⁶¹ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 57-64.

⁶² Keilhau, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 402. This party, which fought for universal suffrage, soon had a clearly socialistic character. See E. Bull, *Grunnriss av Norges Historie* (Oslo, 1926), p. 110.

⁶³ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 109-16. Björnson gave labor talks twice on this day.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 146-58.

had kept the strike going. Branding the poet as a "dangerous guest," the newspaper asked how long his "bold attacks upon the existing social order" would be tolerated.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, despite Björnson's vigorous support, the economic stress of unemployment proved too strong, and ultimately the strike failed.

In 1895 appeared "Björnson's social peace dream," namely the drama, *Beyond Human Power, Part II*. Therein was depicted with stark simplicity the deep social cleavage in the capitalistic world between the slaves of industry living miserably in a sunless valley and the masters of industry dwelling luxuriously upon the sunlit heights. True enough, arbitration was hinted at in the play by a deputation of workers who spoke of future legislation to provide for the settlement of disputes. But the poet's own program for industrial peace was only visionary socialism, including new inventions to make life more agreeable.⁶⁶

Further than to visionary socialism Björnson did not attain.⁶⁷ He continued to call himself a socialist, but there is nothing to show that he had any real knowledge of Marxian ideas. In 1902 he said, "I am not a socialist in the sense that I believe in the socialistic dreams which may perhaps take substance in a century. I have no faith in State Socialism or in the large combinations of capital—trusts—which are to pave the way. . . . But I say to the workers: Propose something that can be realized, such as, for instance, an eight hour day."⁶⁸ In a letter of November 26, 1902, he criticized the stupidity of the socialists, but claimed it was socialism which the Norwegian Liberal party had served during its last years. The existing unjust order in his opinion could not endure, and the gradual progress in the "socialistic spirit," which democracy was then making, would inevitably lead to another order. In March, 1903, the poet suggested cooperating with but not joining the Norwegian socialist group, which was, he thought, "too narrow and too malicious." All in all, one must agree with Einar Hilsen that Björnson simply credited all reforms with a "socialistic foundation or

⁶⁵ *Mgbl.*, 1889, no. 625.

⁶⁶ In flights of fancy Björnson foresaw "wool without sheep" and "silk without silkworms." Notable also in the drama was the leader of the industrialists, a "superman" of a Nietzschean type. See Arvid G. Hansen, *Moderne Kjøttene* (Chra., 1917), pp. 7-19; and T. Hegna, *op. cit.*, p. 33 *et seq.*

⁶⁷ For an excellent analysis of Björnson's interest in socialism and labor see *Arbeidernes Leksikon*, edited by J. Friis and T. Hegna, vol. i (Oslo, 1932), cols. 734-41.

⁶⁸ *Mgbl.*, 1902, no. 726 (from *Politiken*).

spirit." Björnsson, then, was not a socialist, but rather an idealist and a poet with a heart that warmed for the cause of labor and freedom.⁶⁹ It was this warm heart which led him into the peace movement.

In an article marred by malice but candidly critical, *Morgenbladet* in 1886 complained that Björnsson had ceased to be a poet, was solely an agitator, and without having the necessary qualifications had tossed himself "boldly and frivolously into everything." "To his latest whims," continued the newspaper, "belongs his belief in eternal peace."⁷⁰ Eternal peace with Björnsson, however, was not a whim. Indeed it became a passion. Exactly when he became a pacifist it would be difficult to determine. But Fried can hardly be correct in tracing the poet's pacifism to his early youth and works.⁷¹ Certainly, in neither the fifties nor the sixties did Björnsson betray any marked interest in pacifism. Indeed, during the crisis of 1864 he was genuinely belligerent. He wanted the king of Norway and Sweden to aid the Danes, for that was the only way to get people who had enjoyed fifty years of peace "chased out into a war."⁷² But with Björnsson as with Norway pacifism did not become vital until the seventies. Pacifism fitted well into the program of the growing Norwegian Liberal party of that period. Thus, many Liberals feared that the army might be used by the bureaucracy to thwart the popular will. Still others, economy-minded, wanted to spend as little as possible upon the military establishment—always a burden in a small and poor country like Norway. Many Liberals, including Björnsson, also linked pacifism with republicanism. Once the king was removed, the danger of war, they thought, would be lessened.⁷³

Significant in the early seventies was Björnsson's direct attack upon the prevailing military system. It was, he said, "so beautiful, so sublime to demand a strong army," no matter what the conditions. It was "patriotic," "manly," even "religious!" But the poet questioned if there could be in this "any higher morality" or "any blessing," and he noted with concern the anxiety of mothers over their sons living in garrisons. What Björnsson envisioned was a modified Swiss system, so that military exercises would become a step in rearing youth; while the exercises in later

⁶⁹ Einar Hilsen, *Jubilæumsboken fra 14 til 14* (Chra., 1914), pp. 177-81.

⁷⁰ *Mgbl.*, 1886, no. 478; see also no. 475.

⁷¹ Alfred H. Fried, *Handbuch der Friedensbewegung* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1905), pp. 385-86.

⁷² *Gro-Tid*, vol. ii, p. 106.

