

# SNORRI STURLUSON

THE YOUNGER EDDA;  
ALSO CALLED SNORRE'S  
EDDA, OR THE PROSE  
EDDA

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**Snorri Sturluson**  
**The Younger Edda;**  
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**Edda, or The Prose Edda**

*TO HON. THOS. F. BAYARD, AMBASSADOR  
TO THE COURT OF ST. JAMES, IN  
GRATEFUL RECOLLECTION OF PLEASANT  
OFFICIAL RELATIONS.*

# PREFACE

In the beginning, before the heaven and the earth and the sea were created, the great abyss Ginungagap was without form and void, and the spirit of Fimbultyr moved upon the face of the deep, until the ice-cold rivers, the Elivogs, flowing from Niflheim, came in contact with the dazzling flames from Muspelheim. This was before Chaos.

And Fimbultyr said: Let the melted drops of vapor quicken into life, and the giant Ymer was born in the midst of Ginungagap. He was not a god, but the father of all the race of evil giants. This was Chaos.

And Fimbultyr said: Let Ymer be slain and let order be established. And straightway Odin and his brothers—the bright sons of Bure—gave Ymer a mortal wound, and from his body made they the universe; from his flesh, the earth; from his blood, the sea; from his bones, the rocks; from his hair, the trees; from his skull, the vaulted heavens; from his eye-brows, the bulwark called Midgard. And the gods formed man and woman in their own image of two trees, and breathed into them the breath of life. Ask and Embla became living souls, and they received a garden in Midgard as a dwelling-place for themselves and their children until the end of time. This was Cosmos.

The world's last day approaches. All bonds and fetters that bound the forces of heaven and earth together are severed,

and the powers of good and of evil are brought together in an internecine feud. Loke advances with the Fenris-wolf and the Midgard-serpent, his own children, with all the hosts of the giants, and with Surt, who flings fire and flame over the world. Odin advances with all the asas and all the blessed einherjes. They meet, contend, and fall. The wolf swallows Odin, but Vidar, the Silent, sets his foot upon the monster's lower jaw, he seizes the other with his hand, and thus rends him till he dies. Frey encounters Surt, and terrible blows are given ere Frey falls. Heimdal and Loke fight and kill each other, and so do Tyr and the dog Garm from the Gnipa Cave. Asa-Thor fells the Midgard-serpent with his Mjolner, but he retreats only nine paces when he himself falls dead, suffocated by the serpent's venom. Then smoke wreathes up around the ash Ygdrasil, the high flames play against the heavens, the graves of the gods, of the giants and of men are swallowed up by the sea, and the end has come. This is Ragnarok, the twilight of the gods.

But the radiant dawn follows the night. The earth, completely green, rises again from the sea, and where the mews have but just been rocking on restless waves, rich fields unplowed and unsown, now wave their golden harvests before the gentle breezes. The asas awake to a new life, Balder is with them again. Then comes the mighty Fimbultyr, the god who is from everlasting to everlasting; the god whom the Edda skald dared not name. The god of gods comes to the asas. He comes to the great judgment and gathers all the good into Gimle to dwell there forever, and

evermore delights enjoy; but the perjurers and murderers and adulterers he sends to Nastrand, that terrible hall, to be torn by Nidhug until they are purged from their wickedness. This is Regeneration.

These are the outlines of the Teutonic religion. Such were the doctrines established by Odin among our ancestors. Thus do we find it recorded in the Eddas of Iceland.

The present volume contains all of the Younger Edda that can possibly be of any importance to English readers. In fact, it gives more than has ever before been presented in any translation into English, German or any of the modern Scandinavian tongues.

We would recommend our readers to omit the Forewords and Afterwords until they have perused the Fooling of Gylfe and Brage's Speech. The Forewords and Afterwords, it will readily be seen, are written by a later and less skillful hand, and we should be sorry to have anyone lay the book aside and lose the pleasure of reading Snorre's and Olaf's charming work, because he became disgusted with what seemed to him mere silly twaddle. And yet these Forewords and Afterwords become interesting enough when taken up in connection with a study of the historical anthropomorphized Odin. With a view of giving a pretty complete outline of the founder of the Teutonic race we have in our notes given all the Heimskringla sketch of the Black Sea Odin. We have done this, not only on account of the material it furnishes as the groundwork of a Teutonic epic, which we trust the muses will ere long direct some one to write, but also on

account of the vivid picture it gives of Teutonic life as shaped and controlled by the Odinic faith.

All the poems quoted in the Younger Edda have in this edition been traced back to their sources in the Elder Edda and elsewhere.

Where the notes seem to the reader insufficient, we must refer him to our Norse Mythology, where he will, we trust, find much of the additional information he may desire.

Well aware that our work has many imperfections, and begging our readers to deal generously with our shortcomings, we send the book out into the world with the hope that it may aid some young son or daughter of Odin to find his way to the fountains of Urd and Mimer and to Idun's rejuvenating apples. The son must not squander, but husband wisely, what his father has accumulated. The race must cherish and hold fast and add to the thought that the past has bequeathed to it. Thus does it grow greater and richer with each new generation. The past is the mirror that reflects the future.

*R. B. ANDERSON.*

University of Wisconsin,  
Madison, Wis., *September, 1879.*

# INTRODUCTION

The records of our Teutonic past have hitherto received but slight attention from the English-speaking branch of the great world-ash Ygdrasil. This indifference is the more deplorable, since a knowledge of our heroic forefathers would naturally operate as a most powerful means of keeping alive among us, and our posterity, that spirit of courage, enterprise and independence for which the old Teutons were so distinguished.

The religion of our ancestors forms an important chapter in the history of the childhood of our race, and this fact has induced us to offer the public an English translation of the Eddas. The purely mythological portion of the Elder Edda was translated and published by A. S. Cottle, in Bristol, in 1797, and the whole work was translated by Benjamin Thorpe, and published in London in 1866. Both these works are now out of print. Of the Younger Edda we have likewise had two translations into English,—the first by Dasent in 1842, the second by Blackwell, in his edition of Mallet's Northern Antiquities, in 1847. The former has long been out of print, the latter is a poor imitation of Dasent's. Both of them are very incomplete. These four books constitute all the Edda literature we have had in the English language, excepting, of course, single lays and chapters translated by Gray, Henderson, W. Taylor, Herbert, Jamieson, Pigott, William and Mary Howitt, and others.

The Younger Edda (also called Snorre's Edda, or the Prose Edda), of which we now have the pleasure of presenting our readers an English version, contains, as usually published in the original, the following divisions:

1. The Foreword.
2. Gylfaginning (The Fooling of Gylfe).
3. The Afterword to Gylfaginning.
4. Brage's Speech.
5. The Afterword.
6. Skaldskaparmal (a collection of poetic paraphrases, and denominations in Skaldic language without paraphrases).
7. Hattatal (an enumeration of metres; a sort of Clavis Metrica).

In some editions there are also found six additional chapters on the alphabet, grammar, figures of speech, etc.

There are three important parchment manuscripts of the Younger Edda, viz:

1. *Codex Regius*, the so-called King's Book. This was presented to the Royal Library in Copenhagen, by Bishop Brynjulf Sveinsson, in the year 1640, where it is still kept.

2. *Codex Wormianus*. This is found in the University Library in Copenhagen, in the Arne Magnæan collection. It takes its name from Professor Ole Worm [died 1654], to whom it was presented by the learned Arngrim Jonsson. Christian Worm, the grandson of Ole Worm, and Bishop of Seeland [died 1737], afterward presented it to Arne Magnusson.

3. *Codex Upsaliensis*. This is preserved in the Upsala University Library. Like the other two, it was found in Iceland, where it was given to Jon Rugmann. Later it fell into the hands of Count Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie, who in the year 1669 presented it to the Upsala University. Besides these three chief documents, there exist four fragmentary parchments, and a large number of paper manuscripts.

The first printed edition of the Younger Edda, in the original, is the celebrated "Edda Islandorum," published by Peter Johannes Resen, in Copenhagen, in the year 1665. It contains a translation into Latin, made partly by Resen himself, and partly also by Magnus Olafsson, Stephan Olafsson and Thormod Torfason.

Not until eighty years later, that is in 1746, did the second edition of the Younger Edda appear in Upsala under the auspices of Johannes Goransson. This was printed from the *Codex Upsaliensis*.

In the present century we find a third edition by Rasmus Rask, published in Stockholm in 1818. This is very complete and critical. The fourth edition was issued by Sveinbjorn Egilsson, in Reykjavik, 1849; the fifth by the Arne-Magnæan Commission in Copenhagen, 1852.<sup>1</sup> All these five editions have long been out of print, and in place of them we have a sixth edition by Thorleif Jonsson (Copenhagen, 1875), and a seventh by Ernst Wilkin (Paderborn, 1877). Both of these, and especially the latter, are

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<sup>1</sup> The third volume of this work has not yet appeared.

thoroughly critical and reliable.

