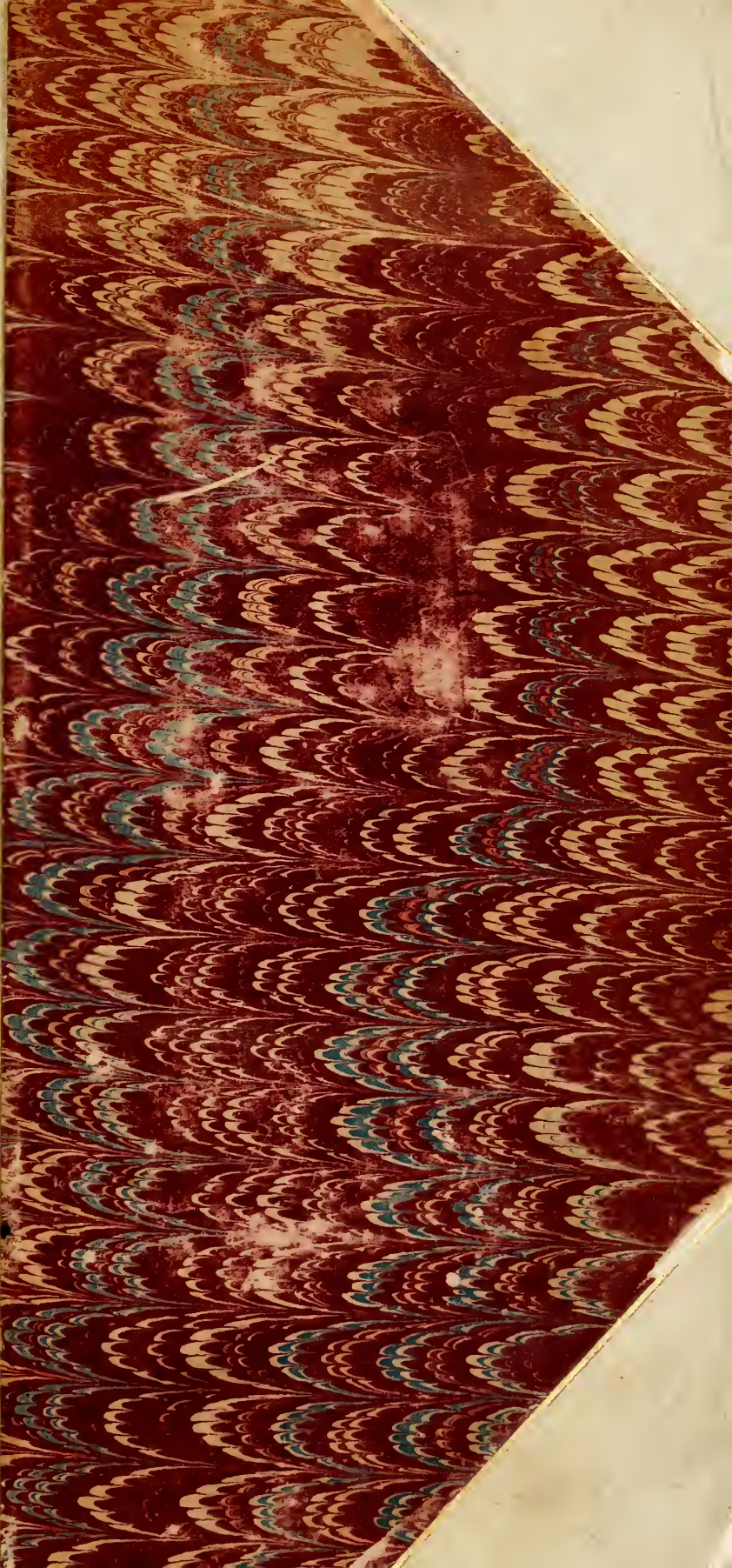
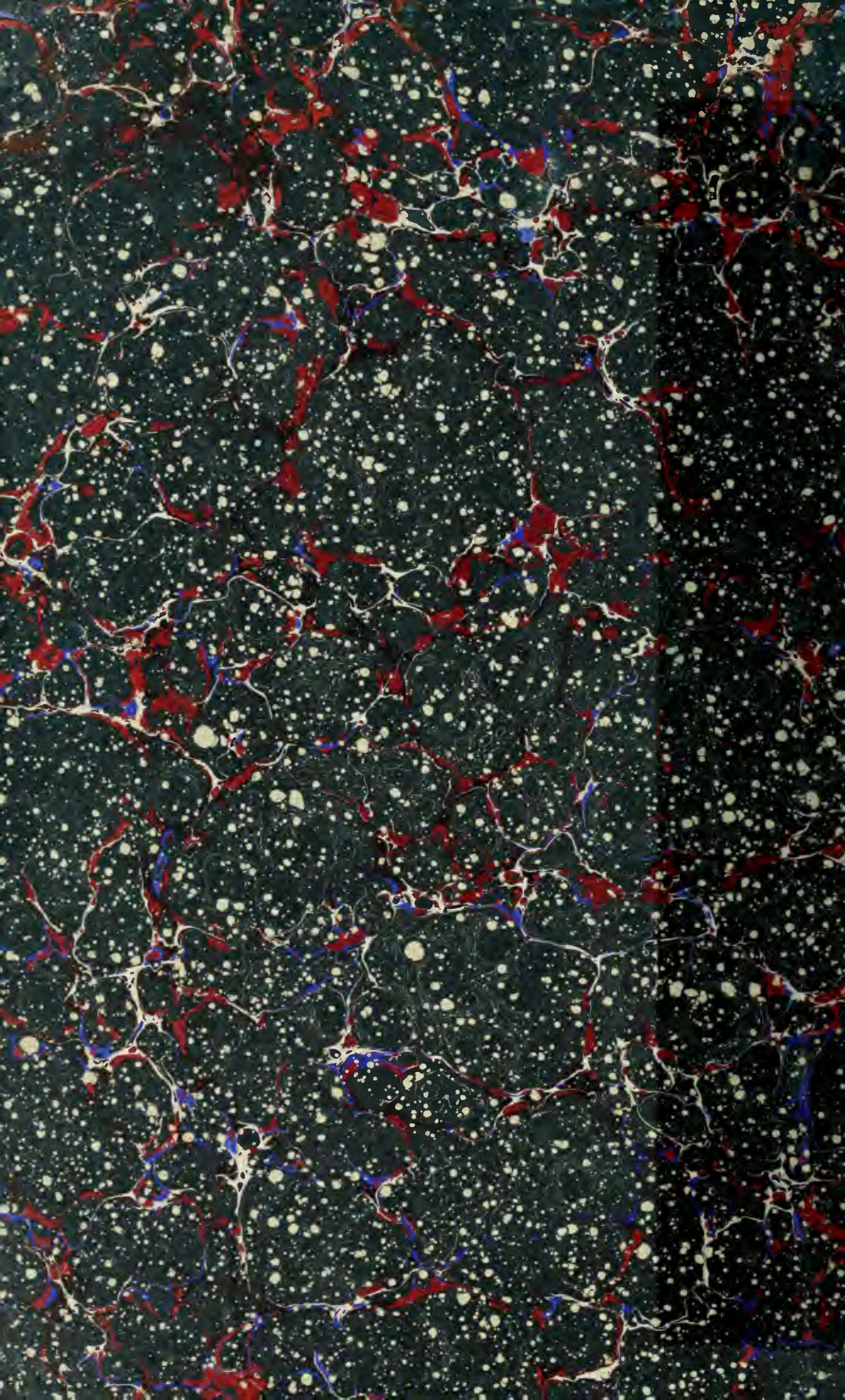


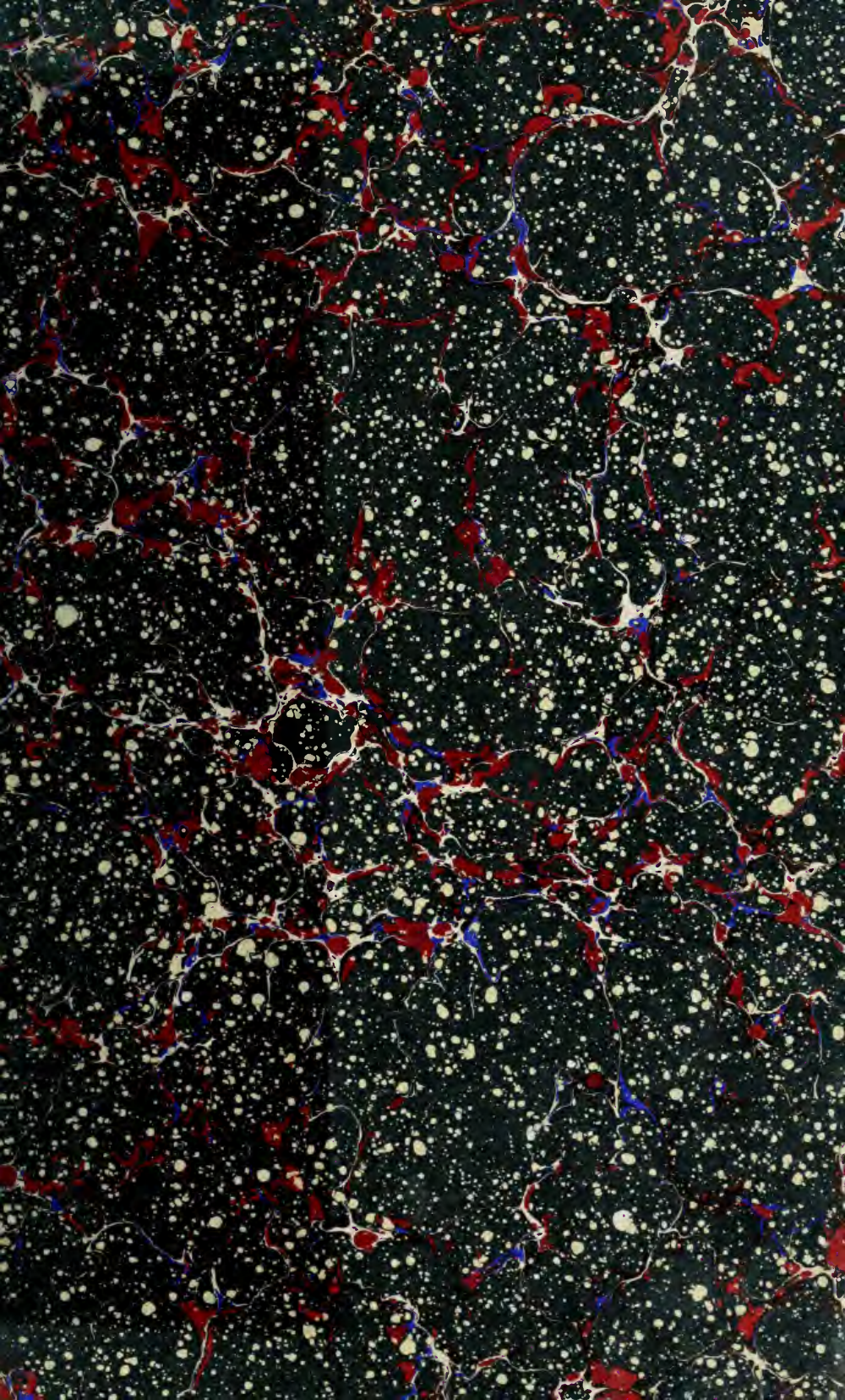
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To my good friend,

W. G. Smith

Aug. 16-1932

M. S.

**THE GODS
OF THE NORTH.**

Frederick A. Col

1904

Dedicated by permission to H. M. the
King of Denmark.

THE
G**ODS OF THE NORTH,**

AN EPIC POEM, BY

ADAM O**EHLenschlæger,**

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL DANISH INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

WILLIAM EDWARD FRYE,

FORMERLY MAJOR OF INFANTRY IN THE BRITISH SERVICE, AND MEMBER
OF THE ACADEMY DEGLI ARCADI, IN ROME.

LONDON,
WILLIAM PICKERING,
PARIS,
STASSIN AND XAVIER.

1845.

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To his Majesty Christian VIII,
King of Denmark,
&c. &c. &c.

SIRE,

The countenance of an enlightened Prince has ever been eagerly sought after by the most distinguished authors. It may then well be permitted to an humble admirer and translator of a poem of Denmark's greatest Scald to desire to place himself and his work under the protection of a King of Denmark, who yields to no Sovereign of any age or country in his love of science, and in his zealous furtherance of all that can adorn or benefit the great family of mankind. In soliciting the permission of dedicating this work to your Majesty, I had nothing to plead in favour of my request, but my ardent zeal for Scandinavian literature; I knew, however, that such zeal would be my greatest recommendation in the eyes of a patriotic Monarch, and the gracious permission accorded to me by Your Majesty I consider as my highest reward.

I have the honour to be,

Sire,

*Your Majesty's most grateful and
devoted humble servant,*

W. E. FRYE.

Paris, January, 1845.

PREFACE

BY THE TRANSLATOR.

THE argument of the poem by the author is the sole document that accompanies the original work ; there are neither notes nor preface to the edition from which I have made my translation, and which is the only one I have ever seen. To the people of education in Scandinavia, who are well versed in the ancient mythology of their country, notes are perhaps not strictly necessary, inasmuch as this poem is based upon the Edda, which is universally read ; but since, to the generality of English readers, the Edda and the Scandinavian mythology are but little, if at all familiar, I feel myself bound to furnish them with all the information on the subject that I have been able to collect from various sources ; by which they will be enabled to read this poem with additional pleasure and profit.

The Scandinavian mythology, like that of all other nations, is founded on the personification and con-

sequent adoration of the powers of nature, which may be expressed by the word "Demonism," used in its Greek sense; to this may be added the deification of national heroes.

The first source of Demonism (I here borrow the words of Wieland in his admirable work called *Agathodemon*) lies in the ignorance of mankind, in the early stages of the world, of the real causes or laws by which the powers of nature act, on the one side; and on the other, in the innate propensity of man to reflect the image of the things which he can and does see, on the things which lie beyond the contact of his senses.

This induces us to personify the causes of the effects that we behold in nature; we assign to them our manner of thinking and acting, and we endow them with a form like our own, because we can conceive no higher model. Thus we give a supposed existence to an infinite number of divinities in heaven and earth, whose operations are seen and felt, though the agents themselves are unseen or unknown. Thus the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the sea, rivers, woods, mountains, etc., all have their peculiar divinities; and as these were considered as the cause of light or of darkness, of warmth or of cold, of fertility or of barrenness, of the eternal vicissitudes of the year, month or day, as well as of the destructive effects of storms, tempests, floods, volcanoes, earthquakes, etc., to the idea of their existence became conjoined the belief of their

superhuman power. They were therefore recognised as the arbitrary rulers of nature, who had their separate principalities, circles, and districts in her empire ; and as we ascribe to them our own passions, caprices, and necessities, we naturally endeavour to captivate their good will, or avert their anger, by prayers, sacrifices, presents, or penances.

On the principle of Demonism, therefore, did the earliest legislators establish the basis of their fabric of social order, civilization and religion ; and it was by profiting by this innate inclination of mankind, that priests and mystagogues succeeded in consolidating their power and influence, which became necessarily augmented and enhanced by the right they arrogated to themselves of canonizing or deifying those heroes or princes, whom they were disposed to hold up as worthy of adoration, or as examples to be followed by the people.

History thus became blended with allegory and mythology ; and this circumstance, combined with the total want of chronology, which seems to pervade the early records of all nations, renders it extremely difficult to give to any mythology a consistent form, proportionate in all its parts, and presenting an invariable doctrine or system of action.

Proceeding thus from a similar source, the Scandinavian polytheism has a remarkable coincidence with those of Greece, Italy, Egypt and India ; and from its

classification of the superior powers into good and evil genii, it bears a still more striking resemblance to the religion of the ancient Persians, the doctrine of the Magi, which admits the co-existence of, and the eternal struggle between, the two opposing principles of Good and Evil, under the types of Ormuzd and Ahrimanes.