⁷³ See H. Koht, *Freds-tanken i Noregs-sogo* (Oslo, 1906), p. 81 *et seq.*

life would be joined with national festivals in a Christian and patriotic spirit.⁷⁴ In 1872 he stressed the objection of the *bonde* to garrison life on the Prussian pattern. Again he urged that national festivals be combined with military drills. As for defense, he complained that the intelligentsia would "consult all foreign books and patterns but seldom the national character and the domestic needs."⁷⁵ In this same decade the republican and nationalist character of Björnson's pacifism came clearly to the surface, coupled with a sincere appreciation of the Swiss military system. As he put it, his program called for "a republic, and an army on the Swiss basis."⁷⁶ He was willing to have the youth trained in the use of weapons. But he would not have any young man "for the sake of the fatherland lose his soul in an organization of the army contrary to the spirit of the North."⁷⁷ In 1874 he exclaimed that the "present military spirit" was "Europe's cross and curse." Yet he did not hesitate to advocate placing arms in the schools at the expense of the state, with non-commissioned officers serving as teachers.⁷⁸ In March of the same year he blamed the princes and not the people for the wars of Europe. Such was the burden of standing armies that, he added, "peace will soon be as costly as war."⁷⁹ During this decade also, the poet produced the drama, *The King*, with its attack upon the standing army.⁸⁰ He was alarmed to hear that Sweden's army was to be organized by the king upon the "Prussian pattern." If true, he said, this would mean "a moral ruin for the good Swedish people and a tremendous step away from the only system which furthers national feeling, namely that of Switzerland."⁸¹ Yet the Scandinavians must, he asserted, stand with the Germans against the Slavs, for this was the most direct means of freeing Schleswig.⁸² A large Germanic league, including Holland, Belgium, and perhaps Switzerland, remained the ultimate goal.⁸³ But Björnson wanted no foreign policy for his people that would necessitate an army and a navy.⁸⁴

⁷⁴ *Brytnings-Ar*, vol. i, pp. 57-58.

⁷⁵ *For Idé og Virkelighed*, vol. i (1872), pp. 217-43.

⁷⁶ *Brytnings-Ar*, vol. i, p. 77. ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 82-83. ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 190.

⁷⁹ *Skandinaven*, 1874, no. 45. In 1874 the poet also appealed for a "peace tribunal" to operate for the Germanic peoples to make war less frequent. See *Brytnings-Ar*, vol. i, pp. 247-48, 302.

⁸⁰ Hegna, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28. ⁸¹ *Brytnings-Ar*, vol. ii, p. 8. ⁸² *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 123.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 287-88. Letter of August 25, 1878. In urging this method to regain Schleswig, it apparently did not occur to him that such a league might simply mean the submerging of individual states in a Pan-German domain.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 297.

By the eighties, Björnsson was convinced that the road to peace lay in republicanism.⁸⁵ In this stand he echoed the sentiments of many of the Norwegian Liberals, who opposed the monarchy and thought of the army not only as a burden but also as a possible tool of the king. But in the eighties he went a step further, prompted no doubt by Pan-Scandinavian sympathies. The future Scandinavian republics, he said, should arrange "with all other nations to have any eventual conflict between them and other states settled before an international tribunal." Next, said the poet, "we take refuge in the stronghold of liberty on earth, the United States of America, and ask them for the eternal cause of peace and growth, to guarantee all small nations which hereafter will secede from the kings' war-hell, that our contract about peaceful settlements with all other nations really will be respected."⁸⁶ But America was far away, and perhaps could not be expected to aid when at the close of the decade a wave of defense hysteria swept over Norway. Russia was thought of as a possible menace,⁸⁷ and friction in the union led others to fear Swedish military measures against Norway.

To Björnsson friction with Sweden was the real issue, for he believed that Russia's goal lay to the south. In his opinion, from Sweden arose the threat of a definite danger, about which the truth should be told. An abstract enthusiasm was being worked up, he charged, "for a possible war against an unknown enemy!" Like his friend, Kielland,⁸⁸ Björnsson criticized severely the participation of clergy and women in the Norwegian preparedness campaign. The "natural frigidity" of the capital

⁸⁵ Note his Chicago speech of December 26, 1880, in which he associated kings, armies, and poverty, and held forth the dream of three Scandinavian republics able to disband their armies and to rely upon the protection of the United States. See *Aftenp.*, 1881, no. 13A. Read Björnsson's *Af mine Foredrag om Republikken* (Chra., 1880), pp. 46-48, on the king and the army.

⁸⁶ *Scandinavia*, vol. i, p. 226.

⁸⁷ Björnsson in 1887 indulged in considerable naïve wonderment at the great, mysterious, conquering Russia which then, much as today, had, he said, "swallowed in whole or in part" its weaker neighbors like Finland, the Baltic provinces, and Poland. See his article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of June 30, 1887. (*A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 74-79). No evidence has been found to support the fears of Russian penetration into Scandinavia. C. F. Palmstierna, "Sweden and the Russian Bogey," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, vol. 113 (1933), pp. 739-54.