Of translations, we must mention in addition to those into English by Dasent and Blackwell, R. Nyerup's translation into Danish (Copenhagen, 1808); Karl Simrock's into German (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1851); and Fr. Bergmann's into French (Paris, 1871). Among the chief authorities to be consulted in the study of the Younger Edda may be named, in addition to those already mentioned, Fr. Dietrich, Th. Möbius, Fr. Pfeiffer, Ludw. Ettmüller, K. Hildebrand, Ludw. Uhland, P. E. Müller, Adolf Holzmänn, Sophus Bugge, P. A. Munch and Rudolph Keyser. For the material in our introduction and notes, we are chiefly indebted to Simrock, Wilkin and Keyser. While we have had no opportunity of making original researches, the published works have been carefully studied, and all we claim for our work is, that it shall contain the results of the latest and most thorough investigations by scholars who live nearer the fountains of Urd and Mimer than do we. Our translations are made from Egilsson's, Jonsson's and Wilkins' editions of the original. We have not translated any of the Hattatal, and only the narrative part of Skaldskaparmál, and yet our version contains more of the Younger Edda than any English, German, French or Danish translation that has hitherto been published. The parts omitted cannot possibly be of any interest to any one who cannot read them in the original. All the paraphrases of the *ásas* and *asynjes*, of the world, the earth, the sea, the sun, the wind, fire, summer, man, woman, gold, of war, arms, of a ship, emperor, king, ruler,

etc., are of interest only as they help to explain passages of Old Norse poems. The same is true of the enumeration of metres, which contains a number of epithets and metaphors used by the scalds, illustrated by specimens of their poetry, and also by a poem of Snorre Sturleson, written in one hundred different metres.

There has been a great deal of learned discussion in regard to the authorship of the Younger Edda. Readers specially interested in this knotty subject we must refer to Wilkins' elaborate treatise, *Untersuchungen zur Snorra Edda* (Paderborn, 1878), and to P. E. Muller's, *Die Æchtheit der Asalehre* (Copenhagen, 1811).

Two celebrated names that without doubt are intimately connected with the work are Snorre Sturleson and Olaf Thordsson Hvitaskald. Both of these are conspicuous, not only in the literary, but also in the political history of Iceland.

Snorre Sturleson<sup>2</sup> was born in Iceland in the year 1178. Three years old, he came to the house of the distinguished chief, Jon Loptsson, at Odde, a grandson of Sæmund the Wise, the reputed collector of the Elder Edda, where he appears to have remained until Jon Loptsson's death, in the year 1197. Soon afterward Snorre married into a wealthy family, and in a short time he became one of the most distinguished leaders in Iceland. He was several times elected chief magistrate, and no man in the land was his equal in riches and prominence. He and his two elder brothers, Thord and Sighvat, who were but little inferior to

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<sup>2</sup> Keyser.

him in wealth and power, were at one time well-nigh supreme in Iceland, and Snorre sometimes appeared at the Althing at Thingvols accompanied by from eight hundred to nine hundred armed men.

Snorre and his brothers did not only have bitter feuds with other families, but a deadly hatred also arose between themselves, making their lives a perpetual warfare. Snorre was shrewd as a politician and magistrate, and eminent as an orator and skald, but his passions were mean, and many of his ways were crooked. He was both ambitious and avaricious. He is said to have been the first Icelander who laid plans to subjugate his fatherland to Norway, and in this connection is supposed to have expected to become a jarl under the king of Norway. In this effort he found himself outwitted by his brother's son, Sturle Thordsson, and thus he came into hostile relations with the latter. In this feud Snorre was defeated, but when Sturle shortly after fell in a battle against his foes, Snorre's star of hope rose again, and he began to occupy himself with far-reaching, ambitious plans. He had been for the first time in Norway during the years 1218-1220, and had been well received by King Hakon, and especially by Jarl Skule, who was then the most influential man in the country. In the year 1237 Snorre visited Norway again, and entered, as it is believed, into treasonable conspiracies with Jarl Skule. In 1239 he left Norway against the wishes of King Hakon, whom he owed obedience, and thereby incurred the king's greatest displeasure. When King Hakon, in 1240,

had crushed Skule's rebellion and annihilated this dangerous opponent, it became Snorre's turn to feel the effects of the king's wrath. At the instigation of King Hakon, several chiefs of Iceland united themselves against Snorre and murdered him at Reykholt, where ruins of his splendid mansion are still to be seen. This event took place on the 22d of September, 1241, and Snorre Sturleson was then sixty-three years old. Snorre was Iceland's most distinguished skald and sagaman. As a writer of history he deserves to be compared with Herodotos or Thukydidēs. His *Heimskringla*, embracing an elaborate history of the kings of Norway, is famous throughout the civilized world, and Emerson calls it the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of our race. An English translation of this work was published by Samuel Laing, in London, in 1844. Carlyle's *Early Kings of Norway* (London, 1875) was inspired by the *Heimskringla*.

Olaf Thordsson, surnamed *Hvitaskald*,<sup>3</sup> to distinguish him from his contemporary, *Olaf Svartaskald*,<sup>4</sup> was a son of Snorre's brother. Though not as prominent and influential as his uncle, he took an active part in all the troubles of his native island during the first half of the thirteenth century. He visited Norway in 1236, whence he went to Denmark, where he was a guest at the court of King Valdemar, and is said to have enjoyed great esteem. In 1240 we find him again in Norway, where he espoused the cause of King Hakon against Skule. On his return to Iceland he

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<sup>3</sup> White Skald.

<sup>4</sup> Black Skald.

served four years as chief magistrate of the island. His death occurred in the year 1259, and he is numbered among the great skalds of Iceland.

Snorre Sturleson and Olaf Hvitaskald are the two names to whom the authorship of the Younger Edda has generally been attributed, and the work is by many, even to this day, called Snorra Edda—that is, Snorre’s Edda. We do not propose to enter into any elaborate discussion of this complicated subject, but we will state briefly the reasons given by Keyser and others for believing that these men had a hand in preparing the Prose Edda. In the first place, we find that the writer of the grammatical and rhetorical part of the Younger Edda distinctly mentions Snorre as author of *Hattatal* (the *Clavis Metrica*), and not only of the poem itself, but also of the treatise in prose. In the second place, the Arne Magnæan parchment manuscript, which dates back to the close of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century, has the following note prefaced to the *Skaldskaparmal*. “Here ends that part of the book which Olaf Thordsson put together, and now begins *Skaldskaparmal* and the *Kenningar*, according to that which has been found in the lays of the chief skalds, and which Snorre afterward suffered to be brought together.” In the third place, the Upsala manuscript of the Younger Edda, which is known with certainty to have been written in the beginning of the fourteenth century, contains this preface, written with the same hand as the body of the work: “This book hight Edda. Snorre has compiled it in the manner in which it is arranged:

first, in regard to the *asas* and *Ymer*, then *Skaldskaparmal* and the denominations of many things, and finally that *Hattatal*, which Snorre composed about King Hakon and Duke Skule.” In the fourth place, there is a passage in the so-called *Annales Breviores*, supposed to have been written about the year 1400. The passage relates to the year 1241, and reads thus: “Snorre Sturleson died at Reykholt. He was a wise and very learned man, a great chief and shrewd. He was the first man in this land who brought property into the hands of the king (the king of Norway). He compiled *Edda* and many other learned historical works and Icelandic sagas. He was murdered at Reykholt by Jarl Gissur’s men.”

It seems, then, that there is no room for any doubt that these two men have had a share in the authorship of the Younger *Edda*. How great a share each has had is another and more difficult problem to solve. Rudolf Keyser’s opinion is (and we know no higher authority on the subject), that Snorre is the author, though not in so strict a sense as we now use the word, of *Gylfaginning*, *Brage’s Speech*, *Skaldskaparmal* and *Hattatal*. This part of the Younger *Edda* may thus be said to date back to the year 1230, though the material out of which the mythological system is constructed is of course much older. We find it in the ancient *Vala’s Prophecy*, of the *Elder Edda*, a poem that breathes in every line the purest *asa*-faith, and is, without the least doubt, much older than the introduction of christianity in the north, or the discovery and settlement of Iceland. It is not improbable that the

religious system of the Odinic religion had assumed a permanent prose form in the memories of the people long before the time of Snorre, and that he merely was the means of having it committed to writing almost without verbal change.

Olaf Thordsson is unmistakably the author of the grammatical and rhetorical portion of the Younger Edda, and its date can therefore safely be put at about 1250. The author of the treatise on the alphabet is not known, but Professor Keyser thinks it must have been written, its first chapter, about the year 1150, and its second chapter about the year 1200. The forewords and afterwords are evidently also from another pen. Their author is unknown, but they are thought to have been written about the year 1300. To sum up, then, we arrive at this conclusion: The mythological material of the Younger Edda is as old as the Teutonic race. Parts of it are written by authors unknown to fame. A small portion is the work of Olaf Thordsson. The most important portion is written, or perhaps better, compiled, by Snorre Sturleson, and the whole is finally edited and furnished with forewords and afterwords, early in the fourteenth century,—according to Keyser, about 1320-1330.