It seems generally admitted that the Gothic mythology was introduced into the north-west of Europe by the Asar or Asiatic Goths, when, under the guidance of the historical Odin, they emigrated from the borders of the Black Sea and penetrated into Scandinavia, where they founded their empire; and had they at that time been acquainted with navigation, they would most assuredly not have stopped there, but would have invaded the British Islands, which would have afforded an easy conquest, and a more alluring resting-place, from the superior fertility of their soil. and far greater mildness of the climate.

The word *Asa* may be derived from Asia, or both may be derived from the word *As* or *Az*,* which in the Zend or ancient Persian dialect (the link between the Gothic and the Sanscrit) signifies “powerful, elevated;” and may have been applied to that part of Asia bordering on Europe by its own inhabitants. as a country, *par excellence*, occupied by a super-excellent people; on the same principle that the word “*Svensk*” (Swedish) is

* This may be the origin of the term *Ace* in cards.

derived from “Sven” (man), and denotes a man, *par excellence*; and the country itself called “*Sverige*” (empire of men, Sweden). The word Goth also is a synonyme for what is good, great, and illustrious; for in all the Teutonic and Scandinavian languages, the three words *Goth*, *good*, and *God* spring from the same root; such has ever been the self-love and vanity of nations. The term *Jotun* or *Jette* may on the other hand have been the name of some rival nation, professing a different worship, and engaged in a long and obstinate warfare with the Asar or Goths, either in Asia or in Europe; and by the suggestion of national hatred, the Asar may have given the name of their enemies (the *Jetter*) to the destructive powers of nature, personified by the malevolent genii or giants: hence in the Icelandic, Danish and Swedish languages, the term *Jotun*, *Jette*, or *Jätte*, denotes a giant and implies the idea formed of this fabulous race by all nations.

The historical Odin was deified after his death, as were his wives, his sons, and immediate relations, and either their names may have been given to the benign influences of nature, or they (Odin and his relations) may have adopted the names of the gods of their Asiatic ancestors, in order to impose on their new subjects. The names of regions, places and abodes were transferred from Asia to Scandinavia; and the said names were either previously or subsequently to the first grand immigration of the Goths into the north-west of Europe,

applied by them to the supposed residences of the gods in heaven. Among the Egyptians and Greeks, the names of the Zodiac and of the constellations afford a similar and satisfactory proof of the continual re-action of earth on heaven, and of heaven on earth.*

The popular belief of the continual intercourse between heaven and earth, between gods, demi-gods, and heroes in the early ages of mankind, fostered and encouraged by the many ingenious allegories framed by the priests, the sole astronomers of the time, out of the movements and influences of the celestial bodies, render either hypothesis probable, and may serve to account for the many incongruities that prevail in the Scandinavian, as well as in other mythologies; it is sufficient for the comprehension of this poem, to lay down the principle, that the Asar (gods) represent the *creating, embellishing, and conservative* powers of nature; and the Jetter (giants), on the contrary, represent the *defacing, corrupting, destructive* powers of the same. The giants existed before the gods, inasmuch as *chaos, darkness and confusion* preceded *creation, light and order*.

With respect to the superhuman size attributed by

* In the prosaic Edda is this remarkable passage, wherein the name of Odin is given to Alfader, the supreme god. "We suppose that he (Odin, the god) must have been so called, for so is called the man, the greatest and the most glorious that we know, and well may mankind let him bear that name."

most nations to evil-spirits, it may be observed, that in darkness the terrors of mankind increase, and the shades of night magnify considerably to the visual orb every object in nature : hence to the Jetter, or evil genii, who were supposed to wander about at night doing mischief, was lent by the imagination a form gigantic in stature, and features frightful to behold. Day appears ! the giants vanish ! or they assume the ordinary appearance of towers, steeples, and windmills ; or they become changed to wolves and bears ; or they dwindle to the usual human size : but are still dangerous by their knowledge of magic, their power of effecting transformations, and by the artifices and illusions whereby they seek to mislead mankind and seduce them to the perpetration of evil. That the Jotun or Jetter, who were probably the aboriginal inhabitants of Scandinavia at the time of the Gothic invasion, should appear to the Asar to be giants in size, and as having the heads of bears, wolves, elks, or wild bulls, conjoined to human bodies, may be very easily and naturally accounted for. The Jotun race were in a very low state of civilization compared with the Asar, and were, probably, totally unacquainted with the art of tanning or weaving. They accordingly clothed themselves with the skins of beasts ; and in order to increase the terrific in their exterior (an object of great importance among savage nations), they preserved the head, tail, and claws of the animals, in whose spoils they arrayed themselves ; and wore its

head, horns and all, as a head-dress above their own, allowing the tail to dangle behind them, while its paws crossed their breast. This must naturally have given to them the appearance, not only of a stature far above the human size, but that also of partaking of the shape and nature both of man and beast, which idea was not a little supported by the ferocity of their manners; and such was probably the origin of giantism in every country.*

I shall now proceed to give an outline of the cosmogony and principal events of the Scandinavian mythology, as far as they can be collected from the only authentic source extant, viz. the fragments of the poetry contained in the elder or poetic Edda, discovered and compiled by the celebrated Sæmund Sigfusson, a native of Iceland, who was born in the year 1054, and died in 1133. He was a Christian priest of extensive talents and acquirements, who made a journey to Rome, a rare occurrence, at that time, among the clergy of the north. He it was who discovered these fragments, and at once perceived their value. He compiled them, and gave them to light, with a Latin translation of his own,

* The figure given to the devil by the imagination of the northern nations is a confirmation of this hypothesis; whereas the Orientals give to him a more seducing form; but in modern times the least cultivated minds reject the northern type, as Göthe says in his drama of Faust :

Das nordische Phantom ist jetzt nicht mehr zu schauen,
Wo siehst du jetzt die Hörner, Schweif und Klauen?

(*Faust von Göthe.*)

under the name of the Edda, which, in the Icelandic or ancient Scandinavian tongue, means “Ancestress.”

It was fortunate that this discovery was made by a man so enlightened and liberal as Sæmunder, who was free from all the prejudices which prevailed among the clergy of his time. Any poem or writing connected with the ancient polytheistic religion of the country, was at that time considered as the work of devils, and severely proscribed. The poems of the Edda, therefore, had they fallen into the hands of an ignorant or bigotted priest, would have been burnt, and lost to posterity for ever. The fragments thus collected together under the name of the Edda are, indeed, but the *disjectorum membra poetarum* ; but they form the only document extant, which throws on the Scandinavian mythology a light at all to be depended on.*

Of importance far inferior, but still of considerable

* The Eddas are written in the Icelandic tongue, then called the *Suio-Gothic*, and sometimes the *Norrana tunga* (or Norse tongue), which was formerly the language of all Scandinavia. After the introduction of Christianity, from the connection with the Empire and the Church, this tongue became gradually deteriorated by a mixture with the German ; and it is by this mixture with the German that the modern Swedish and Danish languages are formed. Iceland having been colonised by some Norwegian families previous to the corruption of the language, has thus, from its insular position, preserved the old language pure ; and it is now called Icelandic, which, though a dead language for Scandinavia, is a living one in Iceland.

relative utility, is the younger or prosaic Edda, composed, rather than compiled, by Snorro Storleson, a learned Icclander, who was born in 1178, and was killed at Reykiaholt in 1241. This work, written in prose, may be considered as a commentary on the elder or poetic Edda, with several additions and legends, collected probably from oral tradition. It is written in a homely, story-telling style, and but for the elder Edda, would stand a chance of being considered as unimportant as a black letter romaunt or fairy tale. In the preface to it, there is a strange jumble of history, sacred and profane; a very fantastic geography; and an attempt to derive the genealogy of all the nations in Europe from the Trojans: there reigns, moreover, throughout the whole work, a total want of chronology. *

The most interesting part of the work, from the light it throws on the elder Edda, is the Gyllfaginning, or Conversations of King Gyllfe, who reigned over a part of Sweden at the time of Odin's invasion. A curious appendage to the work is the "Skalde sprâket" (the language of the Skalds), which forms a sort of *Gradus ad Parnassum* of the Icelandic poetry, in which the synonymes and epithets of all persons and things occurring in the works of the Skalds, are given with extreme accuracy. But, as I have before stated, the whole

* Snorro Storleson is likewise the author of the celebrated history called *Heimkringlas*, a most valuable work.

importance of Snorro Sturleson's work is derived from the elder or poetic Edda. In the Gylfaginning occurs the following remarkable passage :

“ King Gylffe was a prudent and very wise man ; it
“ caused him much surprize that the Asar possessed so
“ much knowledge, that every thing yielded to their
“ will ; and he reflected whether this could proceed
“ from their own power, or whether they derived it
“ from the Gods, to whom they sacrificed. ”

It is from the Gylfaginning that I borrow the following account of the cosmogony, according to the Scandinavian mythology.

In the beginning when nothing existed, when there was neither earth, nor sea, nor heaven, all was Ginnungagap, * a vast unfathomable abyss. Towards the north of this abyss lay a world of cold and darkness called Niffelheim, in the midst of which was the source or fountain Hvergelmer. On the south of Ginnungagap lay Muspelheim, a world of heat, light and fire. From the source Hvergelmer flowed twelve rivers, called collectively Elivagor. These flowed into Ginnungagap, so far from their source, that the poisonous matter they contained congealed at length, and formed a mass of ice. On the other hand, the sparks and flames proceeding from Muspelheim, came into contact with this

* For the meaning of Ginnungagap and of all the other proper names, see the alphabetical catalogue annexed to this preface.

congealed mass ; and the heat, operating on the cold, produced the giant Ymer, the grand progenitor of the race of giants. He was wicked, and so were all his race, who were called Hrimthusser. Shortly after the apparition of Ymer, arose the cow Audumbbla ; she nourished herself by licking the frost from the pillars of salt in Ginnungagap ; and this operation produced, on the first day, a man's hair ; on the second, his whole head ; on the third the entire man ; this man was called Bure. Bure had a son called Bor ; and this Bor, by an union with a beautiful giantess of the name of Betsla, became the father of three sons, Odin, Vil and Ve, the progenitors of the Asar race. These three brothers slew the giant Ymer, from whose body flowed so much blood, that all the giants were drowned therein, except Bergelmer and his wife, who escaped from the deluge on the top of a mountain. Bergelmer and his wife had a numerous progeny, and by them were perpetuated the giant race. Odin, Vil and Ve, having slain Ymer, proceeded to the creation of the world, as it now exists. From the limbs of Ymer, they created the earth, the mountains from his bones, the sea from his blood, the heavens from his scull ; and from his eyebrows they built Midgard, name of the abode to be inhabited by the human race, and so called, because it lies in the middle region. They then from two trees, which they found on the sea-shore, created a man, called Askur, and a woman called Embla ; and placed

them to dwell in Midgard. From this pair descend all mankind.

On the confines of Midgard towards the north, and separated from it by mountains of ice and snow, and dreary wastes eternally agitated by storms, lies Utgard, the domain of the giants, whose sovereign is Lok, commonly called Utgard-Lok, to distinguish him from an Asa bearing the same name. Utgard became thus the region assigned to the giant race, as Midgard was to mankind. The Asar chose for themselves a region supposed to be in the heavens above the earth, and this region they called Asagard. There they built for themselves various palaces and tenements; and dwelling therein, pass their time in joy and felicity, in banquets, tournaments, festivals, and amusements of all sorts; or they occupy themselves in conferring happiness upon, and imagining inventions useful and beneficial to the human race. They occasionally descend from Asagard to Midgard, by passing over the bridge Bifrost, when they deem it necessary to intervene immediately in the affairs of mankind, for the purpose of relieving the oppressed, or of enforcing the practice of justice and benevolence.

The giants, on the contrary, when they sally forth from their domain in Utgard, do so for the purpose of creating storms and earthquakes, and causing, either openly or insidiously, as much mischief as possible to gods and men.

I shall not in this preface enumerate the names of the different gods and goddesses, nor of their abodes and attributes; neither shall I enumerate the names of the giants, nor those of the Dverggar, of the Alfer, or of the Vaner. All these names will be found in a catalogue, alphabetically arranged, which I shall annex to this work. Neither shall I take notice, in this preface, of the various episodes of the mythology, which are introduced in the body of the poem, and explain themselves; but I shall proceed to give an account of the death of Balder,* as it is related in the younger or prosaic Edda.

Frigga is the wife of Odin and queen of the gods. Their son Balder, the most benevolent among the Asar, called by the Skalds “the fillet that binds together the “garland of the gods,” was troubled with unpleasant dreams, portending some dreadful calamity to himself, and pregnant with mischief and ruin to the universe. He related his dreams to the Asar, and a council was held by them, in order to devise the means of averting the threatened mischief. His mother Frigga exacted an oath from all the elements, from iron and all kinds of metals, from stones, trees, beasts, birds, fishes and

* The details of the death of Balder are not given in this Poem “The Gods of the North.” It is only alluded to in the speech of the Vala, in the last canto; but Oehlenschläger has treated the “Death of Balder” separately, and made it the subject of an admirable tragic opera, with choruses and trochaics in the Greek style.

reptiles, that they would do no injury to Balder. When this oath was made, it was agreed upon by the Asar, that they should throw their lances at Balder, or cut at him with their swords, by way of amusement and experiment. Of course, enchanted as he was, he remained unscathed from all those assaults. This rejoiced the gods exceedingly ; but there was one among the Asar, called Lok, originally of giant race, but admitted among the gods ; a being of a treacherous and vacillating disposition, addicted to mockery and calumny, and inheriting from his ancestors, the giants, a strong innate disposition to mischief. It grieved him sore, that no injury could be done to Balder. He repaired to Fensal, the abode of Frigga, in the shape of a female, and related to her what had past between Balder and the other Asar at the tournament. Frigga replied : No weapon can do injury to Balder, for I have exacted an oath in his favour from all things likely to do him mischief. Lok answered : Have you really exacted an oath from all things ? Frigga replied : Eastward to Valhalla grows a little plant, called the misletoe ; from it I exacted no oath, for it appeared to me so insignificant, as to be incapable of doing harm to anybody. Lok went away, dug up the plant, and made thereof a spear ; he then went in search of Hædur, twin-brother of Balder, and born blind. Having found him, he asked him, why he did not join in the general amusement, and cast a weapon at Balder. Hædur replied :

I am blind, and have no weapon. Lok answered : You should not be the only one among the Asar, who does not do honour to Balder ; here ! take this lance (giving to him the spear made of the misletoe), and run at him with it ! Hædur did so, and Balder fell down dead. The gods were inconsolable at his loss, and sent Hermod, the messenger of Odin, to Hela, the queen of death and of the shades below, into whose hands Balder had fallen, in order to supplicate his release. Hermod mounted the steed of Odin, called Sleipner, and repaired to the abode of Hela, in order to demand the restitution of Balder. Hela at first refused to release him on any condition whatsoever ; but at length relenting, she said : Now is the time to prove, if Balder be really so beloved by all creatures, as ye pretend. If, therefore, every thing in nature will shed tears for Balder's death, and demand his release, I will grant it. Hermod returned to Asagard, satisfied with the success of his mission. The Asar sent messengers all over the earth, calling upon all creatures to weep for Balder's death ; and all creatures did grieve and join in the prayer for his release from the shades of Helheim, except an old witch, by name Thock, who was sitting by the entrance of a cavern. When called upon to join in the general lamentation, she answered spitefully :

With dry tears
Doth Thôck grieve

For the death of Balder ;
He never did good to me
Either in life or death ;
May Hela retain her prey !

and in consequence of this solitary refusal, Hela did retain her prey, and will do so until the end of time. It was now discovered that the witch Thock was no other than Lok himself in disguise ; and the gods, enraged at his treachery, inflicted on him a summary vengeance. Changing his two sons into wolves, who devour each other, the gods make a chain from their intestines, and bind therewith Lok to a sharp rock in a subterranean abode. They then place over him two enormous serpents, who drop their venom on his limbs, and he is to remain exposed to this continual torture until the end of the world. But though Lok be thus punished, the calamity springing from Balder's death cannot be averted ; from it dates the entrance of crime and misery into the world, and a state of unceasing warfare in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth ; which state is to last until the great day of Ragnarok, called the twilight of the gods. On that awful day, which is to be preceded by a severe uninterrupted winter of three years' duration, a great battle is to be fought between the gods and giants, in which dreadful conflict giants, gods, mankind, the whole universe, in fine, are to perish in a shower of fire and blood. After the destruction of the world, a new

creation is to take place under the auspices of Vidar, the god of silence and wisdom, the sole being who survives the general conflagration. It is he who is to resuscitate the gods and the human race, and to lead them to dwell in the palace of Gimle on the plains of Ida, an abode of eternal joy and felicity, where virtue and love are to reign triumphant, and vice and hatred be extinguished for ever. As the details of the destruction of the world and of its reconstruction are given in the last canto of this poem, I need not dwell on them here.* Besides the alphabetical catalogue, explicatory of all that remains to be known, concerning the events and personages which figure in this poem, I have annexed to each canto notes, which give the hidden sense and meaning of most of the mythes and allegories; on which subjects I have borrowed all my information from the celebrated Danish antiquarian Finn Magnussen, now living in Copenhagen, which information is to be found in his two admirable works, the one called "The elder Edda, translated with copious notes and

* Respecting the tragic opera of Balder by OEhlenschläger, which I have also translated, Sneedorf Birch says :

"The mythe of Balder is one of the most beautiful and sublime poetical compositions, whose equal is not to be found in the Greek or Roman mythology, or perhaps in that of any other people. This mythe has besides furnished the subject of one of the finest masterpieces in the Danish literature, namely, the drama of "Balder the Good," by OEhlenschläger.

illustrations;" the other, "The Edda doctrine explained and elucidated." These two works afford a complete key to the mythes and allegories of the Scandinavian mythology, intricate as it is; and armed thus with his (Finn Magnussen's) magic wand, I too may fearlessly undertake the office of Hierophant.