⁸⁸ Alexander Kielland in a vigorous little book, *Forsvarssagen* (Cphn., 1890) branded the defense movement as a Conservative cause, advised against all war, and commented acidly upon the antics of the clergy and the women in the preparedness group. Cf. *Mgbl.*, 1889, nos. 625, 628, 629, 636.

for a time, he observed, was being replaced by a "unique, hysterical enthusiasm." In his bold, blunt way Björnson saw through the current agitation and deemed it the sorry business that much of it was.⁸⁹

It was mostly Björnson, writes Koht, who kept the peace movement alive throughout 1890.⁹⁰ In particular he challenged the hatred in Denmark of the Germans and the fear in Norway of the Russians. He blamed the Danes themselves for the disaster of 1864. They could, he alleged, have saved Schleswig. But they were "too occupied with false objectives, with false hopes of what the army could accomplish."⁹¹ As for Russia, his attitude was almost fatalistic. As well, he suggested, try defense against an avalanche in motion, or against fate. For Russia, he believed, had a world mission to unite Europe and Asia into one league, just as North and South America would soon be united, thus insuring "eternal peace." He still believed in a Germanic league. But it must be free, with England taking the lead.⁹² "The Germany of the present, the Germany of conquest, the Germany which holds foreign property and people under her and among them a part of our kinsfolk"—that Germany, menacing the peace of Europe, was not, he said, dear to the Norwegian people. "Militaristic Germany we shun," declared the poet.⁹³

From January to December, 1890, Björnson attacked the Norwegian preparedness movement, which, he felt, should be directed not against Russia but against Sweden. The poet found plenty of opposition. His views were challenged by the militarist, Haakon D. Lowzow, and by the librarian, A. C. Drolsum, as well as by such faithful advocates of preparedness as *Aftenposten* and *Morgenbladet*, aided by a lusty recruit, *Verdens Gang*. According to Lowzow, Russia was Norway's most dangerous neighbor, while Björnson claimed that Russia's real interests lay in the Balkans.⁹⁴ Drolsum felt the full measure of the poet's wrath. The burden of defense, declared Björnson, was "a necessary evil." But as such it was no subject for the "bazaars, dancing, lottery, punch, and

⁸⁹ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 144-45. *Dagbl.*, 1889, nos. 357, 388, 390.

⁹⁰ Koht, *Freds-tanken i Noregs-sogo*, p. 109. In this year also appeared Björnson's preface to K. P. Arnoldson's *Lov—ikke Krig* (Fagerstrand, 1890), in which he stressed the importance of thinking of peace rather than of war, and suggested a friendly appraisal of the possible Russian need of an icefree port in Norway.

⁹¹ See *Dagbl.*, 1890, nos. 357, 359, 408; *V.G.*, 1890, no. 296.

⁹² *Dagbl.*, 1890, no. 2.

⁹³ *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 169.

⁹⁴ Lowzow quoted Björnson's *Pall Mall Gazette* article of 1887 to justify his fears of Russia. For the Lowzow-Björnson controversy see *Dagbl.*, 1890, nos. 2, 16, 17, 20, 21, 25-27, 30, 34; and *V.G.*, 1890, no. 16.

card playing," which had characterized the preparedness movement. "For all of this" he held Drolsum "responsible." Drolsum had also preached "love" of the army. Why in the world, was Björnsson's reaction, should we "love our army more than our workers, seamen, midwives, teachers, librarians?"⁹⁵ But the preparedness party had a staunch supporter in the Liberal newspaper, *Verdens Gang*, which protested against Björnsson's stand and questioned the possible need by Russia of an icefree harbor in Finmark.⁹⁶ The Norwegian defense program, contended *Verdens Gang*, was based "neither upon enthusiasm for war, nor upon hatred of the Russians." Its object was the safeguarding of the "neutrality" of Norway.⁹⁷

A year of controversy closed with Björnsson's speech on the peace question at the Christiania Workingmen's Association on December 7, 1890. Since relations with Sweden were still unsettled, the poet urged first of all that the Norwegians be prepared to defend themselves.⁹⁸ He himself had "always been a friend of peace, although he had composed several war songs." When the danger of war disappeared, he predicted, political boundaries would disappear and there would begin a period of equality and fraternity. Björnsson found fault with the custom of teaching children to play at war. "One must arm spiritually, thereby strengthening patriotism and the fatherland." As for the future, he relied upon the workers in all lands, who had the same vital interest in abolishing war. America, too, had led the way in promoting arbitration. No cause, he confessed, had seized him as had the peace movement. Work for peace was the same as work for progress: thus, old age assistance was impossible without saving the money that went to the army. The poet ended with an ardent appeal for support of the peace movement by the women of Norway.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ *Dagbl.*, 1890, no. 291; also no. 318.

⁹⁶ *V.G.*, 1890, no. 264. *Verdens Gang* based its opinion upon the work of the scholar J. A. Friis, *En Sommer i Finmarken* (Chra., 1871). Actually, the natural outlet for the most of Russia's agricultural products was the Black Sea.

⁹⁷ *V.G.*, 1890, no. 266.

⁹⁸ Significantly enough, this suspicion of Sweden took concrete form after the crisis of 1895 in the strengthening of the Norwegian army and navy and in the building of a chain of forts along the Norwegian-Swedish frontier.