About the name Edda there has also been much learned discussion. Some have suggested that it may be a mutilated form of the word Odde, the home of Sæmund the Wise, who was long supposed to be the compiler of the Elder Edda. In this connection, it has been argued that possibly Sæmund had begun the writing of the Younger Edda, too. Others derive the

word from *óðr* (mind, soul), which in poetical usage also means song, poetry. Others, again, connect Edda with the Sanscrit word Veda, which is supposed to mean knowledge. Finally, others adopt the meaning which the word has where it is actually used in the Elder Edda, and where it means great-grandmother. Vigfusson adopts this definition, and it is certainly both scientific and poetical. What can be more beautiful than the idea that our great ancestress teaches her descendants the sacred traditions, the concentrated wisdom, of the race? To sum up, then, we say the Younger, or Prose, or Snorre's Edda has been produced at different times by various hands, and the object of its authors has been to produce a manual for the skalds. In addition to the forewords and afterwords, it contains two books, one greater (*Gylfaginning*) and one lesser (*Brage's Speech*), giving a tolerably full account of Norse mythology. Then follows *Skaldskaparmal*, wherein is an analysis of the various circumlocutions practiced by the skalds, all illustrated by copious quotations from the poets. How much of these three parts is written by Snorre is not certain, but on the other hand, there is no doubt that he is the author of *Hattatal* (*Clavis Metrica*), which gives an enumeration of metres. To these four treatises are added four chapters on grammar and rhetoric. The writer of the oldest grammatical treatise is thought to be one Thorodd Runemaster, who lived in the middle of the twelfth century; and the third treatise is evidently written by Olaf Thordsson Hvitaskald, the nephew of Snorre, a scholar who

spent some time at the court of the Danish king, Valdemar the Victorious.

The Younger Edda contains the systematized theogony and cosmogony of our forefathers, while the Elder Edda presents the Odinic faith in a series of lays or rhapsodies. The Elder Edda is poetry, while the Younger Edda is mainly prose. The Younger Edda may in one sense be regarded as the sequel or commentary of the Elder Edda. Both complement each other, and both must be studied in connection with the sagas and all the Teutonic traditions and folk-lore in order to get a comprehensive idea of the asa-faith. The two Eddas constitute, as it were, the Odinic Bible. The Elder Edda is the Old Testament, the Younger Edda the New. Like the Old Testament, the Elder Edda is in poetry. It is prophetic and enigmatical. Like the New Testament, the Younger Edda is in prose; it is lucid, and gives a clue to the obscure passages in the Elder Edda. Nay, in many respects do the two Eddas correspond with the two Testaments of the Christian Bible.

It is a deplorable fact that the religion of our forefathers seems to be but little cared for in this country. The mythologies of other nations every student manifests an interest for. He reads with the greatest zeal all the legends of Rome and Greece, of India and China. He is familiar with every room in the labyrinth of Crete, while when he is introduced to the shining halls of Valhal and Gladsheim he gropes his way like a blind man. He does not know that Idun, with her beautiful apples, might, if applied to,

render even greater services than Ariadne with her wonderful thread. When we inquire whom Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday are named after, and press questions in reference to Tyr, Odin, Thor and Freyja, we get at best but a wise and knowing look. Are we, then, as a nation, like the ancient Jews, and do we bend the knee before the gods of foreign nations and forsake the altars of our own gods? What if we then should suffer the fate of that unhappy people—be scattered over all the world and lose our fatherland? In these Eddas our fathers have bequeathed unto us all their profoundest, all their sublimest, all their best thought. They are the concentrated result of their greatest intellectual and spiritual effort, and it behooves us to cherish this treasure and make it the fountain at which the whole American branch of the Ygdrasil ash may imbibe a united national sentiment. It is not enough to brush the dust off these gods and goddesses of our ancestors and put them up on pedestals as ornaments in our museums and libraries. These coins of the past are not to be laid away in numismatic collections. The grandson must use what he has inherited from his grandfather. If the coin is not intelligible, then it will have to be sent to the mint and stamped anew, in order that it may circulate freely. Our ancestral deities want a place in our hearts and in our songs.

On the European continent and in England the zeal of the priests in propagating Christianity was so great that they sought to root out every trace of the asa-faith. They left but unintelligible fragments of the heathen religious structure. Our

gods and goddesses and heroes were consigned to oblivion, and all knowledge of the Odinic religion and of the Niblung-story would have been well nigh totally obliterated had not a more lucky star hovered over the destinies of Iceland. In this remotest corner of the world the ancestral spirit was preserved like the glowing embers of Hekla beneath the snow and ice of the glacier. From the farthest Thule the spirit of our fathers rises and shines like an aurora over all Teutondom. It was in the year 860 that Iceland was discovered. In 874 the Teutonic spirit fled thither for refuge from tyranny. Here a government based on the principles of old Teutonic liberty was established. From here went forth daring vikings, who discovered Greenland and Vinland, and showed Columbus the way to America. From here the courts of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, England and Germany were supplied with skalds to sing their praises. Here was put in writing the laws and sagas that give us a clue to the form of old Teutonic institutions. Here was preserved the Old Norse language, and in it a record of the customs, the institutions and the religion of our fathers. Its literature does not belong to that island alone,—it belongs to the whole Teutonic race! Iceland is for the Teutons what Greece and Rome are for the south of Europe, and she accomplished her mission with no less efficiency and success. Cato the Elder used to end all his speeches with these words: "*Præterea censeo Carthaginem esse delendam.*" In these days, when so many worship at the shrine of Romanism, we think it perfectly just to adopt Cato's sentence in this form:

*Præterea censeo Romam esse delendam.*

# FOREWORD

1. In the beginning Almighty God created heaven and earth, and all things that belong to them, and last he made two human beings, from whom the races are descended (Adam and Eve), and their children multiplied and spread over all the world. But in the course of time men became unequal; some were good and right-believing, but many more turned them after the lusts of the world and heeded not God's laws; and for this reason God drowned the world in the flood, and all that was quick in the world, except those who were in the ark with Noah. After the flood of Noah there lived eight men, who inhabited the world, and from them the races are descended; and now, as before, they increased and filled the world, and there were very many men who loved to covet wealth and power, but turned away from obedience to God, and so much did they do this that they would not name God. And who could then tell their sons of the wonderful works of God? So it came to pass that they lost God's name; and in the wide world the man was not to be found who could tell of his Maker. But, nevertheless, God gave them earthly-gifts, wealth and happiness, that should be with them in the world; he also shared wisdom among them, so that they understood all earthly things, and all kinds that might be seen in the air and on the earth. This they thought upon, and wondered at, how it could come to pass that the earth and the beasts and the birds had the same nature in

some things but still were unlike in manners.

One evidence of this nature was that the earth might be dug into upon high mountain-peaks and water would spring up there, and it was not necessary to dig deeper for water there than in deep dales; thus, also, in beasts and birds it is no farther to the blood in the head than in the feet. Another proof of this nature is, that every year there grow on the earth grass and flowers, and the same year it falls and withers; thus, also, on beasts and birds do hair and feathers grow and fall off each year. The third nature of the earth is, that when it is opened and dug into, then grass grows on the mould which is uppermost on the earth. Rocks and stones they explained to correspond to the teeth and bones of living things. From these things they judged that the earth must be quick and must have life in some way, and they knew that it was of a wonderfully great age and of a mighty nature. It nourished all that was quick and took to itself all that died. On this account they gave it a name, and numbered their ancestors back to it. This they also learned from their old kinsmen, that when many hundred winters were numbered, the course of the heavenly bodies was uneven; some had a longer course than others. From such things they suspected that some one must be the ruler of the heavenly bodies who could stay their course at his own will, and he must be strong and mighty; and of him they thought that, if he ruled the prime elements, he must also have been before the heavenly bodies, and they saw that, if he ruled the course of the heavenly bodies, he must rule the sunshine, and the dew of the heavens,

and the products of the earth that follow them; and thus, also, the winds of the air and therewith the storms of the sea. They knew not where his realm was, but they believed that he ruled over all things on the earth and in the air, over the heavens and the heavenly bodies, the seas and the weather. But in order that these things might be better told and remembered, they gave him the same name with themselves, and this belief has been changed in many ways, as the peoples have been separated and the tongues have been divided.

2. In his old age Noah shared the world with his sons: for Ham he intended the western region, for Japheth the northern region, but for Shem the southern region, with those parts which will hereafter be marked out in the division of the earth into three parts. In the time that the sons of these men were in the world, then increased forthwith the desire for riches and power, from the fact that they knew many crafts that had not been discovered before, and each one was exalted with his own handiwork; and so far did they carry their pride, that the Africans, descended from Ham, harried in that part of the world which the offspring of Shem, their kinsman, inhabited. And when they had conquered them, the world seemed to them too small, and they smithied a tower with tile and stone, which they meant should reach to heaven, on the plain called Sennar. And when this building was so far advanced that it extended above the air, and they were no less eager to continue the work, and when God saw how their pride waxed high, then he sees that he will have to strike it down

in some way. And the same God, who is almighty, and who might have struck down all their work in the twinkling of an eye, and made themselves turn into dust, still preferred to frustrate their purpose by making them realize their own littleness, in that none of them should understand what the other talked; and thus no one knew what the other commanded, and one broke what the other wished to build up, until they came to strife among themselves, and therewith was frustrated, in the beginning, their purpose of building a tower. And he who was foremost, hight Zoroaster, he laughed before he wept when he came into the world; but the master-smiths were seventy-two, and so many tongues have spread over the world since the giants were dispersed over the land, and the nations became numerous. In this same place was built the most famous city, which took its name from the tower, and was called Babylon. And when the confusion of tongues had taken place, then increased the names of men and of other things, and this same Zoroaster had many names; and although he understood that his pride was laid low by the said building, still he worked his way unto worldly power, and had himself chosen king over many peoples of the Assyrians. From him arose the error of idolatry; and when he was worshiped he was called Baal; we call him Bel; he also had many other names. But as the names increased in number, so was truth lost; and from this first error every following man worshiped his head-master, beasts or birds, the air and the heavenly bodies, and various lifeless things, until the error at length spread over the whole world; and so

carefully did they lose the truth that no one knew his maker, excepting those men alone who spoke the Hebrew tongue,—that which flourished before the building of the tower,—and still they did not lose the bodily endowments that were given them, and therefore they judged of all things with earthly understanding, for spiritual wisdom was not given unto them. They deemed that all things were smithied of some one material.

