

**From “Viktor Rydberg, En Lefnadsteckning”
by Karl Warburg, 1900.
Translated by William P. Reaves © 2003**

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Mythological Researcher and Author

A coincidence that became quite fateful for Rydberg’s philosophical work as well as for his poetry, at the beginning of 1880s turned his attention to Nordic mythology, which quickly proceeded to capture his soul for nearly a decade. Rydberg’s mind had long been interested in Old Norse studies. One expression of this was his interest in rune research. It captivated him in two ways: because of its patriotic significance and its quality to offer up riddles to a mind inclined to them. By 1863, he had written an article in the *Handelstidning* about the Gisseberg Stone. During the 1870s, he occupied himself with the mysteries of rune-interpretation and corresponded, among other things, with the shrewd and independent-thinking researcher E. Jenssen about his interpretations of the Tanum, Stentofte, and Björketorp runestones, whose translations he made public partly in contribution to Götesborg’s and Bohuslän’s ancient monuments (the first installment), and partly in the *Svenska Fornminnesföreningens tidskrift* [“Journal of Swedish Ancient Monuments”], 1875.¹

The Nordic myths were dear to him since childhood – a passage from the Edda’s *Völuspá*, besides his catechism, had constituted his first oral-reading exam. During his years as a student he had sought to bring Saxo’s and the Edda’s information into harmony and he had followed the mythology’s development with interest, although he was very skeptical toward the philosophical and nature-symbolic interpretations that appeared here and there, not least in Grundtvigian circles. He harbored a deep reverence for the Nordic forefather’s mythic conception of the world and the powers that worked there, and he saw in them evidence of the original sublimity of the Nordic people’s spirit.

Late in 1879, a pair of voices that seemed to spell the end of the theory of the originality of Old Norse mythology were heard from Norway. The beautiful heathen temple nearly collapsed in ruins. The brilliant rune-interpreter and celebrated philologist Sophus Bugge, on October 31st 1879 at a meeting of the Kristiania Science Society, held a lecture in which he sought to prove that the greatest portion of the North’s mythic and heroic sagas were not of Norse origin, but derived in part from classical antiquity, and in part from Judeo-Christian sources and spread to the North through the British Isles during the Viking Age. Although Bugge’s revelations were not presented in writing until much later, still they immediately aroused enormous attention, and as Joh:s Steenstrup wittily pointed out² with a simile from Peder Paars – after Bugge saw a ship in the moon, there was a multitude of others who evidently saw both tackle, rigging, and even the ship’s dog.

¹ In 1874 (November 5th), he recommended, as a patriotic thought worthy to be realized, the formation of a rune-museum of plaster casts.

² Compare the articles “Revolutionäre Studier over Nordens Gudelære” in the Danish *Dagbladet* 1881 (no. 102 on) and 1882 (no. 181).

But on the other hand, the new theory was met with opposing views from different directions.³

At the same time as Bugge, another Norwegian presented a theory that seemed to support his. It was the Doctor of Theology, and later bishop A. C. Bang who likewise presented before the Kristiania Science Society in the autumn of 1879 his view concerning an affinity between *Völuspá* and the *Sybilline Oracles*, a lecture that came out in print the same year.

Ynglingasaga tells of one King Sveigdir who is enticed into a mountain by a warf, who went on and was never seen again.

Bang's little brochure—one of science's many will-o-the-wisps that burst into flame for a second and vanish into nothing again—played the role of the dwarf and enticed Viktor Rydberg ever so long into the labyrinth of mythology, from which he almost nearly did not escape. The provoking, tempting mystery of the mythological problem worked its magic allure on him as it did so many others. "Atlantis" had once dragged the Carolinian era's great polymaths away from their work in the natural sciences. Mythology likewise now drew the nineteenth century's Swedish polymath away from the completion of his philosophical work in which he had long labored, even away from excursions into the realm of poetic art.

When Rydberg, at the end of 1879, sent Svend Grundtvig a notification of admission in the then newly founded Nordic Literary Society, he seemed to have—in a letter now unfortunately lost-- mentioned Bang's supposed discovery, but said that as a "non-professional" that he would withhold his opinion.