⁹⁹ *V.G.*, 1890, no. 296; see the editorial remarks in no. 301. The women did help. Some thought to promote peace by donating a modern vessel to the Norwegian navy; note their appeal in *Mgbl.*, 1889, no. 629. Others supported the peace societies; read Falnes, *Norway and Nobel*, pp. 76-77.

Björnson's appeal to the workers had two interesting results. First, it was demanded that he and Wollert Konow organize a Norwegian peace society.¹⁰⁰ Second, the celebrated composer, Edvard Grieg, read Björnson's speech and suggested an "Apotheosis to Peace," which apparently was the seed of the poet's oratorio, *Peace* (1891). A superb symbolic study in emotional verse, this oratorio revealed the tragedy of war, proclaimed the message of the Sermon on the Mount, and closed with the expression of a typically naïve Björnsonian faith in machines to end war.¹⁰¹

Only in poetry did Björnson find peace during the nineties. Because he was willing to consider in a spirit of peace and friendship Russia's possible need of an icefree port in Norway, he was accused of wanting to cede such a harbor to Russia, treated almost as a traitor, and suspected of having sold himself for Russian rubles.¹⁰² Such charges were false, an outgrowth largely of bitter partisan and personal strife. As already observed, Björnson simply wanted Norway to control her own foreign relations, for he had no faith in Sweden and the king.¹⁰³ And yet pacifism alone did not dictate his stand, for at bottom he was a Norwegian patriot seeking "complete equality and independence" for his native land.¹⁰⁴

Danish pacifists provided the poet's largest audience in 1892. The Peace Society in Silkeborg, Denmark, planned a great outdoor gathering at Himmelbjerget in Jutland in the summer of 1892, with Björnson as the speaker of the day. Several Danish newspapers were hostile to the entire enterprise, but Björnson's name and fame made the meeting of June 19, 1892, a huge success. Some twenty thousand persons attended, and although a few Danes spoke, Björnson was the only person who

¹⁰⁰ *V.G.*, 1890, no. 290. The society, however, failed to develop. Koht, *Freds-tanken i Noregs-sogo*, p. 110 *et seq.*; and Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-50.

¹⁰¹ See G. Hauch, ed., *Breve fra Grieg* (Chra., 1922), pp. 82 *et seq.* and 100. F. Bull, ed., Björnson's *Samlede Digte*, vol. ii, pp. 171-87, 284-86. Cf. the appreciative analysis by H. Löken in Ejnar Skovrup, *Hovedtræk af Nordisk Digting i Nytiden*, vol. ii (Cphn., 1921), pp. 442-43; and Falnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁰² *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 192. See also *Aftenp.*, 1891, nos. 702, 769; *Mgbl.*, 1891, nos. 620, 628, 666, 716; and *Dagbl.*, 1892, nos. 13, 18, 310.

¹⁰³ He sought to keep the Norwegian army free from the control of the king. The latter he also suspected as the head of the Freemasons in Norway and Sweden, a "military order" whereby indirectly the monarch was the "absolute ruler of the chief officials and the greatest capitalists of the country." See *Dagbl.*, 1892, no. 280; and *Aftenp.*, 1892, no. 534.

¹⁰⁴ *Dagbl.*, 1891, no. 41.

could be heard throughout "the sea of people." Financially, too, the affair was a success, and a contribution was sent to the International Peace Bureau at Berne, Switzerland.¹⁰⁵ The general tenor of the poet's appeal was clear enough.¹⁰⁶ He accused the church of failing to support the peace movement, and he solemnly declared himself a "socialist." All, he said, were tired of war, and its abolition would be the greatest blessing on earth. Lastly, he called for the wide popular support among teachers, preachers, and legislators that would assure the ultimate victory of the peace movement.

A week later, at Sorø, Denmark, Björnson again lectured on pacifism. Curiously enough, here he claimed that war had some justification, as evidenced by recent colonial enterprise in uncivilized areas. "There war was carried on to halt war among men, to prevent traffic in human flesh, and to abolish cannibalism. When the colonial wars spread, they will contribute to halting wars at home, because the people cannot continue to toss out money and display power abroad and at the same time maintain the military forces at home." But in civilized areas, he concluded, war had lost its justification.¹⁰⁷ The worker, he stated, did not want war because it was costly, and the farmer did not want war because it took his sons away from peaceful pursuits. Nine tenths of the people thought war an abomination and would never believe it could lead to any good fortune. The minority of ten per cent, "the upper classes," supported war, and dealt with the other classes by holding a revolver at their backs. As to the alleged internal danger if the armies were disbanded, the truth was, that the "upper classes" simply wanted guaranties against the "lower classes." Yet if justice prevailed, no such need would exist. It had been said that the peace movement was revolutionary. So it was, he agreed, for there was nothing like it to exterminate the "evil instincts" in man and to make him like the Prince of Peace.¹⁰⁸

Actually what Björnson envisioned for Norway was not pacifism alone but a broad social, political, and economic program. In a letter of July 20, 1892, he explained that he had become a socialist, but "without sharing hatred and day-dreaming." Socialism in his opinion meant justice for the common man. In Norway, he declared, the demands of socialism for to-

¹⁰⁵ *Höjskolebladet*, 1917, no. 21, cols. 637-46; 1892, nos. 16-18. T. Holmberg, *Tidsströmningar och Minnen* (Upsala, 1918), pp. 294-97.