3. The world was divided into three parts, one from the south, westward to the Mediterranean Sea, which part was called Africa; but the southern portion of this part is hot and scorched by the sun. The second part, from the west and to the north and to the sea, is that called Europe, or Enea. The northern portion of this is cold, so that grass grows not, nor can anyone dwell there. From the north around the east region, and all to the south, that is called Asia. In that part of the world is all beauty and pomp, and wealth of the earth's products, gold and precious stones. There is also the mid-world, and as the earth there is fairer and of a better quality than elsewhere, so are also the people there most richly endowed with all gifts, with wisdom and strength, with beauty and with all knowledge.

4. Near the middle of the world was built the house and inn, the most famous that has been made, which was called Troy, in the land which we call Turkey. This city was built much larger than others, with more skill in many ways, at great expense, and with such means as were at hand. There were twelve kingdoms and one over-king, and many lands and nations belonged to each

kingdom; there were in the city twelve chief languages.<sup>5</sup> Their chiefs have surpassed all men who have been in the world in all heroic things. No scholar who has ever told of these things has ever disputed this fact, and for this reason, that all rulers of the north region trace their ancestors back thither, and place in the number of the gods all who were rulers of the city. Especially do they place Priamos himself in the stead of Odin; nor must that be called wonderful, for Priamos was sprung from Saturn, him whom the north region for a long time believed to be God himself.

5. This Saturn grew up in that island in Greece which hight Crete. He was greater and stronger and fairer than other men. As in other natural endowments, so he excelled all men in wisdom. He invented many crafts which had not before been discovered. He was also so great in the art of magic that he was certain about things that had not yet come to pass. He found, too, that red thing in the earth from which he smelted gold, and from such things he soon became very mighty. He also foretold harvests and many other secret things, and for such, and many other deeds, he was chosen chief of the island. And when he had ruled it a short time, then there speedily enough became a great abundance of all things. No money circulated excepting gold coins, so plentiful was this metal; and though there was famine in other lands, the crops never failed in Crete, so that people might seek there all

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<sup>5</sup> Dasent translates “hövuðtungur” (chief or head tongues) with “lords,” which is certainly an error.

the things which they needed to have. And from this and many other secret gifts of power that he had, men believed him to be God, and from him arose another error among the Cretans and Macedonians like the one before mentioned among the Assyrians and Chaldeans from Zoroaster. And when Saturn finds how great strength the people think they have in him, he calls himself God, and says that he rules heaven and earth and all things.

6. Once he went to Greece in a ship, for there was a king's daughter on whom he had set his heart. He won her love in this way, that one day when she was out with her maid-servants, he took upon himself the likeness of a bull, and lay before her in the wood, and so fair was he that the hue of gold was on every hair; and when the king's daughter saw him she patted his lips. He sprang up and threw off the bull's likeness and took her into his arms and bore her to the ship and took her to Crete. But his wife, Juno, found this out, so he turned her (the king's daughter) into the likeness of a heifer and sent her east to the arms of the great river (that is, of the Nile, to the Nile country), and let the thrall, who hight Argulos, take care of her. She was there twelve months before he changed her shape again. Many things did he do like this, or even more wonderful. He had three sons: one hight Jupiter, another Neptune, the third Pluto. They were all men of the greatest accomplishments, and Jupiter was by far the greatest; he was a warrior and won many kingdoms; he was also crafty like his father, and took upon himself the likeness of many animals, and thus he accomplished many things which are impossible for

mankind; and on account of this, and other things, he was held in awe by all nations. Therefore Jupiter is put in the place of Thor, since all evil wights fear him.

7. Saturn had built in Crete seventy-two burgs, and when he thought himself firmly established in his kingdom, he shared it with his sons, whom he set up with himself as gods; and to Jupiter he gave the realm of heaven; to Neptune, the realm of the earth, and to Pluto, hell; and this last seemed to him the worst to manage, and therefore he gave to him his dog, the one whom he called Cerberos, to guard hell. This Cerberos, the Greeks say, Herakles dragged out of hell and upon earth. And although Saturn had given the realm of heaven to Jupiter, the latter nevertheless desired to possess the realm of the earth, and so he harried his father's kingdom, and it is said that he had him taken and emasculated, and for such great achievements he declared himself to be god, and the Macedonians say that he had the members taken and cast into the sea, and therefore they believed for ages that therefrom had come a woman; her they called Venus, and numbered among the gods, and she has in all ages since been called goddess of love, for they believed she was able to turn the hearts of all men and women to love. When Saturn was emasculated by Jupiter, his son, he fled from the east out of Crete and west into Italy. There dwelt at that time such people as did not work, and lived on acorns and grass, and lay in caves or holes in the earth. And when Saturn came there he changed his name and called himself Njord, for the reason that

he thought that Jupiter, his son, might afterward seek him out. He was the first there to teach men to plow and plant vineyards. There the soil was good and fresh, and it soon produced heavy crops. He was made chief and thus he got possession of all the realms there and built many burgs.

8. Jupiter, his son, had many sons, from whom races have descended; his son was Dardanos, his son Herikon, his son Tros, his son Ilos, his son Laomedon, the father of the chief king Priamos. Priamos had many sons; one of them was Hektor, who was the most famous of all men in the world for strength, and stature and accomplishments, and for all manly deeds of a knightly kind; and it is found written that when the Greeks and all the strength of the north and east regions fought with the Trojans, they would never have become victors had not the Greeks invoked the gods; and it is also stated that no human strength would conquer them unless they were betrayed by their own men, which afterward was done. And from their fame men that came after gave themselves titles, and especially was this done by the Romans, who were the most famous in many things after their days; and it is said that, when Rome was built, the Romans adapted their customs and laws as nearly as possible to those of the Trojans, their forefathers. And so much power accompanied these men for many ages after, that when Pompey, a Roman chieftain, harried in the east region, Odin fled out of Asia and hither to the north country, and then he gave to himself and his men their names, and said that Priamos had hight Odin

and his queen Frigg, and from this the realm afterward took its name and was called Frigia where the burg stood. And whether Odin said this of himself out of pride, or that it was wrought by the changing of tongues; nevertheless many wise men have regarded it a true saying, and for a long time after every man who was a great chieftain followed his example.

9. A king in Troy hight Munon or Mennon, his wife was a daughter of the head-king Priamos and hight Troan; they had a son who hight Tror, him we call Thor. He was fostered in Thrace by the duke, who is called Loricos. But when he was ten winters old he took his father's weapons. So fair of face was he, when he stood by other men, as when ivory is set in oak; his hair was fairer than gold. When he was twelve winters old he had full strength; then he lifted from the ground ten bear skins all at once, and then he slew Loricos, the duke, his foster-father and his wife, Lora or Glora, and took possession of Thrace; this we call Thrudheim. Then he visited many lands and knew the countries of the world, and conquered single-handed all the berserks and all the giants, and one very big dragon and many beasts. In the north region he found that prophetess who hight Sibyl, whom we call Sif, and married her. None can tell the genealogy of Sif; she was the fairest of all women, her hair was like gold. Their son was Loride (Hloride), who was like his father; his son was Henrede; his son Vingethor (Vingthor); his son Vingener (Vingner); his son Moda (Mode); his son Magi (Magne); his son Kesfet; his son Bedvig; his son Atra, whom we call Annan; his son Itrman; his

son Heremod (Hermod); his son Skjaldun, whom we call Skjold; his son Bjaf, whom we call Bjar; his son Jat; his son Gudolf, his son Fjarlaf, whom we call Fridleif; he had the son who is called Vodin, whom we call Odin; he was a famous man for wisdom and all accomplishments. His wife hight Frigida, whom we call Frigg.

10. Odin had the power of divination, and so had his wife, and from this knowledge he found out that his name would be held high in the north part of the world, and honored beyond that of all kings. For this reason he was eager to begin his journey from Turkey, and he had with him very many people, young and old, men and women, and he had with him many costly things. But wherever they fared over the lands great fame was spoken of them, and they were said to be more like gods than men. And they stopped not on their journey before they came north into that land which is now called Saxland; there Odin remained a long time, and subjugated the country far and wide. There Odin established his three sons as a defense of the land. One is named Veggdegg; he was a strong king and ruled over East Saxland. His son was Vitrgils, and his sons were Ritta, the father of Heingest (Hengist), and Sigar, the father of Svebdegg, whom we call Svipdag. Another son of Odin hight Beldegg, whom we call Balder; he possessed the land which now hight Vestfal; his son was Brander, and his son Frjodigar, whom we call Froda (Frode). His son was Freovit, his son Yvigg, his son Gevis, whom we call Gave. The third son of Odin is named Sigge, his

son Verer. These forefathers ruled the land which is now called Frankland, and from them is come the race that is called the Volsungs. From all of these many and great races are descended.