With respect to this poem and its author,* it has been observed by a modern Danish writer of some eminence: "There have been various poetical works in "all the northern languages based on the legends of "the Edda; but no author has woven thereof a whole, "nor has so happily and poetically embodied its genius, "mythes and transformations, as OEhlenschläger in "his celebrated poem, The Gods of the North."

To me it seems that he has combined in an eminent degree the peculiar excellences of three distinguished poets, of three distinct ages, viz. those of Hesiod in his Theogony, of Ovid in his Metamorphoses, and of Ariosto in his Orlando Furioso. OEhlenschläger seems to possess all the inexhaustible genius, fertility of invention, playfulness, and sly, but not ill-natured, satire of the bard of Ferrara:

"Il grande che cantò le armi e gli amori."

Of my translation, it befits not me to speak. Like my archetype, I have adopted various metres for the

* Suedorf Birch.

different cantos, not always the same as those of the original; for I wished to take a freer scope, and not to fetter myself by an invariable adoption of the self-same metres, which would have been attended with great difficulty, inasmuch as some of them are unsuitable to the genius of the English language, which is far less laconic than the Danish. I have likewise, in a few instances, amplified my archetype, for I was determined that nothing of his should be lost; yet I trust, that even in those parts where I have most amplified, I have never departed from the meaning and spirit of the author. I can therefore never admit, that my translation, though unshackled, should be termed “a free one,” or *Bearbeitung*, as the Germans express it.

With respect to my qualifications as a translator, they are as follows: from the early age of fifteen I have been engaged in the acquisition of the language and literature of Germany; for the last twelve years, I have closely studied the Danish and Swedish languages, and I have lately attempted the Icelandic.

About eight years ago, I made a summer tour in Denmark and Sweden, and when at Copenhagen, I became acquainted with Finn Magnussen, the celebrated antiquarian, and with the poet OEhlenschläger himself, most of whose works I had previously read with unbounded admiration and delight, and among which, this poem, “The Gods of the North,” had excited my peculiar attention. Thus prepared, I deter-

mined on undertaking a metrical version of the whole of this work, one canto of which (the 12th) I had previously translated, and published anonymously in a Parisian weekly review, in 1835.

In my translation, I was further encouraged by the idea that I was thereby contributing to spread among my countrymen a taste for the mythology and general literature of Scandinavia, which is capable of furnishing to the painter or the sculptor a series of subjects not less interesting than those derived from the classic sources of Greece or Rome. I recommend, also, to the attention of scholars, the study of the Danish and Swedish languages, as the key to an historical literature extremely rich and diversified, interesting to the readers of every European nation, but more particularly so to the English reader, who is desirous of forming an intimate acquaintance with the *arcanæ* of his own language, and with his own early history, laws, customs, manners, and legends. The history of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden is as captivating as a romance, and it presents an astonishing variety of the most singular events, which would afford admirable subjects for epic and dramatic poetry, as well as for the historical novel. The English reader will perceive, likewise, that the Scandinavian mythology is the fountain head of many of the most popular tales, legends, and ballads of his own country. It will interest him to mark the effect of the introduction of the Christian religion upon the Scandi-

navian polytheism, as therein he may trace the origin of many of our own superstitions and fabulous traditions. At the appearance of the Cross, the proud edifice of Valhalla, not seldom, alas ! polluted with human gore, crumbles into dust. Asagard, with all its palaces and gardens, dissolves in air ! The mighty Odin himself, the wise, the just, the beneficent Odin, degenerates into a common-place demon, liable to be exorcised by a parish priest. The Nornor, or Fates, the solemn, majestic, and impartial Nornor, though stern, yet beautiful to behold, become changed to disgusting and wrinkled witches, and figure as such in the weird sisters of Macbeth. The awful giants of Utgard sink into the ogres of a fairy tale ; Thor, deprived of his belt, his hammer, his gauntlets, and his car, dwindles into Jack the Giant-killer,* the familiar hero of our days of childhood ; and from the *'graa gaas* (grey goose), a name given to a collection of ancient legends in the Icelandic tongue, from the circumstance of great longevity being attributed to that bird, may be traced our old nursery acquaintance and monitress, Mother Goose. † I have only to add, that I began the translation of this

* Thor is called by the Scalds *Jotni-bane*, i. e. Bane of the Giants : perhaps Odin himself may be the original Jack the Giant-killer, since one of his names is Jalc.—See the Grimnismal in the poetic Edda.

† The French also call these tales *Les Contes de ma Mère l'Oie*.

poem towards the end of the year 1836, and finished it in the autumn of 1837; but I was compelled by circumstances to delay the publication of it until the present year.

W. E. FRYE.

Paris, January 1845.



ALPHABETICAL LIST

OF THE PROPER NAMES OCCURRING IN OR CONNECTED WITH
THE POEM ENTITLED "THE GODS OF THE NORTH."

With the assistance of Finn Magnussen's work Eddalæren (Doctrine of the Edda), I have composed the following alphabetical list of the proper names which occur in this poem, wherein the attributes of the several personages are given, and which should be consulted whenever a proper name occurs, since I have not thought it necessary to repeat in the notes annexed to each canto what is already given in this catalogue.

ÆGIR is the god of the sea, the Neptune of the Scandinavian mythology. His dwelling was supposed to be on the island of Hlesey, now called Lessoe, in the Cattegat. He is sometimes called Iller Ægir. He is of a benevolent disposition; but his consort Ran, who is of giant race, is otherwise. The etymology of the name Ægir is from the Icelandic verb *Ægi*, to liquify, inundate, etc.

ALFADER (Father of all) a name given to Odin, as king of gods and men. It is sometimes given to a supreme unknown God, pre-existent and superior to Odin himself.

ALF, plural **ALFER**, are inferior elementary divinities, divided into two classes, viz the white. Alfer, or Alfs of light; and the black Alfer, or Alfs of darkness. The white Alfer are related to the Asar and Vaner, and are friendly to mankind; they dwell with Balder in his palace of Breidablik. The black Alfer are mischievously disposed: they are connected with the Dvergar (dwarfs), and like them they shun the light of day: they dwell in caverns and sally out at night only. Our word *elf* is derived therefrom.

ANGURBOD, name of a Jettinde (giantess), who, in consequence of an amour with Asa-Lok, brought forth three frightful offspring, viz. the wolf Fenris, the serpent Jormundgard, commonly called the serpent of Midgard, and Hela, queen of death and of the shades below. The word *Angurbod* denotes "messenger of sorrow."

ARILD, Arilds-tid (time of Arild). From *Arilds-time* is a manner of reckoning among the Scandinavians, similar to our expression from "Noah's time." It means the time when mankind first learned the use of fire, and to have fixed habitations. Etym. : *arne* (hearth), *ild* (fire), and *tid* (time).

ASA, pl. **ASAR**, name given to the gods of the Scandinavian mythology; the principal Asar are Odin, Thor, Frey, Balder, Vidar, Ægir, etc. The word seems to be derived from the word As or Az, which in the Zend or ancient Persian language, which forms the link between the Gothic dialect and the Sanscrit, means *elevated, powerful, sublime*.

ASYNIA, pl. **ASYNIOR**, name given to the goddesses; the principal Asynior are Frigga, Freya, Iduna, Sif, Gefion, Nanna, etc.

ASAGARD, or **ASGARD**, is the region, the peculiar territory of the gods. It was supposed to be in the heavens above the earth, and to contain many rich domains and splendid buildings, inhabited by the different gods and goddesses. The most remarkable are the palace of Odin, called Valaskialf; the celebrated banqueting hall or pavilion, called Valhalla : Vingolf the peculiar palace and rendezvous of the Asynior, or goddesses : Trudvang, the domain of Thor : Fensal, the palace of Frigga : Folkvang, that of Freya : Breidablik, that of Balder, besides many others which are given in alphabetical order. Geographically, Asagard or Asgard was the name of a territory and city on the northern border of the Black Sea, from whence the Asiatic Goths originally came. The word *gaard* in Danish, *gard* in Swedish, means a *walled or hedged inclosure*, and is the root of the words *yard*, *court* and *garden*.

ASH, see the word Yggdrassil.

ASKUR is the name of the first man : he and Embla, the first woman, were fabricated from two trees by Bor and Bure ; according to others, by Odin, Vil and Ve. Askur and Embla were then placed by their makers in Midgard, to dwell therein, and perpetuate their race. Askur and Embla are in fact the Adam and Eve of the Gothic mythology. Etym. : *askr* (ash tree).

ASTRILD is the god of love : his name is not to be found in the Edda, but it appears in several of the old Sagas. Etym. : *Ast*, old Danish word signifying (*love*) and *ild* (*fire*).

AURTHOR, a name given to Thor : it means Thor the charioteer, from *åka* (to drive), Swedish verb.

AUDUMBLA, name of the mythologic cow formed by the *Fiat* of Alfader (the *quisquis deorum*), at the creation of the universe. By licking the salt rocks in Ginnungagap, she occasioned the birth of Bure, the progenitor of the Asar race. The cow Audumbla represents the organic power of nature acting upon the Chaos. The word, I think, means "development," from the Icelandic words *aud*, particle signifying *facility*, and *embla* (laborious).

BALDER is the son of Odin and Frigga, the most beloved of his father and mother, the most benevolent among the Aſar, the sun personified, the god of light, piety and poesy. He was slain by his twin brother Hædur, born blind, with a branch of the misletoe. His fate and its consequences have been related at length in the preliminary discourse to this poem. Balder typifies the sun at the summer solstice, and his death the disappearance of the sun from the horizon during the winter months in the north, while Hædur, type of darkness, reigns. The word in Icelandic means *brilliant, beautiful, powerful*. Balder has an evident analogy with the *Baal* of the Assyrians, the *Apollo* of the Greeks, the *Horus* of the Egyptians, the *Krishna* of the Hindoos, all of which are types of the sun in its highest splendour.

BAUGE, name of a giant, who procured for Odin entrance into the bower of Gunliod, when he sought to make himself master of the vase containing the precious liquor called *Suttung's mead*, which was confided to the care of Gunliod. *Bolcerk* was the name assumed by Odin on that occasion. *Baug* in Icelandic means a "ring," and among the northern nations in the Gothic time promises were made

by holding a ring; and this mythe may mean Odin's seduction of Gunliod by means of a promise given on the ring.

BERGELMER, name of the giant who, with his wife, were the only ones of that race who escaped being drowned in the blood of Ymer. He and his consort escaped on a wreck, and landed on the top of a mountain. From these two descended the second generation of giants. This mythe reminds one of the deluge of Noah and that of Deucalion and Pyrrha, and the mountain, mount Ararat; for *Bergelmer* means the *ancient of the mountain*, from *berg* (mountain), and *gamla* (old).

BERSERK (bare sark), name given to a sort of combatants among the ancient Scandinavians, who affected peculiar ferocity, and fought with their fists and teeth, in the absence of other weapons, and in no other clothing but their shirt; hence their name. *Berserkgang* is a term used to signify a combat of life and death, and is often applied to the exploits of Thor, to denote their peculiar danger and difficulty.

BETSLA, name of a beautiful giantess, the wife of Bor, and mother of Odin, Vil and Ve.

BIFROST, name of the vast bridge which unites heaven to earth, and typifies the *rainbow*. Over this bridge the Asar must pass when they descend to the world below; over it must likewise pass the heroes slain in battle, when they ascend to Valhalla, escorted by the Valkyrior. Etym.: from the Icelandic words *bifa* (to move) and *röst* (stone). The bridge Bifrost was supposed to be constructed of stones of various colours.

BILSKIRNIR, name of the palace or castle of Thor, in Trudvang. It is tiled with copper shields, its halls are inlaid with gold and silver, and it has five hundred and forty gates. Etym. : Icelandic words *billd* (aspect, image), and *skirna* (make bright).

BOLVERK, name assumed by Odin when he served Bauge, disguised as a labourer. The etymology of this word may be *böll* (a bolt) and *verk* (work).

BOR, or *Bör*, name of the son of Bure ; by his union with the beautiful giantess Betsla, he became the father of the Scandinavian triad, Odin, Vil, and Ve. Bor, in Icelandic, means *son*. But I suspect the word to be of Hebrew origin, meaning *beginning* ; for *böra* is precisely the Hebrew word wherewith the first book of Genesis begins.

BRAGUR, or **BRAGA**, an Asa, the god of poetry and musical declamation. At the banquets of Valhalla, he chaunts to the sound of his harp the praises of the gods and Einherier, and celebrates in high-flown language their virtues and warlike deeds. He is the husband of Iduna. He is called by the poets of the north, *Bragur hin gamle* (*Bragur the ancient*). Etym. : Icelandic verb *bragga* (to adorn, to embellish). Our English word *to brag* comes probably from the same root.

BREIDABLIK, name of the palace of Balder, in Asagard ; it is tiled with pearls ! Etym. : *breid* (broad, extended), *blík* (view).

BURE, father of Bor, and progenitor of the Asar race : his production, effectuated by the cow Audumbla, has been already related in the translator's preface. *Bure* in Icelandic has the same meaning as *Bör*, i. e. son. Both the

words come probably from the Hebrew or Zend, and mean the same thing, viz. *origin* or *beginning*.

DAG (day), the son of Delling.

DELLING, name of the father of Dag (day); the word means *division*.

DISA, pl. **DISAR**; name given to the Asynior, or goddesses. This word is evidently of Persian origin.

DISARSAL (hall of the Disar), name often given to the palace of Vingolf, the peculiar place of reunion for the goddesses in Asagard.

DOVRE, name of a chain of mountains in Norway, which seems to bear the same relation to Asagard as the natural mount Olympus in Greece bears to the mythological one.