To which Svend Grundtvig replied by sending him a copy of a letter to his friend Sophus Bugge, in which he discussed the matter, and the following appeal:

"You withheld your opinion as a non-professional. But allow me to remark, that in this, which seems to me to be the main point, namely the comparison of *Völuspá* with the Sybillene books, you are more competent than most, because it is exceptional for any Nordic philologist to have occupied himself with Old Christian literature. Therefore it would interest me greatly, if you, and you alone, would take this matter under consideration as soon as Bang's presentation is officially published; for the question is of the greatest interest, and ought to be examined by others before the results can be accepted."

Rydberg answered the appeal. In the Norse Journal (*Nordisk Tidskrift*) for 1881 he presented both of his articles *Sibyllinerna och Völuspá*, a sharp and scathing critique of Bang's theory. In the first part of this treatise (First installment, 1881), Rydberg wanted to, according to what he wrote to Montelius, "review Bang's suppositions from the standpoint of the history of the Sybillene-knowledge, or more correctly lay out the main features of this history and allow the readers to draw their own conclusions. Bang's assumption—that *Völuspá*'s author—a Norwegian who came to Ireland during the 800s—could have had the Sybillene Oracles as a pattern, according to Rydberg's view, lacked every trace of probability, since the Asiatic-Egyptian Sybilline books—which were written in Greek—in the Western World at this time were completely unknown and that the partially distorted notices from Lactantius and Augustinus known in the middle ages about the Sybils were extremely scanty.

³ Primarily by Müllenhoff, *Deutsche Alterthumskunde*, V

Rydberg's polemic in this first part of the treatise is quite mocking. He laughs at the thought that the *Völuspá* skald would bear a heathen mask for Christian ends, and his critique of Bang's assumption that a plucky Norwegian –the first person in 500 years after Lactantius' time to have seen the prophetic books – could have walked into an Irish monastery and found ten of the "*Oracula Sibyllina*", whose existence in Roman-Catholic Europe no human being can trace during the centuries before or the centuries after, concludes with the jocular declaration that it would equally occur to Rydberg to refute this empty possibility, as to refute a person stating that there is a corporate dairy-operation on the planet Mars that returned seventeen and a half percent stock dividends last year.

After this account of the degree of possibility in Bang's supposition, Rydberg devoted the second and more important part of his treatise (the second installment) to a review of the similarities between the Sibylline books and *Völuspá*.

This portion, in which the more ironic tone is mostly abandoned, seems more overwhelming to me. Because here he investigates the different *spirit* of the Sibylline author, who in his understanding of the old gods favors euhemerism and understands them as "idolized human beings", to whom remaining in polytheism is a sin, and whose work is openly monotheistic and Christian, and the spirit of *Völuspá*, which is as heathen as that of any other heathen poem in the world. If *Völuspá* contains any purely Christian elements at all, it nevertheless openly proclaims a polythesitic worldview, which is sustained with great consistency throughout the entire poem.

However, Rydberg believed that the hypothesis that classical polytheistic and later Greek or Roman Christian ideas possibly leaked out and were incorporated into Germanic sagas and myths, was actually scientific and deserving of a thorough and careful investigation, but that this hypothesis should not be confused with Bang's supposition or made responsible for the monstrous idea that *Völuspá*'s heathenism was one of the Sibylline student's false flags, deliberately patched together and plastered up.

The Classical or Christian elements that could be found in *Völuspá* were in all cases completely united with Germanic heathendom and its spirit. The stated similarities in the works were actually the most profound differences.

And after Rydberg refutes Bang's detailed similarities, in detail and by displaying his depth of knowledge in this field, he concludes with the statement "it would have been best if the *Völuspá* poet had been allowed to remain at home."

In the same journal that contained the second part of Rydberg's treatise, a contribution by Sophus Bugge was published that took issue with the first installment.

In it, the respected researcher nevertheless makes the claim that more must have been known in the Middle Ages about the Sibylline texts than Rydberg thinks. Above all he points to the prophecies of Merlin found in seventh book of Gotfrids of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, which points back to the Sibylline texts as their model on the basis of some astronomical details.