11. Then Odin continued his journey northward and came into the country which was called Reidgotaland, and in that land he conquered all that he desired. He established there his son, who hight Skjold; his son hight Fridleif; from him is descended the race which hight Skjoldungs; these are the Dane kings, and that land hight now Jutland, which then was called Reidgotaland.

12. Thereupon he fared north to what is now called Svithjod (Sweden), there was the king who is called Gylfe. But when he heard of the coming of those Asiamen, who were called asas, he went to meet them, and offered Odin such things in his kingdom as he himself might desire. And such good luck followed their path, that wherever they stopped in the lands, there were bountiful crops and good peace; and all believed that they were the cause thereof. The mighty men of the kingdom saw that they were unlike other men whom they had seen, both in respect to beauty and understanding. The land there seemed good to Odin, and he chose there for himself a place for a burg, which is now called Sigtuna.<sup>6</sup> He there established chiefs, like unto what had formerly existed in Troy; he appointed twelve men in the burg to be judges of the law of the land, and made all rights to correspond with what had before been in Troy, and to what the Turks had been accustomed.

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<sup>6</sup> Near Upsala.

13. Thereupon he fared north until he reached the sea, which they thought surrounded all lands, and there he established his son in the kingdom, which is now called Norway; he is hight Saming, and the kings of Norway count their ancestors back to him, and so do the jarls and other mighty men, as it is stated in the HALEYGTAL.<sup>7</sup> But Odin had with him that son who is called Yngve, who was king in Sweden, and from him is descended the families called Ynglings (Yngvelings). The asas took to themselves wives there within the land. But some took wives for their sons, and these families became so numerous that they spread over Saxland, and thence over the whole north region, and the tongue of these Asiamen became the native tongue of all these lands. And men think they can understand from the way in which the names of their forefathers is written, that these names have belonged to this tongue, and that the asas have brought this tongue hither to the north, to Norway, to Sweden and to Saxland. But in England are old names of places and towns which can be seen to have been given in another tongue than this.

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<sup>7</sup> A heroic poem, giving the pedigree (tal) of Norse kings.

# THE FOOLING OF GYLFE

## CHAPTER I. GEFJUN'S PLOWING

1. King Gylfe ruled the lands that are now called Svithjod (Sweden). Of him it is said that he gave to a wayfaring woman, as a reward for the entertainment she had afforded him by her story-telling, a plow-land in his realm, as large as four oxen could plow it in a day and a night. But this woman was of the asa-race; her name was Gefjun. She took from the north, from Jotunheim, four oxen, which were the sons of a giant and her, and set them before the plow. Then went the plow so hard and deep that it tore up the land, and the oxen drew it westward into the sea, until it stood still in a sound. There Gefjun set the land, gave it a name and called it Seeland. And where the land had been taken away became afterward a sea, which in Sweden is now called Logrinn (the Lake, the Malar Lake in Sweden). And in the Malar Lake the bays correspond to the capes in Seeland. Thus Brage, the old skald:

Gefjun glad  
Drew from Gylfe  
The excellent land,

Denmark's increase,  
So that it reeked  
From the running beasts.  
Four heads and eight eyes  
Bore the oxen  
As they went before the wide  
Robbed land of the grassy isle.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Heimskringla: Ynglinga Saga, ch. v.

## CHAPTER II.

# GYLFE'S JOURNEY TO ASGARD

2. King Gylfe was a wise man and skilled in the black art. He wondered much that the asa-folk was so mighty in knowledge, that all things went after their will. He thought to himself whether this could come from their own nature, or whether the cause must be sought for among the gods whom they worshiped. He therefore undertook a journey to Asgard. He went secretly, having assumed the likeness of an old man, and striving thus to disguise himself. But the asas were wiser, for they see into the future, and, foreseeing his journey before he came, they received him with an eye-deceit. So when he came into the burg he saw there a hall so high that he could hardly look over it. Its roof was thatched with golden shields as with shingles. Thus says Thjodolf of Hvin, that Valhal was thatched with shields:

Thinking thatchers  
Thatched the roof;  
The beams of the burg  
Beamed with gold.<sup>9</sup>

In the door of the hall Gylfe saw a man who played with swords so dexterously that seven were in the air at one time.

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<sup>9</sup> Heimskringla: Harald Harfager's Saga, ch. xix.

That man asked him what his name was. Gylfe answered that his name was Ganglere;<sup>10</sup> that he had come a long way, and that he sought lodgings for the night. He also asked who owned the burg. The other answered that it belonged to their king: I will go with you to see him and then you may ask him for his name yourself. Then the man turned and led the way into the hall. Ganglere followed, and suddenly the doors closed behind him. There he saw many rooms and a large number of people, of whom some were playing, others were drinking, and some were fighting with weapons. He looked around him, and much of what he saw seemed to him incredible. Then quoth he:

Gates all,  
Before in you go,  
You must examine well;  
For you cannot know  
Where enemies sit  
In the house before you.<sup>11</sup>

He saw three high-seats, one above the other, and in each sat a man. He asked what the names of these chiefs were. He, who had conducted him in, answered that the one who sat in the lowest high-seat was king, and hight Har; the one next above him, Jafnhar; but the one who sat on the highest throne, Thride. Har asked the comer what more his errand was, and added that

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<sup>10</sup> The walker.

<sup>11</sup> Elder Edda: Havamal.

food and drink was there at his service, as for all in Har's hall. Ganglere answered that he first would like to ask whether there was any wise man. Answered Har: You will not come out from here hale unless you are wiser.

And stand now forth  
While you ask;  
He who answers shall sit.

## CHAPTER III. OF THE HIGHEST GOD

3. Ganglere then made the following question: Who is the highest and oldest of all the gods? Made answer Har: Alfater he is called in our tongue, but in Asgard of old he had twelve names. The first is Alfater, the second is Herran or Herjan, the third Nikar or Hnikar, the fourth Nikuz or Hnikud, the fifth Fjolner, the sixth Oske, the seventh Ome, the eighth Biflide or Biflinde, the ninth Svidar, the tenth Svidrer, the eleventh Vidrer, the twelfth Jalg or Jalk. Ganglere asks again: Where is this god? What can he do? What mighty works has he accomplished? Answered Har: He lives from everlasting to everlasting, rules over all his realm, and governs all things, great and small. Then remarked Jafnhar: He made heaven and earth, the air and all things in them. Thride added: What is most important, he made man and gave him a spirit, which shall live, and never perish, though the body may turn to dust or burn to ashes. All who live a life of virtue shall dwell with him in Gimle or Vingolf. The wicked, on the other hand, go to Hel, and from her to Niflhel, that is, down into the ninth world. Then asked Ganglere: What was he doing before heaven and earth were made? Har gave answer: Then was he with the frost-giants.

## CHAPTER IV.

# THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

4. Said Ganglere: How came the world into existence, or how did it rise? What was before? Made answer to him Har: Thus is it said in the Vala's Prophecy:

It was Time's morning,  
When there nothing was;  
Nor sand, nor sea,  
Nor cooling billows.  
Earth there was not,  
Nor heaven above.  
The Ginungagap was,  
But grass nowhere.<sup>12</sup>

Jafnhar remarked: Many ages before the earth was made, Niflheim had existed, in the midst of which is the well called Hvergelmer, whence flow the following streams: Svol, Gunnthro, Form, Fimbul, Thul, Slid and Hrid, Sylg and Ylg, Vid, Leipt and Gjoll, the last of which is nearest the gate of Hel. Then added Thride: Still there was before a world to the south which hight Muspelheim. It is light and hot, and so bright and dazzling that no stranger, who is not a native there, can stand it. Surt is the name

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<sup>12</sup> Elder Edda: The Vala's Prophecy, 6.

of him who stands on its border guarding it. He has a flaming sword in his hand, and at the end of the world he will come and harry, conquer all the gods, and burn up the whole world with fire. Thus it is said in the Vala's Prophecy:

Surt from the south fares  
With blazing flames;  
From the sword shines  
The sun of the war-god.  
Rocks dash together  
And witches collapse,  
Men go the way to Hel  
And the heavens are cleft.<sup>13</sup>

5. Said Ganglere: What took place before the races came into existence, and men increased and multiplied? Replied Har, explaining, that as soon as the streams, that are called the Elivogs, had come so far from their source that the venomous yeast which flowed with them hardened, as does dross that runs from the fire, then it turned into ice. And when this ice stopped and flowed no more, then gathered over it the drizzling rain that arose from the venom and froze into rime, and one layer of ice was laid upon the other clear into Ginungagap. Then said Jafnhar: All that part of Ginungagap that turns toward the north was filled with thick and heavy ice and rime, and everywhere within were drizzling rains and gusts. But the south part of Ginungagap was lighted

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<sup>13</sup> Elder Edda: The Vala's Prophecy, 56.

up by the glowing sparks that flew out of Muspelheim. Added Thríde: As cold and all things grim proceeded from Niflheim, so that which bordered on Muspelheim was hot and bright, and Ginungagap was as warm and mild as windless air. And when the heated blasts from Muspelheim met the rime, so that it melted into drops, then, by the might of him who sent the heat, the drops quickened into life and took the likeness of a man, who got the name Ymer. But the Frost giants call him Aurgelmer. Thus it is said in the short Prophecy of the Vala (the Lay of Hyndla):

All the valas are  
From Vidolf descended;  
All wizards are  
Of Vilmeide's race;  
All enchanters  
Are sons of Svarthofde;  
All giants have  
Come from Ymer.<sup>14</sup>

And on this point, when Vafthrudner, the giant, was asked by Gangrad:

Whence came Aurgelmer  
Originally to the sons  
Of the giants?—thou wise giant!<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Elder Edda: Hyndla'a Lay, 34.