DRAPA means *funeral dirge*, or song of the *apotheosis*. In it were celebrated the funeral ceremonies of a deceased hero, his glorious actions recapitulated, and his elevation to the rank of an Einherier and admission into Valhalla triumphantly announced. The English word *dirge* comes, perhaps, from the Icelandic and Swedish verb *dyrka* (to adore).

DRUPNER, name of a magic ring fabricated for Odin by the dwarfs, at the command of Asa-Lok. This ring had the faculty of dropping eight other rings on every ninth night: by this is typified the change of the moon and its phases. When Odin placed the ring Drupner on the bosom of his son Balder, when he laid his corpse upon the funeral pile, he whispered a secret in his ear. This may allude to the promise of resurrection, but none knew the secret, save Odin himself. The placing of the ring Drupner (the moon) on the bosom of Balder (the sun) may typify the eclipse of the sun by the moon intervening.

Etym. : from the Icelandic verb *driupa* (to drop, or distil).

DVERG, pl. **DVERGAR** (Dwarf), mythological beings, of short stature, who dwelt in caverns and were skilful in the fabrication of metallic instruments. They are unable to bear the glare of the sun, and prefer to rove about at night. From this circumstance, and from their being at times disposed to mischief, they are considered as related to the giants; but they are employed both by gods and giants to make armour and other instruments for them. They are represented as being of an exceedingly timorous disposition.

DWARFS, see **DVERG**.

EIKTHYRNIR, name of the mythological stag which stands on the roof of the portal of Valaskialf, and from whose antlers springs a fountain which furnishes water to all the rivers of the earth. Etym. : *eikt* (vigils), *hyrnir* (horns).

EINBERIER, name given to mortal warriors deified for their valour, and admitted among the Asar; they are constant guests at the banquets of Valhalla. Their occupations and amusements are thus described in the prosaic Edda :
 “Every day they dress themselves in their armour, go out
 “on horseback to fight, and cut at one another; thus they
 “pass their time. But when the hour of repast approaches,
 “they ride home to the palace, and take their seats at the
 “banquet.” In the elder or poetic Edda, in the chapter called the *Vaftrudnismal*, are the following words concerning them :

“All the Einberier

In Odin’s domain,

Fight together daily,
 And choose their prey of death :
 From the battle they ride afterwards
 To drink beer with the Asar,
 And to feast on the flesh of Sáhrimner,
 In joy and amity.”

Etym. : *einn* (one, unique), and *heria* (to bear arms).

EIR, name of an Asynia, whose office it is to heal the wounds of the Einherier, when they are first admitted into Valhalla, by squeezing into their wounds the juice of the beet. She is, in fact, the goddess of medicine.

ELDIR, name of Ægir's purveyor ; he is supposed to dwell under the famous whirlpool of Malstrom, and to break in pieces with his club every bark that is engulfed therein. Etym. : *eld* (fire), and may allude to the subterranean fire supposed to be under Malstrom, and to cause its effervescence.

ELIVAGOR is, mythologically, the collective name of the rivers that flow from the source Hvergelmer, in Ginnungagap. Geographically, Elivagor is thought to mean the mouth of the White Sea. Etym. : *elf* (a stream), and *vaga* (to wander).

ELVERHOY, name of a hill or barrow in the island of Sealand (Denmark), so called from its being the supposed habitation of *elfs* or *elves*. In Danish, *høi* means *height*.

EMBLA, name of the first woman, according to the Scandinavian mythology. See Askur. *Embla* means *laborious*, *productive*.

FENRIS, name of the mythologic wolf, begotten by Asa-

Lok on the witch or giantess Angurbod. He is malignant, frightful to behold, and his nostrils vomit fire. His presence inspired the gods with such terror, that they endeavoured to bind him with chains of iron and copper; but these he easily burst asunder; they then had recourse to a stratagem, and succeeded in binding him with a magic chain, which was composed as follows: of the noise of cat's feet, of the beards of women, of the breath of birds, of the saliva of fish, of the nerves of bears, and of the roots of mountains. This chain he could not break. The Asar then cast him down into Niffelheim, and placed him at the gate of Helheim, the residence of Hela. There he is to remain chained until Ragnarok; he will then break his chain, join in the battle of the giants against the gods, and devour Odin; but he will be afterwards himself slain by Vidar. By Fenris wolf is typified the subterranean fire, which it is supposed will one day occasion the conflagration of the universe. Etym.: *Fenia* (giantess or sorceress), *rasi* (to spring from).

FENSAL, name of the palace of Frigga, in Asagard. Probable etym.: *fengisall* (happy in acquiring riches).

FIALAR, name of the mythologic cock which is to crow at Ragnarok, to excite the gods and giants to combat. *Fiallar*, in Icelandic, means *cock*.

FINNAFENG, name of the cook of Ægir, god of the sea; he is slain by Asa-Lok for refusing him admittance to Ægir's banquet. The etymology may be from the Icelandic words *finu* (a piece of flesh), *fenge* (a capture).

FOLRVANGUR or **FOLRVANG**, name of the palace of Freya in Asagard, into which are admitted, after death, faithful lovers and virtuous women.

FORSETE, an Asa, the son of Balder, and god of justice ; he dwells in his palace Glitner. He often descends to earth, to sit in judgment, and hear causes under the shade of the ash-tree Yggdrassil, near the fountain of Urda. He is the son of Balder, inasmuch as justice proceeds from light ; and as Urda is the Norna or destiny of the past, it is from her fountain (i. e. consulting the records of the past) that he acquires experience. The etymology of this word is *for* (before), and *sete* (set), ergo *præses*, *president*.

FREY, or **FREYR**, is the god of liberty, joy and fecundity ; he is the son of Niord, and brother of Freya. He is invoked for sunshine and good crops. He represents the sun at the winter solstice. The new year's feast was instituted to do him honour ; it was the day of his birth, and a season of festivity and joy. He was the owner of a magic sword, but falling in love with Gerda, a beautiful damsel of Jotun race, he gave it away to her father, in order to obtain his consent to their union. He is to be slain by Surtur at Ragnarok. Etym. : *frei* (free), *frio* (seed). It is remarkable that in Egypt the sun was called *Phré*. The Swedish word *fröid* (joy) is probably derived from the name of this god.

FREYA is the Venus of the Scandinavians, the goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and fecundity ; she is the sister of Frey, and daughter of Niord. She is the most beautiful of all the Asynior. She was married to Odur ; but when the goddess Iduna, with her golden vase containing the fruit of immortality, was stolen from Asagard, Freya, in common with the other Asar, lost her youth and beauty ; and Odur, disgusted at the change, fled from her em-

braces. On the deliverance of Iduna, Freya recovered her youth and beauty, but her Odur never returned. She wandered all over the earth in search of him, but in vain. She weeps continually for his loss, and sheds tears of gold. When she travels, it is in a golden car, drawn by two black cats. Freya has two daughters, Siofna and Hnos, both remarkable for their beauty and gentleness. The Dutch word *fraaj* (handsome), is derived probably from Freya.

FRIGGA is the wife of Odin, the queen of the gods, the Juno and Ceres of the Scandinavian mythology. She sometimes typifies the earth, as Odin does the heavens; they become thus identic with the *Ουρανός* and *Γη* of the Greeks. She is pleased with offerings of fruits and flowers, and is herself extremely generous and beneficent. The constellation "Orion's belt," is termed by the Scalds the "spinning-wheel of Frigga." She is the mother of Balder, Hædur, Thor, etc. The etymology of Frigga is *frið* (seed), *gà* (to take care of).

FULLA, name of an Asynia, the handmaid and confidante of Frigga, and guardian of her jewels and wardrobe. She hands round the plates to the guests at the banquet of Valhalla. Her name typifies *abundance*; *voll*, *full*, in the German and English languages, and *fuld*, *full*, in the Danish and Swedish, all meaning the same thing, are probably derived therefrom.

GARDERIKE, name given by the ancient Scandinavians to a part of Russia.

GARM, name of the mythologic dog, who remains chained at the cavern of Gnyppa, until Ragnarok; he will then break his chain, and fight with Tyr; both will perish.

GAUTHIOD (Gothland), a name of Sweden.

GEFION, an Asynia, the goddess of virginity, herself a virgin; she receives in her domain in Asagard women, who die unmarried. She is the founder of the island of Sealand (Denmark), which was supposed to have been formerly joined to the continent of Sweden, and which, at her request, was ploughed around, separated from the mainland, and dragged into the Ocean by the sons of Gyllfe, who, to please her, transformed themselves into oxen, and performed the said service.

GEIRSODD means "point of a lance." The historical Odin, when on his death-bed, cut his veins with the point of a lance, assuring his surviving followers and companions, that those who died on the field of battle, or in this manner covered with blood, would meet him in Valhalla, and partake of all the delights of the immortals. Hence the natural death by old age or sickness, called emphatically *strá död* (death on the straw), was looked upon as ignominious by the northern warriors, and as exposing them to the danger of falling into the clutches of Hela. They, in consequence, when they felt their end approaching, either by old age or sickness, opened their veins, and bled to death; this was called *cutting runes to Odin*, or otherwise *geirsodd rita* (to scratch with the point of a lance); and this, as they believed, ensured them admission into Valhalla.

GERDA, a beautiful damsel of Jotun race, daughter of the giant Gymer. She was united to Frey with the consent of all the gods, and admitted among the Asynior. She was renowned for her beauty, piety and virtue. Finn Magnussen thinks that Gerda is a type of the *aurora*

borealis, which replaces the light of the sun in winter, in the extreme northern regions ; Frey himself typifying the sun. Others suppose that Gerda typifies the earth, and her amour with Frey the relationship between the earth and the sun.

GESTUR, name of a blind giant who proposes riddles and enigmas to Skirnir on his journey to the world below, for the purpose of visiting Gerda.

GLALLAR, name of the horn of Heimdal, which he blows, to give notice to the gods of those who arrive at, and attempt to cross the bridge Bifrost. Etym. : Icelandic verb *gala* (to sing, to call out). The English verb *call*, and the Swedish and Danish verbs *kalla*, *kalde*, come from the same root.

GIANTS, called in the Scandinavian dialects Jotun, Jetter, Jättar, the evil genii of the Gothic mythology. At Ragnarok they are to fight with and defeat the Asar on the plains of Vigrid ; but they are themselves to perish in the conflagration that ensues, and they will never be resuscitated (i. e. in a future state of existence there will be no violence or crime). The giants dwell in their peculiar territory, Jotunheim, in Utgard, and are ruled by their sovereign, Lok, commonly called Utgard-Lok, to distinguish him from an Asa of the same name. The giants were supposed to be of various forms and races, some having the heads of wild beasts joined to human bodies, and others the human form entire. They understood magic, were capable of assuming divers shapes, and of increasing or diminishing their stature *ad libitum*. They seem to bear a great resemblance to the Titans of the Greek, and

to the Arites of the Mohammedan theology, and all are borrowed from the Persian system, the doctrine of the Magi.

GIMLE, the most beautiful of all buildings, in which virtuous mortals are to dwell together with the gods, after the reconstruction of the universe, in eternal joy and felicity. The grave is often termed by the Scalds, “the verdant gate of Gimle.” The German word Himmel (heaven) is derived therefrom. Etym. : from the Icelandic word *gimlir* (splendour).

GINNUNGAGAP, name of the vast abyss which existed before the present world, and separated Niffelheim (region of fog) from Muspelheim (region of heat). Etym. : *Ginning* (between), and *gapi* (to yawn or open). The following verbs, in different languages, all come from the Icelandic verb *gapi*, and have the very same meaning, viz. *to gape*, English ; *gapa*, Swedish ; *gape*, Danish ; *gapen*, Dutch ; *gaffen*, German ; and the Greek words $\chi\alpha\omega$, $\chi\alpha\omicron\varsigma$ and $\chi\alpha\sigma\mu\alpha$ (chasm) are likewise from the same root.

GLADHEIM, a general name given to the abodes of the gods in Asagard, and often used as a synonyme for Valhalla. Etym. : *glad* (joy, gladness), and *heim* (home, or abode).

GLADHEIMASAL means *hall of the abode of gladness*, applied as Gladheim.

GLITNER, name of the palace of Forsete, the god of justice. The word means *equalisation*. It represents the station of the sun between August 23 and September 23, beginning of the autumnal equinox, corresponding with the sign of the zodiac Libra (the balance).

- GNA**, an Asynia, messenger and confidante of Frigga. When she executes the commissions of her mistress, she rides on the steed Hofvarpur.
- GNYP**, name of a cavern in Niffelheim. Etym. : Icelandic word *gnyp* (steep).
- GUDBRAND**, or Guldbrand, name of a fertile valley in the province of Aggerhuys, in Norway.
- GULDVEIGE**, a female divinity, personifying riches. Etym. : *guld* (gold), *veige* (weigh).
- GUNLIOD**, name of the daughter of Suttung, to whose care her father confided the vase containing the precious beverage called *Suttung's mead*. Seduced by Odin, she surrenders to him the vase.
- GYLLE**, name of a king of Jotun race, who reigned over a part of Sweden at the time of the invasion of the historical Odin.
- GYLLINBORSTE** (golden-bristled), name of the mythological golden boar, fabricated by the dwarfs at the instance of Asa-Lok, and presented to Frey to serve him as a steed, mounted on which he travels round the world. According to Finn Magnussen, it is a type of the sun.
- GYMER**, name of a Jotun or giant, the father of Gerda. Etym. : *gima* (transmitting light).
- HÆNIR**, name of an Asa, the god of intellect; he accompanies Odin on his travels. By some he is considered as identic with *Vil*, the second person of the Scandinavian mythological triad.
- HÆRFADER** (father of the fight), one of the many names given to Odin.

HAGBARTH, name of a Norwegian prince, celebrated for his valour and his attachment to Signe, a Danish princess. Having had the misfortune to kill Signe's brother in single combat, he falls into the hands of the mother, who, to revenge her son's death, causes Hagbarth to be hanged. Signe, in despair at the loss of her lover, destroys herself. The unfortunate love of Hagbarth and Signe has been the theme of many a northern ballad, and OEhlenschläger himself has made it the subject of a most interesting and pathetic tragedy.

HARBARD, in this poem, is the name of a ferryman of Jotun race, who refuses to ferry Skirnir across a river until he has answered his questions and displayed his knowledge.

HEIDRUNA, name of the mythological goat who stands on the roof of Valaskialf, and whose teats afford a constant supply of hydromel to the guests at Valhalla.

HEIMDAL, or Heimdaller, name of an Asa who stands as sentinel at the bridge of Bifrost, to give notice of the approach of strangers by blowing his horn Giallar. He is constantly on the alert to prevent surprise on the part of the giants. Of him it is said, that he was born of nine mothers; that he had a tooth of gold; that he could do without sleep; see at a distance of a hundred miles, as well by night as by day; hear wool grow on the backs of sheep, and grasses shoot. By his doing without sleep may be meant the absence of night from the northern polar regions during the summer months. At Ragnarok, he will blow his horn with all his force, to excite the gods to combat. Etym. : *Hein* (abode), and *dallr* (horn).

HEIMRINGLAS, name given to the universe in the Scandinavian mythology. Etym. : *Heim* (abode), *kring* (round about), and *lás* (clasp).

HELA, or **HEL**, name of the queen of death and of the shades below, daughter of Asa-Lok and of the giantess Angurbod. She is frightful and appalling to behold : her body is of white or natural colour below the girdle, but all above is blue or livid, from congealed blood. The gods, terrified at her sight, exiled her from Asagard, and cast her down into Niffelheim, to rule over the dead. There, in her castle Helheim, she receives the ghosts of the worthless and cowardly, and of those who die of old age or sickness, who omit to *cut runes to Odin*. Of Hela it is said in the prosaic Edda, that her abode is *anguish* ; her table, *famine* ; her attendants, *delay* and *fruitless expectation* ; her threshold, *precipice* ; her bed, *lingering sickness* ; her bed-curtains, *heart-rending care*.