As to the main question Bugge admittedly considers that "practically nothing" with Dr. Bang should call *Völuspá* a Christian oracle or assume that this poem has the same purpose as the Judeo-Christian oracle, but that the question, if *Völuspá* at all were affected by the Egyptian Asiatic Sibylline texts or by some of the Christian prophecies that during the Middle Ages went around under the name of Sibylline texts deserved to be investigated and that the compilation therefore denoted an advance.

In this paper Bugge also observed that Rydberg used a "forceful tone" that could well have a certain aesthetic effect, but was otherwise not suitable for a respectful and impartial inquiry.

Even another prominent reviewer, who was essentially on Rydberg's side, remarked that Rydberg who otherwise had an elegant style was somewhat sharp and sarcastic toward Bang and moreless swung a heavy pallasch than brandished a knight's sword.⁴

Yet with this, it may be observed that Rydberg held the conviction that Bang, according to the good old, or rather the bad, orthodox-theological method which had the answer in advance and not conduct the investigation very carefully. To this attests the following letter of April 6, 1881 to Svend Grundtvig, where he sent his treatise seperately:

“On December 12th, 1879 you sent me a letter that encouraged me to examine (kant). Bang's treatment of Voluspa and the Sibyllines, when this, that was still unpublished then, had time to become available through bookhandlers. You added in a transcribed excerpt from a letter to Professor Bugge, which allowed me one for my heart invaluable insight in

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⁴ In other words, he swung a heavy calvary blade, designed to hack and thrust, than a lighter and more agile sword.

The Mythological Works

Mythology was the matter that primarily occupied Rydberg's mind during his first years in Stockholm. The outlines of his great work were already clear long before he left Göttesborg, but it took a long time for him to realize them.

The first volume of *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, a large volume of 755 economical pages, was published in 1886. This was followed in 1889 by the second at over 600 pages.

Rydberg had despaired if on the whole his work could even be published without the help of sponsors.

For example, he had the odd notion that the evening paper, in place of giving a concise summary of his lectures, could publish these lectures every two weeks in a supplement not only word-for-word, but even increased with additional evidence. Regarding this, he wrote in his friendly, unpretentious style to the *Aftonbladet's* then working editor Gustaf Retzius:

“This supplement will not cause the *Aftonbladet* increased expense, but will be defrayed by myself. The cost could probably be diminished for me, if the supplement were printed so that the production of booklets were possible. I could then at the same time receive the lectures in the form of a book that a publisher would then possibly assume. I am an impractical man that has difficulty seeing whether this is possible here or not. If this proposal is feasible and will not cause you trouble or to sacrifice, as you already have for me, it shall please me. I realize all too well that the *Aftonbladet* itself cannot have any part of this. If in Sweden are found even fifty people that are interested in this material and have the patience to follow my investigations and arguments, there are many more than I had dared hope.”

The proposal from a typographic standpoint was impractical, but when the time came that the work should be published, Rydberg's old publisher was willing to publish it with a considerable advance, wherefore Rydberg also directed some words of gratitude in his writing to Albert Bonnier, which made possible that the results of his research work of many years would be released to the public.

“I send you the compact volume’ –writes Rydberg in 1886 to Otto Borchsenius. – “Many years of effort have gone into this. The times are such that I probably will receive little recognition for them.”

But he was nevertheless inwardly happy to see the first volume finished:

“ I feel a certain tranquility” --he says in a letter to Helund – “when I now see that the results of these investigations, worked on over many years, were not for nothing, but are condensed into a book that on library shelves will be accessible to future researchers in the field. As far as my Scandinavian contemporaries are concerned, being that they are the “professionals” in the field, I expect no recognition from them. If I get any

recognition at all, it shall make me happier still. But of prime importance is that my work be published in one of these three languages: English, German, or French.

Translations were proposed into all three languages, but only the English one was completed by the North American mythologist and authority of Nordic literature, former professor, now Ambassador to Copenhagen Rasmus B. Anderson, whose offer to translate the detailed work Rydberg greeted “with a cheer in his soul.”

A German translation was also prepared in 1889 by Phillip B. Schweitzer—the famous literary historian—and this pleased Rydberg greatly, but shortly thereafter he met a sudden demise, and a French translation that was planned by a group of scholars in Lund in 1891 never was completely realized.