<sup>15</sup> Elder Edda: Vafthrudner's Lay, 30.

he said

From the Elivogs  
Sprang drops of venom,  
And grew till a giant was made.  
Thence our race  
Are all descended,  
Therefore are we all so fierce.<sup>16</sup>

Then asked Ganglere: How were the races developed from him? Or what was done so that more men were made? Or do you believe him to be god of whom you now spake? Made answer Har: By no means do we believe him to be god; evil was he and all his offspring, them we call frost-giants. It is said that when he slept he fell into a sweat, and then there grew under his left arm a man and a woman, and one of his feet begat with the other a son. From these come the races that are called frost-giants. The old frost-giant we call Ymer.

6. Then said Ganglere: Where did Ymer dwell, and on what did he live? Answered Har: The next thing was that when the rime melted into drops, there was made thereof a cow, which hight Audhumbla. Four milk-streams ran from her teats, and she fed Ymer. Thereupon asked Ganglere: On what did the cow subsist? Answered Har: She licked the salt-stones that were covered with rime, and the first day that she licked the stones

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<sup>16</sup> Elder Edda: Vafthrudner's Lay, 31.

there came out of them in the evening a man's hair, the second day a man's head, and the third day the whole man was there. This man's name was Bure; he was fair of face, great and mighty, and he begat a son whose name was Bor. This Bor married a woman whose name was Bestla, the daughter of the giant Bolthorn; they had three sons,—the one hight Odin, the other Vile, and the third Ve. And it is my belief that this Odin and his brothers are the rulers of heaven and earth. We think that he must be so called. That is the name of the man whom we know to be the greatest and most famous, and well may men call him by that name.

7. Ganglere asked: How could these keep peace with Ymer, or who was the stronger? Then answered Har: The sons of Bor slew the giant Ymer, but when he fell, there flowed so much blood from his wounds that they drowned therein the whole race of frost giants; excepting one, who escaped with his household. Him the giants call Bergelmer. He and his wife went on board his ark and saved themselves in it. From them are come new races of frost-giants, as is here said:

Countless winters  
Ere the earth was made,  
Was born Bergelmer.  
This first I call to mind  
How that crafty giant  
Safe in his ark lay.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Elder Edda: Vafthrudner's Lay, 35.

8. Then said Ganglere: What was done then by the sons of Bor, since you believe that they were gods? Answered Har: About that there is not a little to be said. They took the body of Ymer, carried it into the midst of Ginungagap and made of him the earth. Of his blood they made the seas and lakes; of his flesh the earth was made, but of his bones the rocks; of his teeth and jaws, and of the bones that were broken, they made stones and pebbles. Jafnhar remarked: Of the blood that flowed from the wounds, and was free, they made the ocean; they fastened the earth together and around it they laid this ocean in a ring without, and it must seem to most men impossible to cross it. Thrive added: They took his skull and made thereof the sky, and raised it over the earth with four sides. Under each corner they set a dwarf, and the four dwarfs were called Austre (east), Vestre (West), Nordre (North), Sudre (South). Then they took glowing sparks, that were loose and had been cast out from Muspelheim, and placed them in the midst of the boundless heaven, both above and below, to light up heaven and earth. They gave resting-places to all fires, and set some in heaven; some were made to go free under heaven, but they gave them a place and shaped their course. In old songs it is said that from that time days and years were reckoned. Thus in the Prophecy of the Vala:

The sun knew not  
Where her hall she had;  
The moon knew not  
What might he had;

The stars knew not  
Their resting-places.<sup>18</sup>

Thus it was before these things were made. Then said Ganglere: Wonderful tidings are these I now hear; a wondrous great building is this, and deftly constructed. How was the earth fashioned? Made answer Har: The earth is round, and without it round about lies the deep ocean, and along the outer strand of that sea they gave lands for the giant races to dwell in; and against the attack of restless giants they built a burg within the sea and around the earth. For this purpose they used the giant Ymer's eyebrows, and they called the burg Midgard. They also took his brains and cast them into the air, and made therefrom the clouds, as is here said:

Of Ymer's flesh  
The earth was made,  
And of his sweat the seas;  
Rocks of his bones,  
Trees of his hair,  
And the sky of his skull;  
But of his eyebrows  
The blithe powers  
Made Midgard for the sons of men.  
Of his brains

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<sup>18</sup> Elder Edda: The Vala's Prophecy, 8. In Old Norse the sun is feminine, and the moon masculine. See below, sections 11 and 12.

All the melancholy  
Clouds were made.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Elder Edda: Grimner's Lay, 40, 41. Comp. Vafthrudner's Lay, 21.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CREATION—(CONTINUED.)

9. Then said Ganglere: Much had been done, it seemed to me, when heaven and earth were made, when sun and moon were set in their places, and when days were marked out; but whence came the people who inhabit the world? Har answered as follows: As Bor's sons went along the sea-strand, they found two trees. These trees they took up and made men of them. The first gave them spirit and life; the second endowed them with reason and power of motion; and the third gave them form, speech, hearing and eyesight. They gave them clothes and names; the man they called Ask, and the woman Embla. From them all mankind is descended, and a dwelling-place was given them under Midgard. In the next place, the sons of Bor made for themselves in the middle of the world a burg, which is called Asgard, and which we call Troy. There dwelt the gods and their race, and thence were wrought many tidings and adventures, both on earth and in the sky. In Asgard is a place called Hlidskjalf, and when Odin seated himself there in the high-seat, he saw over the whole world, and what every man was doing, and he knew all things that he saw. His wife hight Frigg, and she was the daughter of Fjorgvin, and from their offspring are descended the race that we call asas, who inhabited Asgard the old and the realms that lie about it, and all that race are known to be gods. And for this reason Odin is

called Alfater, that he is the father of all gods and men, and of all things that were made by him and by his might. Jord (earth) was his daughter and his wife; with her he begat his first son, and that is Asa-Thor. To him was given force and strength, whereby he conquers all things quick.

10. Norfe, or Narfe, hight a giant, who dwelt in Jotunheim. He had a daughter by name Night. She was swarthy and dark like the race she belonged to. She was first married to a man who hight Naglfare. Their son was Aud. Afterward she was married to Annar. Jord hight their daughter. Her last husband was Delling (Daybreak), who was of asa-race. Their son was Day, who was light and fair after his father. Then took Alfater Night and her son Day, gave them two horses and two cars, and set them up in heaven to drive around the earth, each in twelve hours by turns. Night rides first on the horse which is called Hrimfaxe, and every morning he bedews the earth with the foam from his bit. The horse on which Day rides is called Skinfaxe, and with his mane he lights up all the sky and the earth.

11. Then said Ganglere: How does he steer the course of the sun and the moon? Answered Har: Mundilfare hight the man who had two children. They were so fair and beautiful that he called his son Moon, and his daughter, whom he gave in marriage to a man by name Glener, he called Sun. But the gods became wroth at this arrogance, took both the brother and the sister, set them up in heaven, and made Sun drive the horses that draw the car of the sun, which the gods had made to light up the world from

sparks that flew out of Muspelheim. These horses hight Arvak and Alsviid. Under their withers the gods placed two wind-bags to cool them, but in some songs it is called ironcold (ísarnkol). Moon guides the course of the moon, and rules its waxing and waning. He took from the earth two children, who hight Bil and Hjuke, as they were going from the well called Byrger, and were carrying on their shoulders the bucket called Sager and the pole Simul. Their father's name is Vidfin. These children always accompany Moon, as can be seen from the earth.

12. Then said Ganglere: Swift fares Sun, almost as if she were afraid, and she could make no more haste in her course if she feared her destroyer. Then answered Har: Nor is it wonderful that she speeds with all her might. Near is he who pursues her, and there is no escape for her but to run before him. Then asked Ganglere: Who causes her this toil? Answered Har: It is two wolves. The one hight Skol, he runs after her; she fears him and he will one day overtake her. The other hight Hate, Hrodvitner's son; he bounds before her and wants to catch the moon, and so he will at last.<sup>20</sup> Then asked Ganglere: Whose offspring are these wolves? Said Har; A hag dwells east of Midgard, in the forest called Jarnved (Ironwood), where reside the witches called Jarnvidjes. The old hag gives birth to many giant sons, and all in wolf's likeness. Thence come these two wolves. It is said that of this wolf-race one is the mightiest, and is called Moongarm. He

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<sup>20</sup> That wolves follow the sun and moon, is a wide-spread popular superstition. In Sweden, a parhelion is called Solvarg (sun-wolf).

is filled with the life-blood of all dead men. He will devour the moon, and stain the heavens and all the sky with blood. Thereby the sun will be darkened, the winds will grow wild, and roar hither and thither, as it is said in the Prophecy of the Vala:

In the east dwells the old hag,  
In the Jarnved forest;  
And brings forth there  
Fenrer's offspring.  
There comes of them all  
One the worst,  
The moon's devourer  
In a troll's disguise.

