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The Prose Edda

Snorri Sturlson

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The Prose Edda Snorri Sturlson
The Prose Edda is one of the most famous epic poems of the Viking Age, written by a medieval contemporary named Snorri Sturlson. From the intro: "Snorri Sturluson was in the fullest sense a product of his time. The son of a turbulent and ambitious chieftain, Sturla Thórdsson, of Hvamm in western Iceland, he was born to a heritage of strife and avarice. The history of the Sturlung house, like that of Douglas in Scotland, is a long and perplexed chronicle of intrigue, treachery, and assassination, in all of which Snorri played an active part. But even as among the Douglases there was one who, however deep in treason and intrigue, yet loved learning and poetry, and was distinguished in each, so Snorri, involved by sordid political chicanery, found time not only to compose original verse which was admired by his contemporaries, but also to record the myths and legends, the history and poetry, of his race, in a prose that is one of the glories of the age. The perplexing story of Snorri's life, told by his nephew, Sturla Thórdsson,[1] may well be omitted from this brief discussion. A careful and scholarly account of it by Eiríkr Magnússon[1] will be found in the introduction to the sixth volume of The Saga Library. From Snorri's marriage in 1199 to his assassination at the hands of his son-in-law, Gizurr Thórvaldsson, in 1241, there was little in his life which his biographer could relate with satisfaction. His friends, his relatives, his very children, Snorri sacrificed to his insatiate ambition. As chief and as lawman, he gave venal decisions and perverted justice; he purposed at any cost to become the most powerful man in Iceland. There is even ground for belief that he deliberately undertook to betray the republic to Hákon of Norway, and that only his lack of courage prevented him from subverting his country's liberty. Failure brought about his death, for Snorri, who had been a favorite at the Norwegian court, incurred the King's suspicion after fifteen years had passed with no accomplishment; and daring to leave Norway against Hákon's command, he fell under the royal displeasure. Gizurr, his murderer, proved to have been acting at the express order of the King."

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