¹⁰⁶ The account in *Höjskolebladet*, 1892, no. 26, is fairly good; that in *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 241-42, is quite unsatisfactory.

¹⁰⁷ *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 242 *et seq.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 242-46.

day and tomorrow must be chiefly the forwarding of the peace movement; universal suffrage for both men and women; the abolition of all tariffs; old age assistance; one state school only—"the folk school." Further: it was desired that by means of state loans, the cotters (*husmænd*) might buy freely the land which they then rented; that with the use of government funds, workers might buy idle land; that workers and seamen might have a share in industry and shipping; that labor laws might guarantee well-being; and that the military laws in peacetime might become more humane. "If this takes place," he observed, "then so great a proportion of the people will become joint owners and interested parties in the well-being of the country, that no social convulsion is conceivable."¹⁰⁹

Throughout the nineties Björnson remained the articulate apostle of peace at home and abroad. In 1892 a number of his articles appeared in German translation in the pacifist publication, *Die Waffen Nieder!* In August of the same year he took part in an attempted revival of the Norwegian Peace Society.¹¹⁰ He attacked the union with Sweden, which, he said, should become a defensive league, leading the way to peace among the peoples of the earth.¹¹¹ He advocated a new commercial treaty between Norway and Denmark, based upon a mutual lowering of the tariff walls, whereby both countries would escape "the protectionist system of plunder." For the Norwegians, he thought, such an arrangement would be "wise politically," because of the possible "economic loss" in trade with Sweden that might arise from difficulties in the union. His pacifism, in short, could have both an economic and a political foundation. A measure of his ceaseless activity may be seen in the conspicuous silence of the Norwegian Conservative press on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, December 8, 1892.¹¹²

In 1893, however, though still critical of Swedish militarism, Björnson urged a conciliatory policy toward Sweden. The underlying motive was the desire of the poet to promote peace. But his Liberal colleagues did not agree with him on this matter, and bitter partisan strife followed.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ *Silkeborg Avis*, August 22, 1892. See *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 221, 242, 255-58.

¹¹⁰ *Dagbl.*, 1892, no. 244. Koht, *Freds-tanken i Noregs-sogo*, p. 110.

¹¹¹ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 252, 265.

¹¹² *Aftenposten*—clearly annoyed—suggested earlier in the year the "deportation" of the poet to Brazil, the scene of a recent revolution, where there must be "a great deal to reform." *Aftenp.*, 1892, no. 10.

¹¹³ *Dagbl.*, 1893, no. 27. *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 276-78. For the Norwegian Liberal reaction see *Dagbl.*, 1893, no. 82.

With a keen appreciation of this experience Björnson reminded the members of the Universal Peace Congress that, "politics being the daughter of war, our party struggles still retain too much of the morality of war and methods of war."¹¹⁴ Despite the growing tension between Norway and Sweden, the poet's program was peace, coupled with pride in his native land. The Norwegians, he asserted, would be "pioneers for peace."¹¹⁵ But toward the close of 1893 he felt that his efforts in Norway were futile.¹¹⁶ For a time he remained tolerably quiet, except for grumbling over England's colonial policy in Africa, which led him to brand the English as "hypocrites" and to term them "the greatest obstacles to world peace."¹¹⁷ But when on July 5, 1894, Bernhard Hanssen issued the first number of the Norwegian pacifist newspaper, *Det norske Fredsblad*, Björnson contributed an article in which he flayed the State Church of Norway because of its inconsistent stand on peace and war.

The year 1895 was discouraging for the peace movement in Norway. Björnson advocated arbitration to settle the dispute between the Norwegians and the Swedes. He was not heeded, and as noted, the crisis brought a wave of patriotism and preparedness among the Norwegians. As was to be expected, the patriots sought to preserve peace by preparing for war. "All know," wrote *Dagbladet*, "that when our little land arms, then it arms not for war but for peace." Were peace to be preserved and freedom and independence maintained, said the Liberal organ, a powerful defense system must be constructed.¹¹⁸ Armaments were the topic of the day, and Björnson also wrote of armaments—and arbitration. The smaller nations, he declared, must lead the way in demanding arbitration treaties. "War should involve only the warring parties, and an international court should handle violations of this rule." If they agreed upon its use, the peoples of the earth had one defense stronger than war. That was "to denounce all treaties with and to deny every favor to the people who according to the international court have violated the neutrality of another people." This state of affairs should continue until proper resti-

¹¹⁴ *Official Report of the Fifth Universal Peace Congress held at Chicago, United States of America. August 14 to 20, 1893.* (Boston, 1893), pp. 42-43. "Politics should be," said Björnson, "the highest form of love of our neighbor."

¹¹⁵ *Aftenp.*, 1893, no. 283; see no. 373 for his peace talks of June, 1893.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1893, no. 373.

