caused this faithful and able counsellor to be beheaded, and the result was civil war, in which the weak king found it hard to make way against his restless and ambitious brothers. At last he got them into his power by treachery, and threw them into a dungeon of the castle of Nyköping, where they died of starvation. Soon afterwards Birger himself died, despised and hated by his subjects. He was succeeded by his nephew Magnus, his brother Eric’s son, a child of about three years of age. Magnus’s guardian, Mats Ketilmundsson, was a man of strong and noble char­acter, and as long as his supremacy lasted the Swedish people were more prosperous than they had ever been before. Taking advantage of the troubled condition of Denmark, he joined Scania and the neighbouring districts of Halland and Blekinge to the Swedish kingdom ; and had his prudent system of government been maintained these provinces might have been kept, for the inhabitants seem to have preferred Swedish to Danish rule. But, when he died in 1336, the king fell under the influence of un­worthy favourites. Scania, Halland, and Blekinge were restored to Denmark, and Sweden was soon in a state of the greatest confusion. In 1363 a number of nobles who had given Magnus much trouble, and whom he had expelled from the country, went to his sister’s son Albert, count of Mecklenburg, and offered him the crown. The offer was accepted, and afterwards Albert was formally elected by the Great Thing. Magnus resisted, but was defeated and made prisoner in a battle at Enköping in 1365. In 1371 he was released, and the rest of his days he spent in Norway, where he was not unpopular. From his mother he had inherited the Norwegian crown, but before the misfortunes of his later years it had been transferred to his son Haco.

The nobles and the hierarchy of Sweden were now so powerful that only a king of the highest political genius could have hoped to control them. Albert of Mecklenburg proved to be utterly unfit for the task he had undertaken. He tried to protect himself by giving many of the great offices of state to Germans, but he was warned that he would be dethroned if he continued to show so much favour to foreigners. In 1371 he accepted as his chief counsellor a great Swedish noble called Bo Jonsson, to whom about a third of the kingdom is said to have belonged. Bo Jonsson gave much more heed to his own interests than to those of his country, and did hardly anything to mitigate the hardships inflicted on the common people at this time by the turbulence of the well- off classes. After Bo Jonsson’s death Albert attempted to regain some of the authority which he had been forced to delegate to his powerful minister ; but the nobles refused to obey him, and invited Margaret of Denmark and Norway to take his place.

Margaret, one of the most remarkable figures in Scandinavian history, was the daughter of Waldemar IV. of Denmark, and at an early age she had become the wife of Haco of Norway, son of the Swedish king whom Albert had supplanted. The offspring of this marriage was an only son, Olaf, who succeeded his grandfather in Denmark in 1375 and his father in Norway in 1380. Both countries were ruled firmly and wisely by Margaret in her son’s name ; and after his death in 1387 the Danes and the Norwegians begged her to retain supreme power. To this request she assented; and, when the Swedish nobles asked her to undertake the government of Sweden also, she at once expressed her willingness to attack Albert, who had irritated her by claiming the Danish crown. An army was soon despatched to Sweden, and in 1389 Albert was defeated and taken prisoner at Falköping. Stockholm, which was held by German mercenaries, refused to admit the conqueror, and for several years it was besieged

without success by Danish troops. At last the difficulty had to be settled by negotiation. In 1395 it was arranged that Albert should be set at liberty on condition that within three years he should pay a ransom of 60,000 marks. If at the end of that period the money was not paid, he was either to give up Stockholm or to return to captivity. The result was that in 1398 Stockholm was surrendered by the Hanseatic League, which had become security for the fulfilment of Albert’s engagement.

Meanwhile Margaret had persuaded the Danes, the Norwegians, and the Swedes to accept her grandnephew Eric of Pomerania as her successor, and in 1397 he was crowned at Calmar. Margaret was eager that the union of the Scandinavian countries under a single sovereign should be made permanent, and delegates from the councils of state of the three kingdoms met at Calmar to discuss her proposals. On the 20th of July 1397 these delegates concluded what was called the union of Calmar. Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, while retaining their local laws and customs, were in all future time to be ruled by one king. When a king died he was to be succeeded by his eldest son ; but if he were childless his successor was to be freely elected. In foreign affairs Scandinavia was always to act as a united country. Margaret had excellent intentions in devising this bold scheme, but the time was not ripe for so vast a change. It was inevitable that when popular movements were no longer held in check by her strong will, formidable difficulties should spring from the jealousies of the three nationalities.

Even after Eric’s coronation Margaret remained the real sovereign, and she was powerful enough to make the union something more than a mere name. But even during her lifetime the Swedish people showed that they resented the idea of being taxed for objects in which they were only indirectly interested, and when she died (in 1412) it soon became evident that Eric would be unable to retain their allegiance. In 1386 Margaret had formally recognized the claim of Gerhard VI., count of Holstein, to be feudal lord of the duchy of Schleswig. Gerhard died in 1404, leaving three young sons. Margaret and Eric then tried to recover the rights of the Danish crown in the duchy; and in 1413, soon after Margaret’s death, Eric caused Schleswig to be declared a forfeited fief. The result was a war which lasted about twenty years. The Swedes had to bear heavy burdens to enable Eric to carry on the conflict, and he made no attempt to allay their discontent. He seldom visited their country, and his officers often treated them with reckless cruelty. In the province of Dalecarlia the royal bailiff acted so tyrannically that in 1434 the people rebelled. They were led by a brave and patriotic miner, Engelbrecht Engelbrechtsson, and under his influence the movement spread rapidly among the peasantry of other districts. The Swedish council of state, alarmed by the enthusiasm he had excited, agreed in 1436 to declare the king deposed. The nobles were more afraid of the peasants than of Eric, and soon placed him on the throne again ; but he never fully recovered his authority. He was obliged to make Charles Knutsson his viceroy in Sweden ; and Knutsson was as anxious as Engelbrechtsson that Swedish independence should be restored. The two patriotic leaders became jealous of one another, and Engelbrechtsson was murdered by a member of Knutsson’s party. But the popular agitation lost none of its original force, and in 1439 Eric was dethroned by all his kingdoms. He fled to the island of Gotland, where he lived for some years by piracy ; and afterwards he was compelled to seek for refuge in Pomerania.

Christopher of Bavaria, Eric’s nephew, was elected to the Danish throne, and he was soon acknowledged also in