Rydberg wished to know how his work would be received outside of the country, although he knew well that his mythology would be regarded as folly and a vexation to German philologists.

For he was a heretic in the field of mythology, not only in regard to his results, but also in regard to his methods.

It is said that Rydberg is “the last—and poetically the most gifted”—of the mythological school founded by Jakob Grimm and represented by men such as A. Kuhn and Max Müller”, and which school in connection to a philosophical method is strongly synthetic in its understanding of myth (Schück); It has even been said (by Mogk) that Rydberg’s mythology is the first and perhaps the last nordic work that stands firmly on the foundation of comparative mythology in the sense Kuhn and Max took the word.

But even if in his understanding of the mythology as a comprehensive and coherent system, Rydberg is related to the older German school, Richard Steffan is without a doubt correct, when he doubted if Rydberg could be thought of as belonging to any school at all.

Rydberg regarded himself as a mythological heretic, especially in regard to the German school. Quite revealing in this regard is a letter that he wrote to Gustaf Retzius in 1889. The matter was if a German edition could be published with Retzius’ support:

“As it now stands, a possible German publisher can only assess it by the reviews that have appeared in German professional journals. I have no reason to regret this. They are certainly all written by persons for whom the work’s content and method were both new and that have published works themselves, which if I am correct, must seem refuted. But even so, they have acknowledged that I have presented much that is new and at the same time demonstrated to be correct; that I have discovered lost German myths, for example the myth of the World-mill and that I have spread light on the German heroic sagas’, particularly Dietrich Saga’s, original connection to the god sagas, and on their fate after they were severed from them by the introduction of Christianity. But this notwithstanding, the mythological school that has been dominate in Germany from 1840 until now, is nonplussed by the standpoint that it would seal its own if it accepted my work in its entirety. What has surprised me is that they have not sought to strangle my work in its infancy, instead of recommending many of its conclusions’ important details.

The German school starts from the assumption that the myths, as they are today, are pure products of the power of nature’s workings on the human imagination; it attempts to interpret the mythic personages, in the smallest detail, as personifications of wind, storm, thunder, lightning, sun, dawn and dusk, light, darkness, warmth, cold, etc and the mythic events as allegoric-symbolic accounts of metroologic phenomena. The method that it employs in order to extract and justify its results is one whose scientific worth is the lowest of all logic, namely the “intuitive”

method of analogy, which according to my definition does not deserve the name method, because it gives free reign to the arbitrary and the impossible. It is also why an irreconcilable dissonance exists within the school that uses it. One can see dawn personified in the same mythic figure in which another sees lightning. It can see darkness personified by the same mythic element in which another sees the sun. How is this possible? Anything is possible for this method. According to it, even a thing described in the *Rigveda* as black can be a representation of the sun, because there are solar eclipses and, why of course, the sun never shines at night. Ergo: The sun is black.

I, who to my own torment have read through volumes of such material, consider this school's defenders, despite all their erudition and their "intuition", as outside the field in which science, with its serious demand of methods which prohibit fancy, are dominate.

I went about my studies without assumptions. At the outset, I even eliminated ones that I considered correct. The investigations lead me by degrees to the conviction that in order to not get stuck in the overall disorder, one must distinguish between mythogony and mythology (in its most narrow sense) from the very beginning.

Mythogony, the science of the origin of myths, is and ought to be discussed as a separate branch, which belongs to the area of ethnography and particularly social psychology. The raw material for its investigations is not solely and not even particularly the myths of civilized people, like these in comparatively very late stage of development became shaped and came into our time, certainly without what one now includes under the name *folklore*. On this path one can promote to scientific fact that which was previously the German mythic school's single saving truth that as the workings of natural phenomena on the imagination played a role (however not an exclusive role) in the origin of myth.