¹¹⁷ Collin and Björnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-10, 111. Letters of June 9, and 26, 1894.

¹¹⁸ *Dagbl.*, 1895, no. 213. Falnes, *Norway and Nobel*, pp. 94-96.

tution had been made by the offending nation.¹¹⁹ If the small states could be assured of "absolute neutrality," they could keep armaments at a minimum. Total disarmament, the poet believed, was impossible.¹²⁰

Arbitration remained Björnson's keynote during the late nineties. But he would not abandon armaments, for Norway must have protection against Sweden.¹²¹ Moreover, as already indicated, the sole objective of the poet's sensational Russian letters was to get Sweden to join Norway in the work for arbitration treaties to protect their neutrality. That being the case, said Björnson, the Russian letters had to cease when in 1898 the Tsar called for "disarmament."¹²² To Bertha von Suttner Björnson wrote, "The Tsar has done a splendid thing. Whatever may come of it, from now on the air is throbbing with thoughts of peace—even where yesterday they were deemed impossible." "Ultimately," he asserted, "all Germans will be united."¹²³

Björnson's Pan-Germanic dreams were not forgotten. But in them the poet included arbitration, neutrality, and Anglo-American cooperation. Furthermore, he realized that the peace movement had become "an independent ethical force" transcending the barriers of race and appealing to the spirit of righteousness among all peoples.¹²⁴ Regardless of the lukewarm attitude of Sweden, Norway could and did work for arbitration.¹²⁵ But for Norway any declared neutrality had to wait until after 1905, when the Norwegians gained control of their own foreign policy.¹²⁶ In the meantime Björnson kept all these issues alive. In 1898 he sent an open letter to Carl Schurz suggesting an Anglo-American alliance, in which, to promote world peace and "a general association of all the Germanic

¹¹⁹ The reader will note the resemblance to the so-called "sanctions" of the League of Nations.

¹²⁰ *Dagbl.*, 1895, no. 213.

¹²¹ This view was also shared by his fellow pacifist, Halvdan Koht. In his pamphlet of 1894, *Unionen og Freden*, Koht overstressed the warlike attitude of the Swedes, among whom were not a few pacifists and friends of Norway. See Falnes, *Norway and Nobel*, p. 56 *et seq.*; and Koht, *Freds-tanken i Noregs-sogo*, pp. 116-19.

¹²² See Björnson's preface to *Mine Brev til Petersburgskija Vjedomosti*. Björnson claimed that the Tsar preferred to read this newspaper, but there is no evidence to show that Nicholas II was influenced by Björnson's articles in summoning the Peace Conference at The Hague.

¹²³ *Memoirs of Bertha von Suttner*, vol. ii (Boston, 1910), p. 193. *V.G.*, 1898, no. 313; and *War against War*, February 17, 1899, p. 83.

¹²⁴ *V.G.*, 1896, no. 159.

¹²⁵ See the convenient summary from official sources in *Aftenp.*, 1897, no. 386.

¹²⁶ Falnes, *Norway and Nobel*, p. 125.

nations," the United States would abandon isolation and become a great power "with colonies" and "a powerful fleet." Schurz flatly rejected Björnsson's proposal. To Schurz the plan simply meant placing on the backs of Americans the very burden of armaments against which the Tsar had recently directed his "solemn warning."¹²⁷ Nothing daunted, Björnsson put his faith in the smaller nations working together as a league of neutrals.¹²⁸

With the turn of the century came the last hectic years of Björnsson's career. As if sensing that the end was near, he carried on unabated. Often he was on the defensive, and frequently he was disappointed. In 1901 he defended his Pan-Germanism, tracing it to the events of 1864, when he realized that the future must be shared with "kinsmen" in Great Britain, Germany, and America.¹²⁹ In the same year he explained that his Germanic League was based upon *independent* nations and was not a German imperialistic scheme.¹³⁰ Despite disappointment the poet saw "the future of the peace cause" coming like "a sunrise."¹³¹ In 1902 he continued to campaign for the formal neutralization of Scandinavia in conjunction with his familiar Pan-Germanic peace plan, thereby evoking comment in the English, Danish, and German press.¹³²

In 1903 the poet protested against the oppression of Finland by that same Tsar whom he had earlier praised. Björnsson sympathized with the oppressed everywhere, and like most Norwegians he always considered the Finns as brothers.¹³³ In 1888, for instance, he had noted that "official geographies neglected Finland," and he had promised to help over-

¹²⁷ See the *New York Herald*, September 13, 1898, p. 8; and F. Bancroft, ed., *Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz*, vol. v (New York, 1913), pp. 513-15.

¹²⁸ See *V.G.*, 1899, no. 225, for his address at the Interparliamentary Peace Conference in Christiania, in August, 1899. Björnsson had doubted if anything "effectual" would come from the conference at The Hague. *War against War*, January 20, 1899, p. 21.

¹²⁹ *V.G.*, 1901, no. 202. *A.T.*, vol. i, p. 362. ¹³⁰ See *V.G.*, 1901, nos. 220, 224.

¹³¹ See the beautiful passage in his letter of December 18, 1901, in Bertha von Suttner's *Memoirs*, vol. ii, p. 378.