HELHEIM (abode of Hela), name of a strong castle situate in Niffelheim, in the midst of eternal damp, ice, snow and darkness. Herein Hela receives and detains her dead guests.

HERMOD, an Asa, the messenger of Odin ; from his name and attributes he bears a strong resemblance to the Mercury of the Greeks, *Hermes*.

HERTHA (the Earth), a purely allegorical divinity, and sometimes used as a synonyme for Frigga. In the pagan time her image was bathed once a year by female slaves, captives of war, who were afterwards drowned by the priests in her honour, that they might not reveal to profane ears the description of the charms and mysteries they had seen and witnessed.

HILDUR, name of a heroine in the northern legends, afterwards deified and enrolled among the Valkyrior. The story of Hildur, as related by Samsøes, is as follows: Her lover Hedin and her father Hogni slew one another in single combat. One night, in the violence of her grief, she by her magic spells evoked the ghost of Hedin; but her spells were so powerful, that the ghost of her father Hogni also arose. The two ghosts commence fighting, and every night they renew the combat, which is destined to last until Ragnarok. Hildur is present and applauds their courage. From this circumstance, War is called by the Skalds *Hildur's game*.

HLESEY, an island in the Cattegat, supposed to be the peculiar residence of Ægir, the god of the sea. Hlesey is now called *Lesøe*. The word *oe* in Danish and *ö* in Swedish means island.

HILDSKIALF, name of an immense high tower in Odin's palace Valaskialf, from the top of which he can see all that passes in the world below.

HLOORIDA, a name given to Thor, when he drives his car through the air, causing thunder. Etym.: *Hliod* (sound), and *rida* (to ride).

HLYN, name of an Asynia, sent by Frigga to warn mankind of sudden danger during darkness; from its etymology it evidently typifies the flash of lightning that occurs at intervals during a very dark night. The Danish word *lyn* signifies "lightning."

HNOS, name of a beautiful female child, the daughter of Freya. Etym.: *hnoss*, an Icelandic word meaning *a precious thing*.

HOEDUR or **HOEDER**, an Asa, twin brother of Balder; he was born blind. How he slew his brother Balder with a lance made of a branch of mistletoe has been already related. Hôdur is the type of night and darkness, as Balder is that of light and day.

HÖFVARPUR, name of the steed mounted by Gna the messenger of Frigga.

HRIMFAX, name of the steed which draws the chariot of Night. It means "frost bringer;" this steed is sometimes mounted by Skada.

HRIMTHUSSER, mythologically, the name of a race of giants; the word means "frost-demon"; and from the word *thuss*, demon or evil spirit, comes probably the English word *deuce*. Historically, they were probably the name of some Tartar tribe at war with the Asar, and who harassed them exceedingly on their march. From being good archers, and shutting one eye when they took aim, they obtained the reputation of being one-eyed.

HRINGHORN, name of the bark or vessel of Balder, on board of which his body was placed, and burnt after his death. It derives its name from the circumstance of its prow being decorated with rings of horn. Among the Skalds a ship was often compared to an animal, and its masts to the horns of an animal. These masts were made fast with iron rings round their circumference, and this I take to be the surest origin of the etymology of the name Hringhorn or Ringhorn.

HROSVELGER, name of a giant, who, in the shape of an eagle, causes tempests by the flapping of his wings.

Etym. : *hrosi* (corpse), and *svelge* (swallow), the wind being the cleanser of all impurities.

HRUGNER, name of a giant made of stone, and animated by the giants, in order to aid them in the conflict with the Asar. Within his breast, instead of a heart, he had a three-corner stone. He typifies probably a volcano, since in the Icelandic tongue *Hrungrnir* signifies "something that makes a violent noise." Hrugner was slain by Thor.

HUGIN et **MUNIN**, names given to Odin's two ravens, who descend to earth, and bring back to him the news from the nether world; when not employed as messengers, they perch themselves on Odin's shoulders. By *Hugin* is meant "thought," and by *Munin* "memory."

HVERGELMER, name of a source or fountain in Niffelheim. Etym. : *Hver* (urn or kettle), and *gamla* (old).

HYMR, name of a giant, with whom Thor goes a fishing in the disguise of a peasant lad. He catches the serpent Jormundgard, but Hymir files in two the anchor which served as a hook, and the serpent escapes.

IDA, IDAVALLEN, name of the plain, on which the resuscitated Asar and the human race are to be assembled by Vidar, after the reconstruction of the world.

IDUNA, name of an Asynia, wife of Bragur. She is the guardian of the golden vase, containing the apples of immortality, the juice of which gives to the gods perpetual youth, health and beauty. She was once carried off from Asagard by the giant Thiassa, aided by the treachery of Asa Lok; and the gods became at once old and feeble;

but when Iduna was recovered, and brought back to Valhalla with her precious vase, the gods recovered all their power and advantageous attributes. This mythe of Iduna's apples has its parallel in the Amreeta (drink of immortality) in the Hindoo mythology.

ISSEFIORD, name of a large creek or *fjord*, in the island of Sealand (Denmark), lying towards the north.

JETTE, pl. **JETTER**, **JOTUN**. So were called the evil genii or giants of the Gothic mythology. Historically, they were probably the aboriginal inhabitants of Scandinavia, and were of Celtic race, with black hair. Being engaged in continual and deadly warfare with the Asar or Goths, from the time of Odin's invasion, these last may have, from a spirit of national hatred, transferred the appellation Jotun to the evil genii of their own mythology, before that epoch termed *Hrimthusser*. In spite, however, of the hatred and jealousy between the Asar and Jetter, they sometimes, like the Spaniards and Moors, formed political and also matrimonial alliances.

JORMUNGARD, name of the mythologic serpent, called also the serpent of Midgard. This serpent was offspring of Asa Lok, by the giantess Angurbod. His enormous size and frightful appearance excited such terror in the breast of the gods, that they hurled him down into the ocean that surrounds Midgard. There he is to remain until Ragnarok. On that day he will join the giants in the battle against the gods, and will be slain by Thor; but Thor will perish himself immediately after, from the effect of the serpent's venom. This serpent is represented by the poets as holding his tail in his mouth, and is

no doubt an emblem of the great Ocean, which was thought in those times to encircle the earth. His venom represents the dangerous effects of humidity. In the Hindoo mythology, there is the serpent *Naga*, which typifies the Ocean. Etym. : *jord* (earth), *munr* (mouth), *gard* (inclosure).

JOTUN (giant) ; see *Jette* and *Giant*.

JOTUNHEIM, peculiar province of the Jotun or giants in Utgard. Geographically, it is thought to denote Siberia.

LAUFEY, or **LAUFEIA**, name of a giantess, the mother of Asa Lok.

LEIRE, name of the ancient capital of Denmark, situated on the Isscifiord, in Sealand. Leire was the theatre of many an important event. The modern city of Roskild is very near the spot, where Leire once stood.

LIF and **LIFTRASIR**, names of two mythological beings, who remain concealed in the wood of Hoddmimer, at the destruction of the world, and from whom the new race of men are to spring ; these beings are purely allegorical, for *lif* signifies " life," and *liftrasir* " producer of life."

LINDERNÆS, name of a promontory on the southern coast of Norway, in the canton of Mandal.

LODER, an Asa, who conferred beauty on mankind ; by some he is confounded with Ve, the third person of the Scandinavian mythologic triad.

LOFNA, name of an Asynia, who presided over marriage. Etym. : Icelandic verb *lofa* (to promise, to betroth).

LOR, **ASA LOR**, **UTGARD LOR**. In the Gothic mytho-

logy, there are two important personages of the name of Lok or Loke, in the earliest times perhaps ideatic, but in the latter divided; namely Lok of Utgard, the supreme ruler of the giants or malevolent spirits, belonging to our world's system, who dwells in and rules over Utgard; and Asa Lok, originally of giant race, but admitted among the Asar. According to Ling, a modern Swedish poet, in the notes to his poem, called *Asarne* (the Asar), the mythe of the two Loks is thus explained: Utgard Lok represents the subterranean fire and its destructive effects, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions; Asa Lok represents the deleterious qualities of the air, such as tempests and unwholesome exhalations. In my opinion, the most simple explanation of this mythe would be as follows: Utgard Lok typifies physical evils and calamities, and in this respect he resembles the Siva of the Hindoos; as possessor of subterranean riches, he resembles the Plutus of the Greeks, who, as we are told, was related to Pluto. Asa Lok is the type of moral evil, or the propensity to vice in human nature, which has been personified by the Orientals, under the various names of Satan, Ahrimanes, Belial and Eblis. The punishment inflicted on Asa Lok for his treachery has been already related. At Ragnarok, he will break his chain, and join in combat with the giants against the gods. He and Heimdal will destroy each other.

LOPTUR, a name given to Asa Lok; it means *one who runs through the air*.

MALSTROM, name of the famous whirlpool on the coast of Norway, near Lofoden. *Malstrom* signifies "millstream." It is called by the Skalds the *mill of Ægir*.

MAANEGARM, name of the mythologic winged goblin,

who constantly pursues the moon (maane), and will swallow her up at Ragnarok.

MANHEIM (abode of man), a name often given to Midgard, or the earth.

MEGINGARD (girdle of strength), name of Thor's belt, which had the faculty of doubling his force when he girded himself with it.

MIDGARD, name given to the earth, as being in the *middle region* between Asagard and Utgard.

MIMER, an Asa, the god of eloquence and of wisdom ; he sits by the wave of Urda, called the fountain of wisdom, of which he is the guardian, and which springs near the ash-tree Yggdrassil. Urda is the destiny of the past, so that the allegory is clear ; by consulting the records of the past, we gain wisdom and experience.

MJOLNER (breaker in pieces), name of Thor's hammer, type of the thunderbolt.

MOKKURKALF, name of a gigantic figure made of clay, and animated by the giants, that he might aid them against Thor. They gave to him the heart of a horse. This may allude to the custom among many heathen nations of consecrating an idol of clay, wood or stone, by putting therein the heart of a man, or of some animal. Mokkurkalf was slain by Tialf.

MUSPEL, MUSPELHEIM, name given to the region of fire and heat which lies to the south of Ginnungagap, and from whence at Ragnarok, Surtur will collect flames, and set fire to the universe. Flames are often termed by the Scalds " the children of Muspel."

NAGLEFARE (ship of nails), name of a bark or vessel built by the giants. As its name imports, it was built of men's nails. On board of this vessel, the giants will embark at Ragnarok, to give battle to the gods. The giants are continually at work to increase its size; hence, those who neglect to cut off the nails from the hands and feet of dead men, contribute to the building of this vessel, and to the mischief that will ensue from it. The popular belief of the continuation of the growth of the hair and nails after death, has probably contributed to this mythe.

NANNA, an Asynia, the wife of Balder, renowned for her piety and constancy. At his death she threw herself on his funeral pile, and was burned with him.

NARF, name of a giant, the father of Night, and also the name of one of Asa-Lok's sons by Sigyn.

NASTROND, name of a frightful and noisome marsh in the subterranean world, filled with venomous serpents, and destined as a place of punishment in the future life for those who are absolutely incorrigible.

NIDAROS, a city in Norway of great historical celebrity, the ancient capital of the kingdom, and now called Trondhjem, and by the Germans Drontheim.

NIDDING means "*scoundrel*," "*worthless fellow*;" it was the greatest insult to a Scandinavian to call him a Nidding, and the offence could only be expiated by the blood of the offender.

NIDHOG name of a frightful dragon that dwells in the marsh of Nastrond, and who continually gnaws the root of the Ash-tree Yggdrassil. Etym. : *nid* (reproach, abuse), *högg* (blow), in Icel.

NIFFELHEIM, department of Utgard, region of eternal cold, fog, darkness and horror, lying to the north of Ginnungagap. It is sometimes used as a synonyme for Utgard, or for Helheim. *Niffël* means "fog."

NIORD, or **NIORDUR**, is the Æolus of the Scandinavians, the god of the winds. He is of Vaner race, and is father of Frey and Freya. He was admitted among the Asar to preside over the winds and is the type of the north wind in particular. He is invoked by fishermen and travellers. He was afterwards married to Skada, daughter of the giant Thiase.—Niord is of a very friendly and benevolent disposition. See the articles *Skada* and *Vaner*.

NORNA, pl. **NORNOR**, name of the Parcæ, or Fates of the Scandinavians; they were three in number, viz Urda, Norna, or destiny of the past; Verdandis, of the present; Skulda, of the future. They sit near the Ash Yggdrassil, the tree of time, where they weave the woof of human destiny.

ODIN is the Chief Asa, the king of gods and men, the Jupiter and Mars of the Scandinavian mythology, and the grand progenitor of the Scandinavian kings. Some think that this was the name given to the supreme God of nature by the Asar, previous to the invasion of the north-west of Europe by the historical Odin, whose real name is said to be Sigge (conqueror); and that the name of Odin was assumed by Sigge during his life, or given to him by his followers after his death. Others think that the real name of the great conqueror was Odin, and that his name was given to the supreme unknown God. At all events, the historical Odin was deified after his death, and being confounded with the mythologic one, was from that period

worshipped as the supreme ruler of the universe. Odin has an immense number of appellations, the most remarkable of which are Alfader, Hœrfader and Valfader. As god of war he is accompanied by two favourite wolves, one called Gere (rapacity), and the other Freke (audacity), to whom he gives his share of food at the banquet of Valhalla; for according to the Edda, Odin lives on wine alone. Odin has also two favourite ravens, one called Hugin (thought), the other Munin (memory), who sit perched on his shoulders, and whom he sometimes dispatches to bring him news from the nether world. At Ragnarok, Odin is to be swallowed up by the wolf Fenris. Odin bears a lance called Gugner.

ODUR, name of the husband of Freya, whom he abandoned on the loss of her youth and beauty. He was changed into a statue by Odin, as a punishment for his desertion. He was the inventor of the art of making wine.

OLUF, a king of Denmark, slain by Starkodder, whom he afterwards meets in Valhalla.

QVASER, name of a chief of Vaner race by his mother; his father, name unknown, was an Asa. He taught mankind arts and sciences, but particularly poetry. He was killed by two dwarfs, who mixed his blood with honey, and poured it into a golden vase. This drink had the faculty of inspiring poetical talent. Suttung, the brother of Qvaser, revenged his death on the two dwarfs, by binding them to a rock in the mid-ocean, where they suffer perpetual hunger. He then took the vessel containing the sacred liquor, and gave it in charge to his daughter Gunliod. This liquor is called by the Scalds "Suttung's mead,"

and is used as a synonyme for poetical inspiration. Etym. : *Qvasir*, Icelandic word meaning "breath" or "inspiration."

RAGNAROK, called also "the twilight of the gods," is the *last day*, according to the Scandinavian mythology, the day, on which the whole creation, gods, giants, and mankind are to perish in a shower of fire and blood. Ragnarok will be preceded by a dreadfully severe winter of three years duration, called the *Fimbul-vetr*. At Ragnarok the wolf Fenris will break his chain, and so will Lok. A grand battle will be fought between the gods and giants on the plains of Vigrid, wherein the latter will be victorious; but twill be a fruitless victory, for Surtur, with flames from Muspelheim, will set fire to the universe, and involve victors and vanquished in general destruction. Vidar alone will survive the general conflagration and reconstruct the universe. The etymology of the word Ragnarok, I conceive to be the two Icelandic words : *ragna* (to imprecate, implore vengeance), and *rok* (violent tempest). Some derive it from *regin* (dynasts or gods), and *röckur* (twilight).

RAN or **RANA**, name of a giantess, wife of Ægir the god of the sea. She is of an extremely malevolent disposition, and takes pleasure in causing shipwrecks and drowning sailors. In the pagan time, when seamen found their ship about to sink, it was their custom to hold a piece of money in their hand, to propitiate Ran. In fact, Ran personifies the dangers and destructive properties of the sea; Ægir the salubrious and beneficial ones. The word *Ran* in Icelandic means "rapacity," and from it comes the Danish verb *rane* (to rob).