Mythology on the other hand is the study of myths their current condition, after having passed through centuries during which they underwent a transformation process in which social, religious, and ethical necessity as well as the need for connection between them intervened so that their original foundation in nature, where one exists, no longer can be easily recognized with certainty, at least for the time being. The science of mythology is to follow myths, as best it is able, on the paths they follow through time along with the language, by which means they are passed from generation to generation: thus to follow the Indo-European mythology down through the branches that the Indo-European language produced. Since the myths come to us in a fragmentary condition, it is ultimately mythology's task to compare the fragments in order to see if they match one another, and if they do to join them together, as one seeks to unite the scattered shards of a broken vase. One can thereby establish 1) The form of the myth-complex, as it was before it was destroyed; 2) which myths are placed in immediate connection to one another; 3) if lacunas (blank spaces), which cannot be filled, exist and what form these lacunas have.

The methods that these investigations must employ are partly the inductive method which the natural sciences use, and partly the circumstantial method that is used in a court of law, where witnesses are questioned and evidence is evaluated by its content and coherence."

The task Rydberg set for himself was to seek to uncover *the epic connection* in the myths, which he did not regard as a chaotic mass. While, in the first volume, he presents the connections between specific Germanic myths, in the second volume, he extends the comparison to myths of proto-Indo-European origin and, thus devotes his attention to the Indian and Persian myth-cycles. In his opinion, every myth, even those that were independent in the beginning became incorporated as links in a chain, which began with the creation of the world, the gods and the origin of the human race, and ended with Ragnarök and the regeneration of the world.

According to Rydberg's view, the myths are nevertheless of much different ages. Some date from the proto Indo-European era, such as the myths of the break between the

gods and the nature-artists, the resulting fimbul-winter and the measures which were taken to preserve the best of creation for the coming blessed world-era. Other myths belonged to a much later time, some probably from heathendom's last centuries. But as they arose, all became knit as new links to an already existing epic chain.

Rydberg traced the identities of myths in two ways, namely the polyonymy -- using the multiple names of the gods and heroes-- and the similarities in the substance of the myths.

However, his critics remarked that he carried this supposition too far (Wisén particularly objected to equating Thjazi and Völund) and on the whole find altogether too many "ingenious constructions of a poet" (Detter). Adolf Noreen⁵ has particularly asserted that the mythological *coherence*, the system, that Rydberg and others want to find in the heathen myths, is especially the work of a later time.

During the Viking age foreign influences acted on the mythology, which thereby became religio-philosophical; the myths were deepened and received ethical significance during contact with Christianity; even the originally warlike Baldur received many features of Christ; the question again is what and where was it inspired by the Christian spirit; the old gods were Christianized more and more. And finally, an "Old Norse theology" was created by Christian men that made up a system.

"The first of these theologians, whose name we know", says Noreen, "was Snorri, the last was Viktor Rydberg." ... "Rydberg falls prey", continues Noreen, "to a similar misconception as for example Lönnrot in regard to the Kalevala, and MacPherson in regard to the Ossian, which they did not essentially *arrange*, but *created*. Therefore he is not a restorer, but something far greater: a creative artist, a great poet.

So might the national epic from our heathen era have looked, if it lasted but a few more centuries and had had at hand a man such as Viktor Rydberg with his comprehensive education, religious interest and poetic genius."

On account of this, Rydberg sent the following letter to Noreen (May 18th, 1892):

"To Adolf Noreen, my shrewd critic, a hearty thanks for the friendly treatment!

I am happy that we are closer in the matter at hand than I had believed. I agree that "our heathen forefather's were on the point of building a glorious Lord's house" and that the building material in part could display "already hewn stones" beside the unhewn blocks. Thus, it is not unwarranted from your standpoint, that I investigate the hewn stones' surfaces and forms to combine them as they allow themselves to be fit together."