¹³² Dr. Andreas Elviken has kindly called my attention to the dispatch of September 3, 1902, which the scholarly French diplomat, M. Jusserand, sent from Copenhagen to express his doubts on Björnsson's proposal. *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 2^o Série, Tome Second (Paris, 1931), Doc. no. 388, p. 463. See *N.Int.*, 1902, nos. 201-03; and *Aftenp.*, 1902, no. 616.

¹³³ See *Mine Brev*, p. 49. But he recognized a difference in language. *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 169-70.

come this neglect. Wherever Finns and Norwegians met, he declared, they felt as if they belonged together.¹³⁴ In sober prose and flaming verse in 1903 he lashed at the Tsar and stirred the Finns. It was a legend, he said, that the Tsar was not responsible for the violence in Finland. That which was happening there was "the attempted murder of a people."¹³⁵ In a powerful article of August, 1903, Björnson indicted the French for furnishing the gold which supported the Russian autocracy in its oppression of both the Finns and the Jews.¹³⁶ The Finns did not forget Björnson's efforts on their behalf.¹³⁷ But with Björnson the entire episode left melancholy conclusions, which he disclosed in an article from Rome in November, 1904. He who had discounted the fear of Russia,¹³⁸ now professed to see a "Russian peril," personified in the faithless Nicholas II, aided and abetted by Germany and France. Even in the peace movement the poet found "hypocrisy" and inability to rise above national prejudice. The "morality of war" must be attacked.¹³⁹ Finally, he complained that as a member of the Nobel Committee¹⁴⁰ of the Storting he had urged the publication, in three languages, of a *Revue Nobel*,¹⁴¹ in order to combat the ethics of war. But, he claimed, unfortunately his hands were tied. Worse yet, in 1906 by a shabby political maneuver Björnson was dropped from the Nobel Committee. He had fallen from grace among the Norwegian nationalists.¹⁴² Ill but courageous, he spent the sum-

¹³⁴ P. Nordmann, *Björnstjerne Björnson i Lif och Lära* (Helsingfors, 1915), p. 136.

¹³⁵ *Mgbl.*, 1903, no. 281; also no. 265. For the historical setting of the Finnish situation see the careful study by John H. Wuorinen, *Nationalism in Modern Finland* (New York, 1931).

¹³⁶ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 479-81. In 1904 he urged stopping the Russo-Japanese war by means of an "effective neutrality," including a boycott on food, ships, and money. In 1905 he further suggested that war loans raised in neutral lands be considered contraband of war. See *V.G.*, 1904, no. 367; and *Aftenp.*, 1905, no. 78.

¹³⁷ On Björnson and Finland see W. Söderhjelm, *Profiler ur finskt kulturliv* (Helsingfors, 1913), pp. 423-46; and Yrjö Hirn, in *Nordens Kalender, 1933*, pp. 18-24.

¹³⁸ Falnes, *Norway and Nobel*, pp. 28-29.

¹³⁹ See his pamphlet of 1906, *Krigsmoralen*, a didactic appeal for the aid of women in combatting the "morality of war."

¹⁴⁰ On Björnson and the Nobel Committee see the helpful work of O. J. Falnes, *passim*.

¹⁴¹ Read Falnes, *Norway and Nobel*, pp. 193-200, for the story of this venture. The *Revue Nobel* did not materialize. See Björnson's article, "A Great Plan," *Review of Internationalism*, April, 1907, pp. 5-7.

¹⁴² See *Dagbl.*, 1904, nos. 25, 287, 297, 298, for typical castigation of Björnson as a deserter from "Norway's national party" (the Liberals). *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 489-91.

mer of 1906 at Aulestad, interested as ever in the peace movement.¹⁴³

In 1907 came the poet's last great crusade on behalf of struggling nationalities, notably the Ruthenians, the Czechs, and the Slovaks.¹⁴⁴ In 1904 in an article on hypocrisy in the peace movement Björnsson had already called attention to the oppressed nationalities in the Habsburg domains.¹⁴⁵ But in April, 1907, he wrote an article in defense of the Ruthenians, suffering under Polish domination,¹⁴⁶ and this led him to the championing of the Slovaks against the Magyars. The Magyars abroad were active pacifists. However, in Hungary they oppressed the Slovaks. The lesson was obvious: the work of peace must begin at home.¹⁴⁷ Next, Björnsson was given an honorary position at the peace congress in Munich in 1907. Here was an opportunity. In an open letter which ran through the entire European press he declared that such a gathering should not tolerate the presence of the Magyar leader in oppression, Count Albert Apponyi.¹⁴⁸ Such humbug was an ideal target for Björnsson, and in the ensuing debate he made it known throughout the world that there was a Slovak people.¹⁴⁹ When the Czecho-Slovak state was set up after the first World War, Björnsson was remembered. His name was carved high upon a mountain wall for all to read.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ See his account of the two Hollanders (not named), who visited him in regard to an international institution to be located at The Hague, toward which Carnegie had promised fifty million dollars. *Aftenp.*, 1906, no. 591 (from *Gudbrandsdölen*).