RATATOSK, name of the mythologic squirrel that resides on the branches of the Ash Yggdrassil, and employs himself in running up and down the tree, in order to sow discord between the Eagle Hrosvelger, who sits on the top, and the dragon Nidhög, who lies at its root. This will remind the reader of the fable of Æsop of the eagle, the cat and the sow.

RINDA, name of a princess of Garderike, seduced by Odin.

ROSKA, name of a peasant's daughter who, with her brother Tialfe, was adopted by Thor and accompanied him on his travels. She was elevated to the rank of an Asynia, and placed in Folkvang, to dwell with Freya.

RUNES, mean "letters of the alphabet" or writings.

SAGA, an Asynia, the goddess of history; she is represented with a graver and shield, on which she engraves events worthy of commemoration.

SÆHRIMNER, name of the mythologic hog, whose flesh furnishes food for the banquets of Valhalla. It is killed every morning and resuscitated every night.

SIF, or **SIFIA**, an Asynia, the wife of Thor, renowned for the beauty of her hair. Asa-Lok, to revenge himself on Sif for spurning his addresses, cut off her hair while she was asleep; but he was compelled by Thor to procure for her a new head of hair, made of gold by the dwarfs. Hence gold is often termed by the Scalds *Sif's hair*.

SIGNE, name of a Danish princess. — See Hagbarth.

SIGYN, the wife of Asa-Lok; she alone does not abandon him in his adversity; and when he is chained in the subterranean cavern, with the enormous serpents hanging over him,

she holds out a vase to catch the venom they let drop. When the vase is filled, she goes out to empty it ; the venom of the serpents then falling on Lok, causes him to writhe with pain, and this movement causes earthquakes.

SIOFNA, an Asynia, daughter of Freya ; she presides over sleep and sends pleasing dreams. Etym. : Icelandic verb *sofna* (to sleep).

SKADA, daughter of the giant Thiase ; she comes to Valhalla in a fury, to revenge her father's death, becomes pacified at the sight of Balder, and having caught Niord at a game of blindman's-buff, obtains him for a husband ; but their tempers being very different, she being capricious and violent, and he placid and benevolent, they soon quarrell. They cannot agree about their place of residence ; she wishing to dwell in the mountains inland, and he preferring to dwell on the sea-shore. Niord says :

“ I was tired of the mountains, ;
 Though I was not long there ;
 Only nine nights :
 The howling of the wolf
 Was disagreeable to me
 Accustomed to the chaunt of the swan.”

Skada says :

“ I could not sleep
 On the banks of the sea,
 On account of the screaming of birds ;
 And the sea-gulls by their cries,
 Disturb my repose every morning.”

As *Skada* means “ *mischief*” in all the Teutonic and

Scandinavian dialects, (to scathe, in English), the allegory is clear : by her union with Niord *she* represents the mischievous qualities of the wind, *he* the salubrious and beneficent ones.

SKALDS, or **SCALDS** ; so the poets were called in Scandinavia.

SKIDBLADNER or **SKRYBLADNER**, name of a ship given to the gods by Gerda, on her marriage with Frey. When not required for navigation, it could be folded up like a scarf. It seems to resemble the Sverga, or ship of heaven, of the Hindoos ; and they are both probably types of the clouds, for *sky* is "cloud," and *blad* a leaf, in the Icelandic tongue.

SKINFAX, name of the steed who draws the chariot of day. Its meaning is "light-bearer," the $\phi\omega\sigma\phi\omega\rho\omega\varsigma$ of the Greeks.

SKIRNIR, name of an Asa, messenger of Frey ; he is sent by Frey to negotiate his union with Gerda, and by Odin to procure a cord to bind the wolf Fenris, both which commissions he executes successfully. Etym. : Icelandic verb *skirna* (to clear up).

SKRYMER, name of a giant who meets Thor on his journey to Utgard and leads him astray. He mystifies him also by giving to him a wallet filled with provisions, but which Thor could not untie. Etym. : Icelandic word *skrum* (boasting), from which comes the Swedish verb *skrymma* (to look big).

SKULDA, name of the Norna, or destiny of the future. Etym. : *skulu* (shall), in Icelandic.

SLEIPNER, name of Odin's charger. He has eight feet ; he typifies the wind with its eight principal points.

SNOTRA, an Asynia extremely graceful, who inspires mankind with elegance of gesture and diction. Etym. : Icelandic verb *snotra* (to teach manners).

STARKODDER, name of a celebrated Scandinavian warrior. He slew king Oluf in a perfidious manner, but having afterwards greatly distinguished himself by a series of brilliant actions, he seems to have obliterated his crime, for he was deified after his death. He may be considered in some measure as the Hercules of the Goths.

SURTUR, name of a formidable giant, who, with flames collected from Muspelheim, is to set fire to the universe at Ragnarok. Etym. : *surtr* (swarthy in colour).

SUTTUNG ; Suttung's mead ; see Qvaser.

SVEA, SVITHIOD, names of Sweden.

SYN, name of an Asynia who in this poem figures as the porteress of Valhalla, but in the Edda she is porteress of the palace of Freya.

THIASSE, name of a giant, father of Skada. In the shape of an eagle he carries off Asa-Lok, and compels him to join in a plot to steal away Iduna from Asagard. When Iduna is delivered, Thiasse pursues her in the shape of a griffin, but is burnt to death by falling into the bale fire at Breidablik.

THOR, an Asa, son of Odin and Frigga, the god of war, strength, and thunder. He plays a most prominent part in the Gothic mythology. He is the arch enemy of the giants, and is constantly employed in punishing crime and oppression and protecting the weak and virtuous. His various actions are described in this poem, of which he is

the principal hero. He is the owner of a famous hammer called *Mjolner*, and of a no less famous belt called *Megin-gard*; he wears steel gauntlets and brazen armour. He travels usually in a golden car, drawn by two white goats, *Tanngiostr* and *Tanngrisner*; when that car rolls along the heavens, it causes thunder and lightning. The worship of Thor seems to be of very remote antiquity; he typifies probably the occult force of nature, which checks the blind fury of the elements and brings them back to their proper limits. There is no mention of Thor as an historical personage. Odin is thought to have introduced the worship of Thor into Scandinavia; hence, by mythologic filiation, he is said to be Thor's father; or this relationship may typify *supreme force* proceeding from *supreme wisdom*. Thor defeats and puts to flight the giants; thus does thunder disperse noxious exhalations and purify the atmosphere. Thor seems to resemble the Indra of the Hindoo mythology.

THRYMUR, name of a giant who falls in love with Freya. Having obtained possession of Thor's hammer, *Mjolner*, he offers to restore it on condition of obtaining the hand of Freya. The gods are unwilling to part with Freya, but hit on the expedient of sending Thor disguised as Freya, and Asa-Lok as female attendant, down to Thrymur's abode in Jotunheim. As soon as Thor obtains his hammer, he throws off his female attire, and slays Thrymur and all his followers.

TIALFE, or Tialf, name of a young peasant adopted by Thor and admitted among the Asar; he accompanies Thor as his shield-bearer in all his expeditions. He is brother of Roska.

TING, or **THING** ; a council is so called in the Scandinavian peninsula. This word has the exact meaning of the English word “ thing,” “ business,” etc., and of the Latin “ negotium.” *Storting* means “ grand council,” for *stor* signifies “ great” in all the Scandinavian dialects.

TRUDVANG, or **TRUDVANGUR**, name of the domain of Thor, in Asagard.

TROLD, in Swedish *Troll*, means an evil demon or goblin in the Scandinavian mythology ; they were very fantastic and grotesque in their appearance. The French word *drôle* (anglicè *droll*) is probably derived therefrom, and was introduced by the Norsemen when they conquered Neustria.

TROLDKEMPELAND ; the giants’ territory was often so called. Etym. : *trold* (goblin), *kæmpe* (warrior), *land* (land).

TYR, an Asa, renowned for his valour, and younger brother to Thor. His celebrated adventure with the wolf Fenris, who bites off his hand, is related in the 26th canto of this poem. Etym. : *tyr* (brilliant renown).

ULLER, name of an Asa who presides over archery and duels.

URDA, name of the Norna or destiny of the past. Etym. : Icelandic word *urdu* (was).

UTGARD is the name of the territory of the giants. It was supposed to be to the north of Midgard, and that mountains of ice formed the barrier between the two regions. It also signifies the world below, and includes Jotunheim, Svartalfheim, Niffelheim, and Nastrond. Etym. : *ut sig-*

nifies *exclusion*, anglicè *out*, and the etymology of *gard* has been already given as meaning *enclosure*. Utgard-Lok is the ruler of Utgard.

UTGARD-LOK, see **LOK**.

VAFTRUDNER, name of a giant celebrated for his wisdom, who is consulted by Odin under the name of Gangrôd (weary wanderer.) Vaftrudner does not, it is true, figure in this poem, but I introduce him into my catalogue because I am obliged to quote some passages in a chapter of the Edda bearing his name, in order to elucidate a passage of OEhlenschläger. Etym. : *vafi* (eminent), *drutna* (to be proud).

VALA, name of the sibyl or prophetess of the Gothic mythology, who foretells the destruction of the world.

VALASKIALE, name of the palace of Odin, in Asagard, in which he holds his court.

VALFADER (father of the choice), name given to Odin when he presides at the banquets in Valhalla.

VALHALLA (hall of the choice), name of the celebrated banqueting hall of Odin, in Valaskialf, and theatre of the convivial festivities of the gods and Einherier.

VALKYRIE, pl. Valkyrior, name of the celestial virgins who attend the fields of battle in order to carry off to Valhalla the souls of the heroes who fall. They are mounted on white horses, with fiery manes and tails. At the banquets of Valhalla they hand round to the guests the mead and ale. The word Valkyrie means *chooser of the slain*, because they choose from the heaps of slain those who have shown most courage. Owing to this belief, the word

val, which originally meant "choice," was applied to a field of battle; hence the Danish word *valplads* and the German *wahlplatz*, both signifying "field of battle." *Kyrie* comes from the old Teutonic verb *küren* (to choose); there is therefore, properly speaking, tautology in the word *Valkyrie*, both the words of which it is composed signifying *choice*. By the *Valkyrior* are thought to be typified those meteoric appearances in the heavens, which were supposed to forebode wars and tumults.

VANER, VANAHEIM; mythologically the *Vaner* were elementary divinities, and *Vanaheim* was supposed to be situated in the heavens, above the earth, immediately above *Midgård*. Geographically, *Vanaheim*, according to *Snorro Sturleson*, was a country lying immediately eastward of the *Tanais* or *Don* river; but the historical *Vaner* are represented as a highly civilized people, from whom the *Asar* learnt the arts and sciences and all that embellishes life. Now I am yet to learn that the inhabitants of the banks of the *Don* were ever remarkable for refined culture; I therefore reject the hypothesis of *Snorro Sturleson*, and adopt that of *Finn Magnussen*, who thinks that by the historical *Vaner* are meant the Asiatic Greeks or the Persians, from whom the *Asar* or *Goths* might well learn the arts of civilization. *Njord* was a chief of *Vaner* race; *Njord* became father of *Frey* and *Freya* by his sister. Such a matrimonial connection was perfectly lawful among the ancient Persians, and is so among their descendants, the *Parsis* or *Guebres*, to this day. A learned friend of mine, a Portuguese by birth, by name *Dr. Constançio*, much given to the study of philology and the Eastern languages, thinks that by the *Vaner* and the

country inhabited by them, Vanaheim, may be meant the country bordering on the lake Van or Erivan, in Armenia; and this seems extremely probable, as the Armenians were a Persian peuplade, highly civilized, and professing in days of old the same religion as the Guebres. Mythologically, Niord and his son and daughter may have been divinities worshipped in Armenia, Persia, and Asiatic Greece, and the Asar may have adopted and incorporated that worship into their own mythology, just as the Romans and Greeks adopted many of the divinities and religious ceremonies of the Egyptians. I think I can perceive a strong resemblance between Frey and Horus, between Freya and Astarte, and between Niord and Nereus.

VANDHOSE (water-spout), brother of Skada. Etym.: *vand* (water) and *hose* (trowser) in Danish.

VAR, an Asynia, the goddess of truth; she registers the vows of mankind and punishes perjury.

VARDOE, an island of East Finnmark on the north-eastern extremity of Norway, in latitude 75° north.

VAULUNDER is the Vulcan of the Gothic mythology. Historically he was a smith, celebrated for the beauty and excellence of his workmanship in metals. He forges weapons and armour for the gods.

VE, name of the third person in the triad of the Scandinavian mythology, and son of Bor.

VERDANDIS, or Verandis, name of the Norna or destiny of the present. Etym.: *verandi*, participle present of the Icelandic verb *vera* (to be).

VIDAR, an Asa, god of wisdom and of silence; he wears thick shoes, hence he is often called by the Scalds, "the

god with the thick shoes." He never breaks silence, but his look is so penetrating that he discovers the most secret thoughts of men. He is to play a most important part at Ragnarok, and will slay the wolf Fenris. Vidar alone will survive the general conflagration and reconstruct the universe on an imperishable basis. Etym. : Icelandic word *vitra* (wisdom).

VIL, one of the sons of Bor, and second person of the Scandinavian triad, Odin, Vil, and Ve. Of this triad Sneedorf Birch thinks that *Odin* typifies air or breath; *Vil*, light; and *Ve*, warmth. The death of Ymer, therefore, by Odin, Vil, and Ve, typifies the annihilation of ice and snow, and elicitation of the products of the earth by air, light, and warmth.

VINGOLF, name of a palace in Asagard, considered as the peculiar place of rendezvous of the Asynior or goddesses.

YGGDRASSIL, name of the mythologic Ash-tree, called "The tree of the world." Of this tree it is thus written in the prosaic Edda: "This ash is the first and greatest of all trees, which spreads its branches over the whole earth. It springs from three roots. Near one of these roots, which pushes the trunk and branches towards Asagard, flows the fountain of Urda, which contains the water of wisdom, and of which Mimer is the guardian. The gods often descend to this spot, to sit in judgment on the actions of mankind and of one another. They interrogate Urda. The second root of Yggdrassil stretches towards the region of the Hrimthusser frost-giants of Utgard. The third root extends below, as far as Niffelheim, and is continually gnawed by the dragon Nidhög." By this, according to Finn Magnussen, is meant the gradual deterioration of the

world, which will end in its destruction; for the Ash Yggdrassil is no other than the symbol of our world. May I be permitted to add my conjecture towards the interpretation of this mythe: By the first root, which pushes stem and branches towards Asagard, may be meant the elevation of our thoughts towards heaven. By the second root, extending towards the region of the ferocious Hrimthusser, may be meant the tendency of our minds to fraud, rapine and violence; and by the third root, gnawed by Nidhög, the writhings of conscience and of envy: the etymology of the word Nidhög seems at least to give some weight to my conjecture.

Of this tree it is further written in the prosaic Edda: "On the branches of this Ash dwells an Eagle: he knoweth much, and between his eyes sits a Hawk, called Väderfalner. A squirrel, called Ratatosk, runs up and down the trunk of the Ash-tree, and endeavours to excite discord between the Eagle and the Dragon Nidhög, who dwells at its root. Four stags spring round the Ash-tree, and bite its branches: their names are Dainn, Dvalen, Dunneyr, and Durathror." Among the various interpretations given of this mythe, the following, given by Grundtvig, seems to me the most happy.

"Yggdrassil is the genealogical tree of the human race; its triple root denotes the three sorts of men who are to be found on earth, viz. Those who cooperate powerfully for a noble and eternal object (children of the gods); Those who work powerfully, but for an ignoble and temporal object (children of giants); and lastly, the idle, useless and powerless, relations of Hela. The Eagle denotes the human mind in its greatest elevation; the Squirrel

“denotes the tempter or type of temptation, who is in
 “compact with the Dragon. The Hawk denotes the spirit
 “of divination or presentiment of the future, which agi-
 “tates the human brain; and the four Stags denote the
 “four passions or desires of power, of honour, of wealth,
 “and of sensual pleasure.”