He is filled with the life-blood  
Of men doomed to die;  
The seats of the gods  
He stains with red gore;  
Sunshine grows black  
The summer thereafter,  
All weather gets fickle.  
Know you yet or not?<sup>21</sup>

13. Then asked Ganglere: What is the path from earth to heaven? Har answered, laughing: Foolishly do you now ask. Have you not been told that the gods made a bridge from earth to heaven, which is called Bifrost? You must have seen it. It may

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<sup>21</sup> Elder Edda: The Vala's Prophecy, 43, 44.

be that you call it the rainbow. It has three colors, is very strong, and is made with more craft and skill than other structures. Still, however strong it is, it will break when the sons of Muspel come to ride over it, and then they will have to swim their horses over great rivers in order to get on. Then said Ganglere: The gods did not, it seems to me, build that bridge honestly, if it shall be able to break to pieces, since they could have done so, had they desired. Then made answer Har: The gods are worthy of no blame for this structure. Bifrost is indeed a good bridge, but there is no thing in the world that is able to stand when the sons of Muspel come to the fight.

## CHAPTER VI.

# THE FIRST WORKS OF THE ASAS. THE GOLDEN AGE

14. Then said Ganglere: What did Alfather do when Asgard had been built? Said Har: In the beginning he appointed rulers in a place in the middle of the burg which is called Idavold, who were to judge with him the disputes of men and decide the affairs of the burg. Their first work was to erect a court, where there were seats for all the twelve, and, besides, a high-seat for Alfather. That is the best and largest house ever built on earth, and is within and without like solid gold. This place is called Gladsheim. Then they built another hall as a home for the goddesses, which also is a very beautiful mansion, and is called Vingolf. Thereupon they built a forge; made hammer, tongs, anvil, and with these all other tools. Afterward they worked in iron, stone and wood, and especially in that metal which is called gold. All their household wares were of gold. That age was called the golden age, until it was lost by the coming of those women from Jotunheim. Then the gods set themselves in their high-seats and held counsel. They remembered how the dwarfs had quickened in the mould of the earth like maggots in flesh. The dwarfs had first been created and had quickened in Ymer's flesh, and were then maggots; but now, by the decision of the gods,

they got the understanding and likeness of men, but still had to dwell in the earth and in rocks. Modsoegner was one dwarf and Durin another. So it is said in the Vala's Prophecy:

Then went all the gods,  
The all-holy gods,  
On their judgment seats,  
And thereon took counsel  
Who should the race  
Of dwarfs create  
From the bloody sea  
And from Blain's bones.  
In the likeness of men  
Made they many  
Dwarfs in the earth,  
As Durin said.

And these, says the Vala, are the names of the dwarfs:

Nye, Nide,  
Nordre, Sudre,  
Austre, Vestre,  
Althjof, Dvalin,  
Na, Nain,  
Niping, Dain,  
Bifur, Bafur,  
Bombor, Nore,  
Ore, Onar,  
Oin, Mjodvitner,

Vig, Gandalf,  
Vindalf, Thorin,  
File, Kile,  
Fundin, Vale,  
Thro, Throin,  
Thek, Lit, Vit,  
Ny, Nyrad,  
Rek, Radsvid.

But the following are also dwarfs and dwell in the rocks, while the above-named dwell in the mould:

Draupner, Dolgthvare,  
Hor, Hugstare,  
Hledjolf, Gloin,  
Dore, Ore,  
Duf, Andvare,  
Hepte, File,  
Har, Siar.

But the following come from Svarin's How to Aurvang on Joruvold, and from them is sprung Lovar. Their names are:

Skirfer, Virfir,  
Skafid, Ae,  
Alf, Inge,  
Eikinslgalde,  
Fal, Froste,

Fid, Ginnar.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Elder Edda: The Vala's Prophecy, 12, 14-16, 18, 19.

## CHAPTER VII. ON THE WONDERFUL THINGS IN HEAVEN

15. Then said Ganglere: Where is the chief or most holy place of the gods? Har answered: That is by the ash Ygdrasil. There the gods meet in council every day. Said Ganglere: What is said about this place? Answered Jafnhar: This ash is the best and greatest of all trees; its branches spread over all the world, and reach up above heaven. Three roots sustain the tree and stand wide apart; one root is with the asas and another with the frost-giants, where Ginungagap formerly was; the third reaches into Niflheim; under it is Hvergelmer, where Nidhug gnaws the root from below. But under the second root, which extends to the frost-giants, is the well of Mimer, wherein knowledge and wisdom are concealed. The owner of the well hight Mimer. He is full of wisdom, for he drinks from the well with the Gjallar-horn. Alfater once came there and asked for a drink from the well, but he did not get it before he left one of his eyes as a pledge. So it is said in the Vala's Prophecy:

Well know I, Odin,  
Where you hid your eye:  
In the crystal-clear  
Well of Mimer.

Mead drinks Mimer  
Every morning  
From Valfather's pledge.  
Know you yet or not?<sup>23</sup>

The third root of the ash is in heaven, and beneath it is the most sacred fountain of Urd. Here the gods have their doomstead. The asas ride hither every day over Bifrost, which is also called Asa-bridge. The following are the names of the horses of the gods: Sleipner is the best one; he belongs to Odin, and he has eight feet. The second is Glad, the third Gyller, the fourth Gler, the fifth Skeidbrimer, the sixth Silfertop, the seventh Siner, the eighth Gisl, the ninth Falhofner, the tenth Gulltop, the eleventh Letfet. Balder's horse was burned with him. Thor goes on foot to the doomstead, and wades the following rivers:

Kornt and Ormt  
And the two Kerlaugs;  
These shall Thor wade  
Every day  
When he goes to judge  
Near the Ygdrasil ash;  
For the Asa-bridge  
Burns all ablaze,—  
The holy waters roar.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Elder Edda: The Vala's Prophecy, 24.

<sup>24</sup> Elder Edda: Grimner's Lay, 29.

Then asked Ganglere: Does fire burn over Bifrost? Har answered: The red which you see in the rainbow is burning fire. The frost-giants and the mountain-giants would go up to heaven if Bifrost were passable for all who desired to go there. Many fair places there are in heaven, and they are all protected by a divine defense. There stands a beautiful hall near the fountain beneath the ash. Out of it come three maids, whose names are Urd, Verdande and Skuld. These maids shape the lives of men, and we call them norns. There are yet more norns, namely those who come to every man when he is born, to shape his life, and these are known to be of the race of gods; others, on the other hand, are of the race of elves, and yet others are of the race of dwarfs. As is here said:

Far asunder, I think,  
The norns are born,  
They are not of the same race.  
Some are of the asas,  
Some are of the elves,  
Some are daughters of Dvalin.<sup>25</sup>

Then said Ganglere: If the norns rule the fortunes of men, then they deal them out exceedingly unevenly. Some live a good life and are rich; some get neither wealth nor praise. Some have a long, others a short life. Har answered: Good norns and of good

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<sup>25</sup> Elder Edda: Fafner's Lay, 13.

descent shape good lives, and when some men are weighed down with misfortune, the evil norns are the cause of it.

16. Then said Ganglere: What other remarkable things are there to be said about the ash? Har answered: Much is to be said about it. On one of the boughs of the ash sits an eagle, who knows many things. Between his eyes sits a hawk that is called Vedfolner. A squirrel, by name Ratatosk, springs up and down the tree, and carries words of envy between the eagle and Nidhug. Four stags leap about in the branches of the ash and bite the leaves.<sup>26</sup> Their names are: Dain, Dvalin, Duney and Durathro. In Hvergelmer with Nidhug are more serpents than tongue can tell. As is here said:

The ash Ygdrasil  
Bears distress  
Greater than men know.  
Stags bite it above,  
At the side it rots,  
Nidhug gnaws it below.

And so again it is said:

More serpents lie  
'Neath the Ygdrasil ash  
Than is thought of  
By every foolish ape.

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<sup>26</sup> The Icelandic barr. See Vigfusson, *sub voce*.

Goin and Moin  
(They are sons of Grafvitner),  
Grabak and Grafvollud,  
Ofner and Svafner  
Must for aye, methinks,  
Gnaw the roots of that tree.<sup>27</sup>

Again, it is said that the norns, that dwell in the fountain of Urd, every day take water from the fountain and take the clay that lies around the fountain and sprinkle therewith the ash, in order that its branches may not wither or decay. This water is so holy that all things that are put into the fountain become as white as the film of an egg-shell As is here said:

An ash I know  
Hight Ygdrasil;  
A high, holy tree  
With white clay sprinkled.  
Thence come the dews  
That fall in the dales.  
Green forever it stands  
Over Urd's fountain.<sup>28</sup>

The dew which falls on the earth from this tree men call honey-fall, and it is the food of bees. Two birds are fed in Urd's fountain; they are called swans, and they are the parents of the

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<sup>27</sup> Elder Edda: Grimner's Lay, 35, 34.

<sup>28</sup> Elder Edda: The Vala's Prophecy, 22.

race of swans.