¹⁴⁴ On this phase see the excellent work of the late Trygve Tonstad, *Björnstjerne Björnsson og Slovakene* (Oslo, 1938).

¹⁴⁵ *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 495.

¹⁴⁶ Published in *Die Zeit* of Vienna, the contribution drew fire at once from the Polish pianist Paderewski, who alleged that his people had "always been tolerant towards other nationalities." See *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 535-40. Cf. The London *Tribune*, April 22, 1907, p. 5; and *Edda*, 1932, pp. 423-28. For the Russian aspect of the Ruthenian problem see Romain Sembratovytch, *Le Tsarisme et l'Ukraine* (Paris, 1907), to which Björnsson contributed the preface.

¹⁴⁷ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 541-47.

¹⁴⁸ See E. Lederer, *Björnsson et Apponyi* (Prague, 1921); and *Count Albert Apponyi. The so-called Angel of Peace, and what he stands for in Hungary*, issued by the Slovak Natl. Committee (Cleveland, 1911). At the suggestion of the writer, the University Library in Oslo has obtained photostats of Björnsson's correspondence of 1907 (with Dr. Lederer) from the National Museum at Prague. Björnsson's letters are in German.

¹⁴⁹ *A.T.*, vol. ii, pp. 547-48.

¹⁵⁰ See the reproduction on the cover of Tonstad, *op. cit.* One may wonder if the Czechs and Slovaks would have had a different fate had Björnsson's suggestion of 1907 been followed. There was, he then said, no solution other than letting each nationality cultivate its own speech in complete freedom, "but make German the common language for all of Central Europe." (Italics are Björnsson's). See *Edda*, 1935, p. 211.

After 1900 it is hard to think of Björnson as purely a Norwegian nationalist, for in most respects he was no longer that. Significant was his observation in that very year that a current was passing over most of the European peoples, manifested in a popular self-worship so bombastic that each nation thought itself supreme upon the earth. With almost a prophetic glance at modern nationalism in its most vicious form Björnson wrote: "For the entire movement there is found a new name. It is called 'Nationalism' ('Imperialism,' 'Antisemitism,' and so forth, are merely subdivisions). But it is the old romanticism in the armor of war—the most dangerous enemy which the modern spirit now has."¹⁵¹

Björnson did not—could not—solve the problem of Central Europe. A Pan-Germanism that served, not conquered; that sought brothers on both sides of the Atlantic in order to end war; that sought within to unite the various peoples in voluntary cooperation—that, he asserted in 1908, would be a blessing for Central Europe.¹⁵² The suffering Slavs followed him almost to death's door. "The Serbs are calling for me, the Croats call, the Slovaks call. But I can do nothing. In part because it is useless, so long as the questions now stand. In part because I am occupied and am incapable of close work for more than a few hours each day. But what an injustice."¹⁵³ So wrote Björnson in 1909. Shortly before his death in the following year he handed his old friend, Collin, his last manuscript, the beginning of a poem "dedicated to the Polish factory girls." The title read: "The Good Deeds Save the World."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ *V.G.*, 1900, no. 286.

¹⁵² *A.T.*, vol. ii, p. 551. In Austria, he felt, the future of Europe would be decided, in the relationship of Germans to Slavs.

¹⁵³ *Edda*, 1935, p. 229. Letter of March 14, 1909.

¹⁵⁴ Björnson and Collin, *Brevveksling*, pp. 423 and 442.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THIS bibliography contains the principal sources cited in the text. Place of publication has been noted as it appears on the original title page, regardless of the change in name from Christiania to Oslo in 1925. No separate listing is here given for certain materials to which little reference has been made. For a number of the entries a brief comment has also been furnished.

UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

The University Library in Oslo has the chief collection of Björnson manuscripts and correspondence. The manuscripts are mostly of his literary works. The correspondence, which in part has been published by Halvdan Koht and Francis Bull, was still largely restricted when seen by the writer. For the Björnson Centennial in 1932 the University Library published a catalog of its exhibition of Björnsoniana entitled *Björnstjerne Björnson. Katalog over Utstillingen i Universitetsbiblioteket*, edited by Ö. Anker (Oslo, 1932). This is an excellent guide to the Björnson manuscripts on display in 1932. It also includes a valuable classified bibliography of published material relating to Björnson.

In the United States there is an important group of unpublished Björnson letters in the R. B. Anderson Papers deposited in the Wisconsin Historical Society Collections at Madison. Selections from these letters have been made available through the courtesy of Professor Einar I. Haugen of the University of Wisconsin.

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SOCIAL DRAMAS: *The Newlyweds* (1865); *The Editor* and *A Bankruptcy* (1875); *The King* (1877); *Leonarda* and *The New System* (1879); *A Gauntlet* (1883); *Beyond Human Power* (first part 1883, second part 1895); *Paul Lange and Tora Parsberg* (1898). (The first part of *Beyond Human Power*, a powerful drama stemming from Björnson's own religious crisis, is generally regarded as a masterpiece. See the discussion by J. Nome, *Björnsons dikterproblem: studier omkring "over ævne" ideen*. Oslo, 1934.)

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V. Björnson's Articles, Speeches, Pamphlets, and Prefaces

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