YMER, name of the giant, the great progenitor of the giant race. He was slain by Bor and his sons, as has been already related; and from his body the world was constructed, according to the following lines in the poetic Edda in the chapter called *Vaftrudnismal* :

From Ymer's body
 The world was created ;
 The mountains from his bones ;
 The heavens from the ice-cold giant's head.

Ymer is evidently the type of the chaos.

As the reader may be curious to know how Ymer propagated his race, I quote the following question and answer from the *Vaftrudnismal*. Odin in disguise interrogates, and *Vaftrudner* answers :

Tell me, *Vaftrudner* !
 How did the giant of old (Ymer)
 Beget children without a giantess ?

Answer :

From the arm of the giant,
 According to the tradition,
 A boy and girl sprung together ;
 According to others a six-headed son
 Was produced from the feet of the giant.

*Additional remarks respecting Valhalla.—The origin
of its conception and meaning.*

Finn Magnussen says in his notes to the *Vaftrudnismal*, speaking of the Einherier and their amusements: "This account of the amusements of the heroes in Valhalla seems, with respect to the ideas of our forefathers about the games suited to warriors, to correspond perfectly with Xenophon's relation of the warlike diversions of the Thracians, at a great banquet in his time. These are his words: 'A large round table was prepared; the guests sat round it on benches strewed with leaves, and drank out of large drinking-horns. After they had drunk in honour of the gods, and sung to them hymns of praise, the most distinguished Thracians rose up, and began to dance and put on their armour, leaped up and down, and fought with naked swords. One cut at another, who immediately fell in such a manner, that we all thought he was slain; but it was merely a feigned death in a mimicked fight. Then the Paphlagonians gave a great shout. The conquerors stripped the conquered of their armour, and chaunted a hymn in honour of Sitalka; but the other Thracians bore out the fallen, and stretched them out, as if they were dead, although no mischief had happened.'"

(Xenophon's Anabasis, book vi.)

"After that, other warlike spectacles and dances took place, in which women, who were real Amazons, took part. As such games were the delight of the Thracians on the borders of the Black Sea, who were either closely related to the Goths or the same people, so were they also

“ among the customs of our forefathers ; at least their ideas
 “ of the glories and delights of Valhalla seem to confirm it.”

Opinion of the Swedish poet Ling respecting Valhalla.

Valhalla is the type of *heroic renown*. In all ages and among all people, cowards have been held in abhorrence ; for without courage, strength of soul and firm will, nothing noble can be effectuated. He who exposes his own life to save another's, he who year after year endures captivity with fortitude in order to enforce the truth of his principles, or meets death with courage, in order to save another from that fate, acquires now as formerly our admiration and esteem. He was called by our forefathers Valhalla's guest ; and on that account Ragnar Lodbrook and Gunnar entertained the hope, while expiring under the fangs of serpents, to be received in Valhalla, because they bore their sufferings with resignation, equally with those heroes who had fallen in battle. But at Ragnarok Valhalla itself will disappear ; i. e. *heroic renown* appertains merely to this earthly life, and with it must finally pass away. Goodness alone lives eternally on the peaceable ever-green island which rises from the sea, and on which stands the palace of Gimle.

I here annex a translation I made of a chorus in the tragedy of Sigurd Ring, by the Swedish poet Stagnelius, as it gives a lively picture of the Valkyrior and of their occupations on the field of battle and in Valhalla.

Aye! such is the Norna's immutable doom!

On the earth ever discord shall rage!

But a banquet eternal in Asagard's dome,

All sense of past sufferings assuage:

See her fiery-mancd steed the Valkyrie bestride
Towards Valhall fresh hosts of Einherier to guide !

O'er the heath, where the warriors in battle array
Stand glitt'ring in armour, she flies ;
To death first she dooms them, then bears off her prey
To partake of the bliss of the skies ;
Not a thought doth the haughty one deign to bestow
On the tear of the bride, on the mother's deep woe.

Now thickens the combat ! now onward they dash
At the hugle's sound savage and shrill !
Bows twang ! arrows whiz ! lances shiver ! glaives clash !
Unyielding each host struggles still !
Now blood runs in torrents adown the green mead,
And the rivers are choked with the limbs of the dead !

On rides the Valkyrie ; she knows where to chuse
The bravest midst thousands of slain ;
She dismounts ; bids them rise ; then her course she pursues,
Till she reaches the Asar's domain ;
With pride she parades them still reeking with gore,
Still scarr'd with deep gashes, great Odin before.

Her armour now doffing, at Valfader's feast,
Crowned with roses, in purple array'd,
The Valkyrie shines, and presents to each guest
The goblet high brimming with mead ;
The heroes her graces bewitching behold,
And Bragur entranced strikes the harp-strings of gold.

With respect to the proper names, it may be asked why there is sometimes a variation in the manner of spelling them ; why, for instance, Frey should sometimes be called Freyr ; Niord, Niordur ; Heimdal, Heimdaller ; Jormundgard, Jormundgardur. The explanation thereof must be traced to the Icelandic language itself. In one of the declensions many of the masculine nouns, and almost all the proper names masculine, take *er*, *ur* and *r* as terminations of the nominative case which are omitted in the other cases ; and the Danish, Swedish and German translators of the Edda have adopted the names indifferently without assigning any reason.



THE GODS
OF THE NORTH.

ARGUMENT OF THE POEM.

The Asar (Gods), and the Jetter (Giants), represent the two conflicting powers of nature; the former represent the *creative embellishing* power; the latter the *defacing destructive* one. Lok * vacillates between both, as the *variable spirit* of time. He proposes to Thor to travel to Jotunheim (abode of the giants), without the knowledge of Odin, in order to punish the arrogance of the giants. Thor is mystified in the subterranean world, and obliged to return unsuccessful; but he makes two young people happy, and elevates them to the rank of gods, because they left their home and parents, and confided themselves implicitly to him. He again forms the resolution of revenging himself on the giants for their presumption, and endeavours to catch the serpent of Midgard. He travels this time with the consent of Odin, and without Lok. Now he shows himself in the plenitude of his power, and is on the point of catching the Serpent, when it is saved by the giant Hymir. In his disappointment, Thor loses his hammer Mielner.

In the mean while Lok pays court to Sif, the wife of Thor, but meets with a contemptuous repulse; to revenge himself, he cuts off her hair while she is asleep. Compelled by Thor and Frey, he procures from the Dvergar (dwarfs), new hair for Sif spun from gold, a new hammer for Thor, the steed Gyllinborste for Frey, and the ring Drupner for Odin.

Now it happens shortly after, that Lok sets out on an adventure with Odin and Henir; but he is caught by the giant Thiase, who compels him to carry off Iduna from Valhalla, which he willingly undertakes, in order to mortify the gods. With Iduna vanish health, strength, beauty and youth from Valhalla; the gods lose their power. The Nornor (fates), being consulted, announce to them, that "bravery with the help of love shall compel time to fidelity, and blooming life again return to Valhalla." Now Thor compels Lok to bring back Iduna, and Freya lends to him her falcon's wings for that purpose. During Iduna's absence, Freya has lost her husband Odur, who deserted her, because her youth and beauty had vanished. Skada forces her way into Valhalla, and obtains Niord for a husband. Frey, having nothing to do, ascends to Hlidskialf, which is now no longer brilliant, and where hitherto none but Odin dared to repair. He finds himself punished for his temerity by beholding a beautiful mountain-damsel (a rare exception), of whom he becomes violently enamoured. Now Iduna returns to Valhalla, and with her return health, youth and beauty to

* Asa-Lok

the gods. The gods are described; the joys of Valhalla; the palaces of heaven; the Einherier. Starkodder arrives in Valhalla, and is raised to the rank of a god. Bragur sings a song in honour of Gefion. The love of Frey for Gerda brings to pass a reconciliation between the gods and giants. Skirnir, Frey's messenger, consoles his master, by reminding him of Odin's own amours. He travels on his master's account to the abode of the beloved damsel, overcomes all difficulties, solves the riddles of the giants, shows to Gerda the portrait of Frey, and softens her heart. Her father gives his consent, on condition that Frey shall cede to him his sword. During his travels, Skirnir has likewise procured for Odin a chain, wherewith to bind the wolf Fenris. On the marriage day of Gerda, the wolf is bound, but Tyr loses his hand. In this manner the operative influence of the giants on the gods is made manifest. The rash Tyr defies the brave Thor; Thor becomes angry, revenges himself on the innocent human race, and repents his anger. The marriage of Gerda is celebrated a second time at the palace of Ægir, god of the sea. There Lok, enraged at the captivity of Fenris, and his own expulsion from the banquet, endeavours to spoil the joy of the meeting, insults the gods, and is compelled to fly. Banished, and weary of wandering about, he again earnestly desires to visit Valhalla, and promises, in order to atone for his effrontery, to procure for Thor the true hammer Mjølner from the giant-king Thrymur. Thrymur consents to restore the hammer, but only on condition of Freya becoming his bride. Lok brings this message to Valhalla, after the Alfer had procured for him his pardon from the Asar. Vexed at the contempt of Thor, and seeing the possibility of doing a treacherous action, he gives way to the temptation, and through the means of Heimdal persuades the Asar to a stratagem; so that Thor, dressed as Freya, goes down into Utgard. When Thor is in Utgard, and the hammer Mjølner is placed in his lap, he revenges himself by slaying all the giants, except the old ones and the children, who remain concealed in the deepest recesses of the mountain with Utgard-Lok. Then arises from the vapour of the blood a remarkably tall female figure, sent by Alfader. She prophesies the fall of Valhalla, the death of Balder, the torments of Lok, the approaching destruction of the universe, and the punishment of the gods for their deceit; which is, that their existence shall for a time pass away, and the whole creation perish by fire. After this, she consoles them with the assurance of a future life, where innocence and bliss are to reign eternally.

THE GODS OF THE NORTH.

CAVTO I.

THOR SETS OUT ON AN ADVENTURE WITH LOK.

A STORY wonderful to hear
Recorded stands in ancient runes ;
Now to my golden harp give ear,
And ponder well its mystic tunes !
The strange events, which yet remain
Unravell'd of the Asar bright,
Be mine the glory to explain,
And all their actions bring to light.

Th' eternal wars, the deadly hate
Between the Gods and Giant race ;
Of Asa-Lok the guile innate ;
Alfader's wisdom ; Freya's grace ;
The Berserk fights of Thor the bold ;
The joys of Valhall, dome sublime :
All these I sing : come, young and old !
And listen to my varied rhyme !

* For all proper names, the reader is requested to consult the Alphabetical List preceding this poem. The notes to which the figures refer, are to be found at the end of the poem.

Thus sang in days of yore a Scald,
And I from him repeat the song :
A land there is, Trudvanger call'd,
Where frowns a castle huge and strong :
This building boasts its massive walls,
And many a spacious colonnade ;
Its forty and five hundred halls
With silver or with gold inlaid.

How many forests, lakes and fields
On every side this pile surround !
The roof is tiled with copper shields,
Which shed a dazzling lustre round.
Therein the mighty Asa dwells,
Whom mortals term the god of war ;
Odin excepted, he excels
All other gods : his name is Thor.

Around his waist a belt he wears,
And gloves of steel his hands protect ;
Mjölner, a hammer vast, he bears,
When in the fight he stands erect.
That belt a tenfold power doth give,
When round his loins he girds it tight ;
Nor doth the foe remain alive,
On whom his hammer haps to light.

Late vanquish'd by the Asar brave,
Excluded from the solar ray,
Bound in the mountain's deepest cave,
In fetters Lok of Utgard lay.
But vain the giant monarch's doom,
Naught can his stubborn hate control ;
Here in the midst of cold and gloom
Fresh thoughts of vengeance fire his soul.

Like singed threads his chains he rends,
Bursts through the surface of the earth,
To Upsala his course he bends,
Of Northern gods the sacred hearth ;
He there extinguishes the fire,
And shakes to dust the temple's walls. (1)
This deed excites great Odin's ire ;
To council he the Asar calls.

Each at the council board, I ween,
Gave the advice that seem'd him fit :
But Thor with hand beneath his chin
Lost in reflection seem'd to sit.
Much did the hero muse and scan,
How best to punish Loki's crime,
And by some well-concerted plan
To crush the Lord of Jotunheim.

To rove in search of glorious war
 This Asa chief finds much delight,
 High seated in his golden car
 Drawn by two goats of colour white.
 Earth well may tremble with dismay,
 When through the skies this chariot rolls,
 For clouds then veil the face of day,
 And awful thunders shake the poles.

But 'mongst the Asar one call'd Lok
 Holds rank, nor undeserv'd the name;
 For much he joys with spiteful mock
 To lacerate his neighbours' fame.
 Howe'er he shine in outward grace,
 Hollow and false is all within:
 Before the Ash (2) he oft must pass
 In penance for his various sin.

With scorpion wit and envious tongue
 Though oft he gives the Asar pain,
 Still his arch jests and gibing song
 Compel them strait to laugh again:
 His features fair are own'd by all,
 But all his mind perverse deplore;
 He takes his seat in Odin's hall
 Upon the bench next Asa-Thor.

The Nymphs (4), that Valhall's dome adorn,
With breast of lily, cheek of pink,
To all th' Einherier in their turn
Now bear around th' immortal drink.
The largest horn high-fill'd with mead
Was drain'd by Thor the chieftain bold :
And then to seek his goats he sped,
And yoke them to his car of gold.

He grasps his hammer, mounts his car,
And bids Lok place him by his side ;
The thunders roar, the lightnings glare,
As down the vault of heaven they glide !
Heimdaller views them roll along,
And greets with trumpet loud and shrill :
The seven virgins (4) tune their song,
And Thor salute with gracious smile.

Then Lok on fraud and guile intent,
Thus Thor address'd : " Methinks, 'tis time
Our bitter foes to circumvent,
And quell the powers of Jotunheim ;
Thou mayst defy the force of fire,
And laugh to scorn the earthquake's shock ;
Feelest thou not a strong desire
For once to visit Utgard Lok ?"

Then Thor: " My corslet braves the steel ;
 My helm unbruised in fight remains :
 And, be he dwarf or giant fell,
 Whom Miölnr strikes, it ends his pains."
 Now to the earth they swift descend ;
 The birds sing gaily in the wood,
 And every flower its head doth bend,
 Owning the presence of a god.

The sun now sinks beneath the main,
 The night obscures its parting rays ;
 Rolling athwart the starry plain,
 The moon its silver disk displays :
 Two funeral mounds appear in sight :
 Then first the eyes of Asa Thor
 Glisten'd in triumph. Late at night
 They stand a peasant's hut before.

They ask for shelter ; lowly bows
 The peasant, and replies : " My lords !
 You're welcome here to seek repose ;
 But little else my roof affords."
 They needs must stoop to enter through
 The cottage door ; and there they found
 The peasant's wife and daughter too
 Sitting the lowly hearth around.

The daughter was a graceful maid
With azure eyes and golden hair.¹
They rose ; and thus the matron said :
“ Alas! but meagre is our fare :
Mere roots and herbs our meal supply ;
No flesh invigorates our blood.”
“ Fear not !” the thund’rer made reply,
“ This night shall be no lack of food.”

See now the giant-queller raise
His hammer ! lo ! his goats he slew !
Such was his custom : with amaze,
Yet not displeas’d this act to view,
The old dame stared ; then rushed in haste
Upon the board to spread the cloth ;
While Lok, as cook, prepar’d to baste
The meat, and mix the savoury broth.

A wondrous fact I now reveal :
Thor drives these goats around the earth,
And slays them for his nightly meal,
When no provisions cheer the hearth.
This done, their skins and bones he takes,
And casts them in a corner strait :
And lo ! those goats, when he awakes,
Again stand living at the gate.