Henrik Schück's opinion, expressed in "*Svensk gudatro under hedentid*", originally published in *Finsk Tidskrift*, and later in *Ur gamla papper*, IV, stands in close connection to Noreen's:

Schück most closely favors Bugge's views, but is however critical of his method, which Schück considers narrowly linguistic and philological. For Bugge, the myths dissolve into a collection of details and he often forgets that a myth is foremost a poem, not a philological mosaic. But, despite these defects, Schück considers Bugge's fundamental idea that Snorri's mythological system is the result of a combination of heathen cult and Christian dogma, as correct. Rydberg, "who is what Bugge is not, a poet --and perhaps the most finely educated and

⁵ Noreen: *Formnordisk religion, mythologi, and teologi* in "*Spridda Studier*", 1895. (Originally printed 1892)

deep-thinking one that Sweden possessed in modern times –had better prerequisites than others to grasp the poetry which lay concealed in the Nordic people’s mythology.” But for all that, if his work in its main purpose must be stamped a failure, it is –Schück thinks—because Rydberg, originally a theologian, sought a *system* in the Nordic mythology, which can scarcely be found in its last phase; he does not recognize mythology as an *evolution*. His mythology proceeds from the highest principles and progresses from them to the relevant historic facts in contrast to the new view, which proceeds from the given historical material, subjecting it to a critical analysis.

For my own part, I can only take an objective view, but shall allow myself to make two points. For the correct understanding and recovery of a myth, a strong power of imagination is necessary. Imagination can lead one astray –as shown best by Fredrik Sanders’ wanderings—but when the investigation of myth is undertaken without imagination, the heart of the myth easily vanishes like the powder from a butterfly’s wings when it is handled too roughly. That Rydberg with a poet’s intuition and genius rediscovered many myths—especially within the tradition penned by Saxo —is undoubted and even acknowledged by his opponents and, in this regard, what he brought to light is a valuable treasure, independent of whether his main theory is correct or not.

The second point is that Rydberg did not consider the Germanic mythology to have been an originally coherent “system”, but one on which generation after generation had worked and which evolved over the centuries, including the final centuries of heathendom, during which the last links were joined. This is clear from the preface to “Fädernas Gudasaga”.

Even those that disapprove of the main train of thought in Rydberg’s work and consider it a failure from this standpoint have learned and been inspired by many of its details where his acute perception and power of imagination have come up correct.

His correspondence is full of acknowledgement in this regard from distinguished philologists and mythologists. Among the many letters that Rydberg received from prominent scientists on the basis of his mythology, those from his great opponent and friend Sophus Bugge are of particular interest. With the author’s kind permission may some excerpts from them be known.

After the receipt of the first volume, Bugge writes (February 1887):

“I have read and with every page I read my enthusiasm grows. I have been wonderfully taken by the rich, fresh images. I have read with happiness and in full agreement, surprised to find here combinations that in part have wound around in my own thoughts, but also – for the sake of truth—many times in disagreement and inclined to make an opposite interpretation (for example with many applications of the principle of polyonymy). Forgive these words from one, who confronted with such a magnificent and in many respects important work such as yours, has realized that he is nothing more than a philologist. I deeply regret that your *Investigations* arrived too late to have any influence on my final volume of mythological *Studies*.

Please accept my warm thanks for your work, which is more dear to me because you sent it with a friendly word.”

To which Rydberg replied in March of the same year:

“My heartfelt thanks for your letter, which can bring me nothing but happiness and is a true expression of your noble, veracious personality!

During the years I toiled over these “*Investigations*”, my thoughts have fallen on you daily with the wish that I was close to you to discuss with you every relevant point and avail myself of your considerable philological expertise.

If I had known that even a single page in my book would be read by you with full approval and support, I would have fulfilled a desire I harbored within myself to place the work in close connection with your name. But I considered it impertinent and abstained from it.

Thank also for the gift: “*Studien über das Beowulf-epos!*” To my pleasant surprise I have found that your thoughts here on many points correspond with my own, and that you present reasons for views that I intend to present in the second volume of my work. Therefore I will have many occasions to mention your name and it is my desire to do so whenever I have cause. In other points of the same work you have opened new ways for me, which I probably would not have tread if left to myself.”