17. Then said Ganglere: Great tidings you are able to tell of the heavens. Are there other remarkable places than the one by Urd's fountain? Answered Har: There are many magnificent dwellings. One is there called Alfheim. There dwell the folk that are called light-elves; but the dark-elves dwell down in the earth, and they are unlike the light-elves in appearance, but much more so in deeds. The light-elves are fairer than the sun to look upon, but the dark-elves are blacker than pitch. Another place is called Breidablik, and no place is fairer. There is also a mansion called Glitner, of which the walls and pillars and posts are of red gold, and the roof is of silver. Furthermore, there is a dwelling, by name Himinbjorg, which stands at the end of heaven, where the Bifrost-bridge is united with heaven. And there is a great dwelling called Valaskjalf, which belongs to Odin. The gods made it and thatched it with, sheer silver. In this hall is the high-seat, which is called Hlidskjalf, and when Alfater sits in this seat, he sees over all the world. In the southern end of the world is the palace, which is the fairest of all, and brighter than the sun; its name is Gimle. It shall stand when both heaven and earth shall have passed away. In this hall the good and the righteous shall dwell through all ages. Thus says the Prophecy of the Vala:

A hall I know, standing  
Than the sun fairer,  
Than gold better,  
Gimle by name.

There shall good  
People dwell,  
And forever  
Delights enjoy.<sup>29</sup>

Then said Ganglere: Who guards this palace when Surt's fire burns up heaven and earth? Har answered: It is said that to the south and above this heaven is another heaven, which is called Andlang. But there is a third, which is above these, and is called Vidblain, and in this heaven we believe this mansion (Gimle) to be situated; but we deem that the light-elves alone dwell in it now.

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<sup>29</sup> Elder Edda: The Vala's Prophecy, 70.

## CHAPTER VIII. THE ASAS

18. Then said Ganglere: Whence comes the wind? It is so strong that it moves great seas, and fans fires to flame, and yet, strong as it is, it cannot be seen. Therefore it is wonderfully made. Then answered Har: That I can tell you well. At the northern end of heaven sits a giant, who hight Hrasvelg. He is clad in eagles' plumes, and when he spreads his wings for flight, the winds arise from under them. Thus is it here said:

Hrasvelg hight he  
Who sits at the end of heaven,  
A giant in eagle's disguise.  
From his wings, they say,  
The wind does come  
Over all mankind.<sup>30</sup>

19. Then said Ganglere: How comes it that summer is so hot, but the winter so cold? Har answered: A wise man would not ask such a question, for all are able to tell this; but if you alone have become so stupid that you have not heard of it, then I would rather forgive you for asking unwisely once than that you should go any longer in ignorance of what you ought to know. Svasud

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<sup>30</sup> Elder Edda: Vafthrudner's Lay, 37.

is the name of him who is father of summer, and he lives such a life of enjoyment, that everything that is mild is from him called sweet (svasligt). But the father of winter has two names, Vindlone and Vindsval. He is the son of Vasad, and all that race are grim and of icy breath, and winter is like them.

20. Then asked Ganglere: Which are the asas, in whom men are bound to believe? Har answered him: Twelve are the divine asas. Jafnhar said: No less holy are the asynjes (goddesses), nor is their power less. Then added Thride: Odin is the highest and oldest of the asas. He rules all things, but the other gods, each according to his might, serve him as children a father. Frigg is his wife, and she knows the fate of men, although she tells not thereof, as it is related that Odin himself said to Asa-Loke:

Mad are you, Loke!  
And out of your senses;  
Why do you not stop?  
Fortunes all,  
Methinks, Frigg knows,  
Though she tells them not herself.<sup>31</sup>

Odin is called Alfater, for he is the father of all the gods; he is also called Valfater, for all who fall in fight are his chosen sons. For them he prepares Valhal and Vingolf, where they are called einherjes (heroes). He is also called Hangagod, Haptagod, Farmagod; and he gave himself still more names when he came

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<sup>31</sup> Elder Edda. Loke's Quarrel, 29, 47.

to King Geirrod:

Grim is my name,  
And Ganglare,  
Herjan, Hjalmbore,  
Thek, Thride,  
Thud, Ud,  
Helblinde, Har,  
Sad, Svipal,  
Sangetal,  
Herteit, Hnikar,  
Bileyg, Baleyg,  
Bolverk, Fjolner,  
Grimner, Glapsvid, Fjolsvid,  
Sidhot, Sidskeg,  
Sigfather, Hnikud,  
Alfather, Atrid, Farmatyr,  
Oske, Ome,  
Jafnhar, Biflinde,  
Gondler, Harbard,  
Svidur, Svidrir,  
Jalk, Kjalar, Vidur,  
Thro, Yg, Thund,  
Vak, Skilfing,  
Vafud, Hroptatyr,  
Gaut, Veratyr.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Elder Edda: Grimner's Lay, 46-50.

Then said Ganglere: A very great number of names you have given him; and this I know, forsooth, that he must be a very wise man who is able to understand and decide what chances are the causes of all these names. Har answered: Much knowledge is needed to explain it all rightly, but still it is shortest to tell you that most of these names have been given him for the reason that, as there are many tongues in the world, so all peoples thought they ought to turn his name into their tongue, in order that they might be able to worship him and pray to him each in its own language. Other causes of these names must be sought in his journeys, which are told of in old sagas; and you can lay no claim to being called a wise man if you are not able to tell of these wonderful adventures.

21. Then said Ganglere: What are the names of the other asas? What is their occupation, and what works have they wrought? Har answered: Thor is the foremost of them. He is called Asa-Thor, or Oku-Thor.<sup>33</sup> He is the strongest of all gods and men, and rules over the realm which is called Thrudvang. His hall is called Bilskirner. Therein are five hundred and forty floors, and it is the largest house that men have made. Thus it is said in Grimner's Lay:

Five hundred floors  
And forty more,  
Methinks, has bowed Bilskirner.

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<sup>33</sup> Oku is derived from the Finnish thunder-god, Ukko.

Of houses all  
That I know roofed  
I know my son's is the largest.<sup>34</sup>

Thor has two goats, by name Tangnjost and Tangrisner, and a chariot, wherein he drives. The goats draw the chariot; wherefore he is called Oku-Thor.<sup>35</sup> He possesses three valuable treasures. One of them is the hammer Mjolner, which the frost-giants and mountain-giants well know when it is raised; and this is not to be wondered at, for with it he has split many a skull of their fathers or friends. The second treasure he possesses is Megingjarder (belt of strength); when he girds himself with it his strength is doubled. His third treasure that is of so great value is his iron gloves; these he cannot do without when he lays hold of the hammer's haft. No one is so wise that he can tell all his great works; but I can tell you so many tidings of him that it will grow late before all is told that I know.

22. Thereupon said Ganglere: I wish to ask tidings of more of the asas. Har gave him answer: Odin's second son is Balder, and of him good things are to be told. He is the best, and all praise him. He is so fair of face and so bright that rays of light issue from him; and there is a plant so white that it is likened unto Balder's brow, and it is the whitest of all plants. From this you

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<sup>34</sup> Elder Edda: Grimner's Lay, 24.

<sup>35</sup> The author of the Younger Edda is here mistaken. Oku is derived from the Finnish thunder-god, Ukko.

can judge of the beauty both of his hair and of his body. He is the wisest, mildest and most eloquent of all the asas; and such is his nature that none can alter the judgment he has pronounced. He inhabits the place in heaven called Breidablik, and there nothing unclean can enter. As is here said:

Breidablik it is called,  
Where Balder has  
Built for himself a hall  
In the land  
Where I know is found  
The least of evil.<sup>36</sup>

23. The third asa is he who is called Njord. He dwells in Noatun, which is in heaven. He rules the course of the wind and checks the fury of the sea and of fire. He is invoked by seafarers and by fishermen. He is so rich and wealthy that he can give broad lands and abundance to those who call on him for them. He was fostered in Vanaheim, but the vans<sup>37</sup> gave him as a hostage to the gods, and received in his stead as an asa-hostage the god whose name is Honer. He established peace between the gods and vans. Njord took to wife Skade, a daughter of the giant Thjasse. She wished to live where her father had dwelt, that is, on the mountains in Thrymheim; Njord, on the other hand, preferred to be near the sea. They therefore agreed to pass nine

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<sup>36</sup> Elder Edda: Grimner's Lay, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Compare Vainamoinen, the son of Ukko, in the Finnish epic Kalevala.

nights in Thrymheim and three in Noatun. But when Njord came back from the mountains to Noatun he sang this:

Weary am I of the mountains,  
Not long was I there,  
Only nine nights.  
The howl of the wolves  
Methought sounded ill  
To the song of the swans.

Skade then sang this:

Sleep I could not  
On my sea-strand couch,  
For the scream of the sea-fowl.  
*There* wakes me,  
As he comes from the sea,  
Every morning the mew.

Then went Skade up on the mountain, and dwelt in Thrymheim. She often goes on skees (snow-shoes), with her bow, and shoots wild beasts. She is called skee-goddess or skee-dis. Thus it is said:

Thrymheim it is called  
Where Thjasse dwelt,  
That mightiest giant.  
But now dwells Skade,

Pure bride of the gods,  
In her father's old homestead.<sup>38</sup>

24. Njord, in Noatun, afterward begat two children: a son, by name Frey, and a daughter, by name Freyja. They were fair of face, and mighty. Frey is the most famous of the asas. He rules over rain and sunshine, and over the fruits of the earth. It is good to call on him for harvests and peace. He also sways the wealth of men. Freyja is the most famous of the goddesses. She has in heaven a dwelling which is called Folkvang, and when she rides to the battle, one half of the slain belong to her, and the other half to Odin. As is here said:

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<sup>38</sup> Elder Edda: Grimner's Lay, 11.

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