In March of 1891, Bugge, who in the meantime was busy with further studies into this subject, writes the following regarding the second volume of Rydberg’s work:

“Please accept by thanks, belated though it may be. From the understanding I have of the historic conditions of the origin of the poems and narratives of gods and heroes that we read in Snorri’s Edda and in the old mytho-heroic poetry, I certainly cannot (as I well know) judge your book with impartiality. But nevertheless, in truth, I can say that I appreciate this great and important work. Just as I hope that future mythological research will follow many of the paths I have sought to clear, it is my belief that they will make indissoluble many of the bond that your writing has sought to knit. And I must confess that in the second volume I find much more that I confidently can agree with than in the first volume. I cannot agree with your understanding of *Völund*. However, for example, I find your exposition of “Astrology and Merlin” very convincing, and I regret for my own sake, that you have reprinted my essay on the Sibylline Oracles, the thesis of which I no longer see as valid. In order for one to judge with authority your comparative study of the Baldur myth with the Indian and Persian myths, one must be better acquainted with the most current investigations of the Vedic and Avestan religion than I am. But obviously, this matter ought to be investigated from the standpoint from which you have, and your investigation will definitely form an important part of the final answer of the matter.

I bring you my heartfelt thanks for all the learning, inspiration, and captivation I have found in your book. I have also sought to express this gratitude in another manner, in that I, along with some of my colleagues have proposed you be made a member of our academy, into which you were accepted yesterday.”

Rydberg, who then was convalescing after a long illness, answered this letter:

“Now I can only say *thanks* to my noble friend. Your nobility over joys and humbles me at the same time. But the humility is of the uplifting kind, because it is united with the intention to emulate you. It is possible that my work will be published in French translation. With your approval I will edit it so that our cooperation will be better brought to light and our differences, no more than is necessary. For this purpose, I will go through all your works again, where I ought to find many points of contact than I have already pointed out. But above all, you must allow me to adorn the French edition with a dedication to Sophus Bugge from his devoted friend and admirer Viktor Rydberg.”

When Rydberg sent Bugge *Vapensmeden*, he received the following letter (March 5th, 1892):

“Greetings Friend and Brother!

I have yet to look into your “Vapensmeden” yet can hear the simple tone inside. But I have again and again stopped on the threshold and read the words that you wrote in the introduction: “To my noble friend Sophus Bugge!” For the gift, and first and foremost for these words my warmest thanks!

Every time they do me good. They do me double good in this period

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Seldom have two opponents exchanged nobler and more sympathetic letters with one another than these two representatives of the best and noblest of the Swedish and Norwegian cultural worlds. And in the hands that they willingly extended to one another, despite their irreconcilable points of view—one may see a symbol for a good relationship between the two countries that are proud to call them their sons.

“*Investigations into Germanic Mythology*—with the exception of individual chapters, for example the excellent introduction to the Indo-European homeland, the chapters on the Sibylline Oracles and Völuspá and Astrology and Merlin.”-- is of an esoteric nature Therefore, in 1887, between the two volumes of his scientific work, Rydberg published a popular summary: *Fädernas Gudasaga berättad för Ungdomen*, the origin of which however was purely accidental. An author that wanted to publish a children’s book based on his work had shown Rydberg her manuscript. Rydberg could not accept it, but took it upon himself to popularize his mythology and offered her this instead, which she however discretely refused to accept. He then revised his account further and published it as a work intended to give youth “our ancestors’ myths as a connected whole.”

Entirely irrespective of the scientific implications, the Godsaga is a masterpiece of masculine, strong narrative art, united with the ancient sagas own spirit.

Outside of these pure mythological works, Rydberg, during this same period, also prepared his treatise on *Hjältesagan å Rökstenen*. [The Hero saga on the Rök stone]. By 1884 he already had a clear outline –as is evident from a letter of the time.

(more follows on page 628)

Rydberg’s hypothesis that the Röksten refers to the Lodbrokssaga, is scarcely durable.....

EXCERPT FOR FG:

“*Investigations into Germanic Mythology* is of an esoteric nature Therefore, in 1887, between the two volumes of his scientific work, Rydberg published a popular summary: *Fädernas Gudasaga berättad för Ungdomen*, the origin of which however was purely accidental. An author who wanted to publish a children’s book based on his work had shown Rydberg her manuscript. Rydberg could not accept it, but took it upon himself

to popularize his mythology and offered her this instead, which she however discretely refused. He then revised his account further and published it as a work intended to give youth “our ancestors' myths as a connected whole.”

Entirely irrespective of the scientific implications, the Godsaga is a masterpiece of masculine, strong narrative art, united with the ancient sagas own spirit.