See from the wood the peasant's son
Laden with faggots now appear!
He piles them on the hearth: anon
The smoking steaks the trav'lers cheer:
No dish had they; Thor's buckler broad
This want supplied: and now they feed
With hearty zest, while the goats' blood
Furnish'd to all delicious mead.

No sooner was the supper past,
Thor rose observant of his rite;
The bones within the skins he cast;
This did not 'scape the urchin's sight:
His liquorish tooth would fain partake
Of daintier food than met the eye;
So unperceived a bone he brake,
And suck'd the marrow greedily.

The morning dawn'd: with choral strain
The feather'd songsters fill the skies:
The sun ascends: the travellers twain
From slumbers light refresh'd arise.
To war and bold adventure prone,
Each buckles on his armour strait,
And whets his weapon on the stone,
That stands without the cottage gate.

As in the car the Asar sprung,
 The urchin's trick was manifest ;
 One goat limp'd heavily along,
 As if with lameness sore oppress'd. (5)
 Thor was enraged ; his colour fled ;
 He bit his lips ; his eyes flash'd fire ;
 Well might the wretched peasant dread
 For wife and child the chieftain's ire.

But more so, when he saw the chief
 Brandish on high his hammer vast :
 The danger threaten'd, no relief
 At hand ; with fear he stood aghast :
 Then, kneeling down, he humbly sued
 Forgiveness for the stripling's guile,
 Offering all he had : the God
 At such an offer well might smile.

Relenting at the peasant's prayer,
 And pitying his extreme distress,
 He bade him rise with friendly air,
 And gave his hand in pledge of peace.
 "If to my care thou wilt confide
 Those children stout," said Asa-Thor,
 "I will for all their wants provide,
 And teach them both the art of war."

Pleased to escape with a whole skin,
 This offer glad the swain embraced :
 Lok gave to each a javelin,
 And strait their limbs in armour laced :
 Their glist'ning eyes the joy reveal
 Of Tialfe bold, and Roska bright :
 To serve the God how proud they feel,
 And court the perils of the fight.

The Lord of Trudvang now design'd
 On foot to seek the giant's lair :
 His car and goats he left behind,
 Confided to the peasant's care.
 Impatient of delay, he fain
 Would march direct to Jotunheim.
 They journey on o'er many a plain,
 And rivers cross, and mountains climb.

And now can I assert with truth,
 Tialfe became a warrior good ;
 No son of earth could e'er this youth
 Surpass in zeal and fortitude :
 His strength by Thor was duly prized,
 As gay he trudg'd across the field,
 And on his brawny shoulders poised
 The heavy bag with viands fill'd.

E'en Freya's self could scarce excel
 Young Roska for her shape and air ;
Her bosom now is cased in steel,
 A golden helmet crowns her hair.
Thor towers aloft in plates of brass,
 With Miölnir in his right hand gleaming :
Lok trips along in light cuirass,
 His dark locks o'er his shoulders streaming.

Now marching on, the tedious way
 They oft beguile with gay discourse ;
Sudden a wild tempestuous sea
 Appears in sight, and checks their course !
The roaring billows reckless roll'd
 White foaming 'gainst the marble steep !
And Rana's voice was heard to scold
 With frightful scream from out the deep !

The mighty monarch, Ægir hight,
 Consort of Ran, o'er ocean reigns :
Beneath a roof of pearl so bright
 He sits, and stern his right maintains ;
With diamond-pointed pole the wave
 He guides ; a silver helmet, starr'd
With coral, decks his temples grave,
 And sea-weed forms his shaggy beard.

On Hlesey you may find his throne
 Of muscle-shell : this monarch sage
 Can by a frown or wink alone
 The billows' utmost wrath assuage.
 'Twixt him and Niord a pact holds good, (6)
 And when Niord rides across the deep,
 On coal-black courser mounted proud,
 The winds are hush'd, the billows sleep.

Lok now with terror stood appall'd ;
 This did not 'scape Thor's eye severe.
 " Ha ! " to his comrade stern he call'd :
 " Let not thy courage fail thee here !
 Take heart ! take heart ! if thus we shrink
 At th' onset of our enterprize,
 What shame ! what scandal ! think ! oh think !
 Thou didst thyself this plan devise . "

Thus said, into the foaming sea
 He plunged, and bade them follow strait :
 No more delay ; they all obey ;
 And spite of helm and corslet's weight
 With nervous arm they stem the brine ;
 With fear no more their bosoms quail :
 They heed not now the mermaid's whine,
 And laugh to scorn the snorting whale.

On, on they swim with hope elate,
In spite of warring wave and wind ;
And though the waves high o'er them beat,
Full many a mile they leave behind.
At length the lightning's vivid flash
By fits reveals a glimpse of land ;
And breakers, that around them dash,
Give hopes to gain the adverse strand.

How wondrous is thy strength, O Thor !
Encouraged by th' example set
Of that brave chief, they reach the shore,
And land in garments dripping wet.
The moon, emerging from a cloud,
A wild and barren heath displays :
They droop, but Thor cries out aloud :
“ Now, by yon moon's benignant rays,

“ We may some dwelling find at last ;
Let us inland our course pursue !”
O'er sand and ice they struggle fast,
While cold and bleak the north-wind blew.
Roska at length, with marching spent,
Implored her fellow-trav'lers' aid ;
Lok carried now the damsel faint,
Lok ever lov'd a beauteous maid.

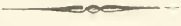
Now burst the clouds with thunder riven,
 And dark as pitch the sky became,
 Save when athwart the vault of heaven
 A meteor lanced a transient flame !
 The rain in torrents now descending,
 Struck terror in each trav'ler's breast ;
 E'en Thor himself, that chief unbending,
 Could scarce his mind of fear divest.

He girds his belt around him tight :
 " Here Lok of Utgard's juggling play
 Hath ample scope the heroes bright
 Of Asagard to lead astray.
 But short shall the fiend's triumph be ;
 His insolence will I chastise,
 And teach him low to bend the knee
 Before the rulers of the skies ! "

Thus Thor. At length a hut they find ;
 They enter ; it may serve them well
 For shelter from the piercing wind
 And rain, that still in torrents fell.
 But such a hut was never seen ; (7)
 Open remain'd one side entire ;
 'T was one vast door ; the chiefs, I ween,
 This entrance strange did much admire.

They loose their wallet now to seek
Their food, by hunger gaunt-compell'd ;
Poor Roska, with a pallid cheek,
Sat in a corner, half congeal'd.
Two legs of goat they soon consumed,
Then laid them down to seek repose ;
But Thor alone the watch assumed,
His thoughts forbid his eyes to close.

His cheek upon his palm reclines ;
He sits beside the spacious door ;
Secure of Miölner, he designs
Destruction to the giant's power.
This gives him comfort and delight ;
What glory will to him accrue !
How oft during the long, long night,
He grasps with pride his weapon true !



CANTO II.

SPELLS UPON THE HEATH.

As Thor now sat with watchful ear,
In pensiveness profound,
A startling din he chanced to hear,
'Twas like the earthquake's sound.
All nature shook; the billows' roar
By this was deafen'd quite:
Thor grasp'd his hammer, nor forbore
His belt to fasten tight.

Now starting up, the Asa spake
Aloud with accent shrill:
"Who is it dares this noise to make,
When Hlorrida lies still?"
His choler he could scarce restrain,
He fain would kill and slay;
And much it gave the hero pain
No foe stood in his way.

A comet now with awful sweep
Shot through the sky blood-red,
And, stretch'd out on the earth asleep,
A Jotun vast display'd!
His snoring made the mountains shake,
So frightful was the sound ;
He seem'd as long as the boa snake
On Java's swampy ground.

When Thor's eye to the spot was turn'd,
He saw the giant move,
And on the goblin's skull he burn'd
His hammer's strength to prove.
Of this the giant seem'd aware,
He started up in haste :
The sight all mortal eyes would scare,
Of such dimensions vast.

He view'd his foes with fearful scowl,
He shook his shoulders broad ;
His voice was like the ice-bear's growl,
Vex'd by the hunter's goad ;
Each of his nerves like brass was strong,
And hard and tough his skin ;
He bore a pole of iron long,
Instead of javelin.

Now Thor to scrutinize his foe
 With cautious look began ;
 Then burst he forth : “ Say, who art thou,
 Thou strange, wild-looking man ?”
 Then he : “ From Goblin-land (1) I come,
 All weapons’ force I mock,
 For who shall Skrymur overcome,
 Who serves great Utgard-Lok ?

“ Thy name I ask not, and though now
 I first behold thy face,
 The features of our bitt’rest foe
 In thine, methinks, I trace.
 And though the Asar with applause
 Thy merits loud proclaim,
 We giants spurn their boasted laws.
 And laugh to scorn their fame.

“ The trifling noise my snoring made
 Hath caused thee much alarm ;
 With helm and plume upon thy head
 Thou canst not reach my arm.
 Upon my palm I’d hold thee high
 All in thy armour dress’d ;
 Yet of our Jotun race am I
 The weakest and the least.”

He gazed around on every side,
 His eye-balls fiercely glared :
 “ Where is my glove ? (he gruffly cried,)
 To steal it who hath dared ? ”
 At length a horse-laugh wild and fierce
 Announced the giant's mirth ;
 He laugh'd to see Thor's followers
 From out the hut come forth.

The giant now to feel the ground
 Stoop'd down with knitted brow ;
 He stoop'd again, and groped around :
 “ My glove, where is it now ? ”
 His helm's bright horse-hair waved sublime,
 Like fir-crown'd mountain's top :
 He stoop'd once more ; and lo ! this time
 He took the cottage up !

Then first our travellers perceiv'd
 By th' morning dawn full well,
 That, what a cottage they believ'd,
 Was a vast glove of steel. (2)
 Upon his hand the giant drew
 The glove ; it fitted tight ;
 At once it fill'd the champions true
 With wonder and affright.

But Thor exclaim'd : " Cheer up, my friends !
 Believe me ! strength or skill
 Never on size alone depends ;
 The wolf an ox can kill.
 For me, with this foul fiend to cope
 Quite resolute I stand :
 Shame were it, should an Asa droop
 With Miölner in his hand."

Now this discourse the giant fear'd ;
 He lean'd against his spear.
 " What urgeth Thor of Asagard
 To quit his brilliant sphere ?
 What moves the mighty God of war
 To tread this barren strand ?
 Why is he come without his car
 To our dark Goblin-land ?"

Then thus replied with accent grum
 The god to heroes dear :
 " Enough ! it pleas'd me here to come,
 And, therefore, I am here.
 'Bout Lok thy swarthy king things strange
 I've heard, and now I go
 My thoughts with him to interchange
 In Utgard's realm below.

" I long to view that Chief of fame,
 And tarry there awhile ;
 For naught I fear his arms of flame.
 Nor e'en his magic guile :
 The giants long have learn'd to quake,
 When Asa-Thor drew near."
 Tialfe and Roska, as he spake,
 Now smiled, devoid of fear.

The giant now with bitter sneer
 Thus boisterously replies :
 " I warn thee not to persevere
 In this rash enterprize :
 Athwart the iron staves so high,
 That Utgard's realm surround.
 No Asa with impunity
 His entrance e'er hath found.

" Restrain thy course, thou Asa pale!
 Nor seek our realm to view !
 For there thy strength will naught avail ;
 Thy rashness thou mayst rue :
 As friend, I know, thou comest not,
 But shouldst thou entrance gain,
 Defeat and shame will be thy lot,
 And hope of flight is vain.

" Go back, I say! once more return
 To thy star-lighted dome!
 Midst wilds of bramble, brake and thorn,
 What boots it here to roam?
 A desert drear, where howls the storm,
 A sea, where billows roar,
 Between the gods and giants form
 The bound'ry ever more.

" In warlike games and banquets gay
 The Asar pass their time,
 Warm'd by the sun's eternal ray
 In Asagard sublime :
 A royal life of bliss and power
 The Nornor them have given ;
 And mortals fervent still adore
 The denizens of heaven.

" But for the swarthy giant brood
 Far different is the lot :
 They wax in strength and hardihood
 P' th' mountain's deepest grot.
 Earth's sons to us no honour pay ;
 They venture not to tread
 Those dreary wastes, where we hold sway ;
 They fly from us with dread.

Darkness our realm for aye conceals
 From earth's light-favour'd sphere :
 No fires, but what the flint reveals,
 Our gloomy caverns cheer :
 The Asar's glory 'tis to found
 Creation, order, life :
 But we delight to spread around
 Destruction, ruin, strife."

Now Thor was stagger'd, and anon
 With Miölner struck his shield.
 "Thou bitter fiend! thou evil One,
 'Gainst sense and feeling steel'd!
 My hammer cannot here, of course,
 Attain thy lofty brow ;
 But thou shouldst feel my lightning's force,
 Were in Trudvang now.

"Do Utgard's champions dare to hold
 To Thor such language proud ?
 Foul pismire thou in earth's black mould !
 Vile slug with torpid blood!
 Thinkst thou to damp my courage high,
 Because thou tower'st above
 These brambles? I thy arms defy ;
 Thy arts my pity move.

“ I tell ye plain, ye giant brood !
 Were ye in number more
Than snakes in Nastrond’s marshy flood,
 Or sands on the sea-shore,
I’d brave ye all; for none alive
 Would Thor the combat shun ;
To me what pleasure would it give
 To slay ye every one !

“ Not only valour stout in war,
 But wit, and skill, and grace
Our Asar boast; and think ye, Thor
 Cannot your Lok surpass ?
Your frightful teeth may terrify
 The children of mankind :
Thor’s frown alone would make ye fly,
 Like chaff before the wind.

“ Alfader hath of old consign’d ye
 To realms of damp and shade;
In caverns deep, ’tis there we find ye
 In treach’rous ambushade ;
Night only gives ye courage; then
 Ye quit your lurking place,
And with huge clubs and frightful din
 The works of man deface.

“ When the poor trav’ler seeks his home,
 Ye lead him far astray;
 With murderers and wolves ye roam,
 And guide ‘hem to their prey :
 Ye feast on human hearts ; their blood
 Ye drink with savage joy ;
 And all that’s useful, great, and good,
 Your lust is to destroy.

“ But tremble ! think ! the day will come,
 When you shall perish all :
 The Nornor have decreed your doom ;
 By our hand shall ye fall :
 Your limbs shall be consumed by fire ;
 The mountains be your grave :
 Let no one hope Alfader’s ire
 Unpunish’d long to brave !

“ In torrents shall your life’s blood flow ;
 The dwarfs, although they be
 Your kinsmen, towards your overthrow
 Shall lend their industry :
 For us the sons of light ’tis they
 That forge the weapons good,
 And those same weapons shall one day
 Be colour’d with your blood.

" Behold this hammer! from its blow
 The tide of death bursts forth :
 'Twas a dwarf's gift; this girdle too!
 I've prov'd, methinks, its worth. "

Thus said, the hero brandish'd high
 His Miölner; at the sight
 The giant cow'ring made reply :
 " I question not thy might :

" Let us be friends, thou Asa good!
 To Utgard straight I'll guide thee;
 And every night with choicest food
 For supper I'll provide thee :
 And Utgard-Lok will much rejoice,
 Such is my fond belief,
 Himself to see and hear the voice
 Of such a glorious chief. "

Silent they moved along the strand,
 While Skrymur march'd before,
 Bearing a wallet in his hand :
 E'en Roska fear'd no more.
 The farther they advanc'd, the road
 Less difficult became.
 Thor's anger vanish'd; on they strode;
 With joy their faces beam.

They cross'd a plain at close of day ;
On th' borders of a wood
Arrived, quoth Skrymur : " Here we may,
Methinks, take rest and food.
Let us this night no further go,
Repose we all do need :
And, when at morn the cock's shrill crow
Awakes us, we'll proceed."

His heavy wallet down he flings,
Then adds with meaning sly :
" Be cautious not to spoil the strings.
When you this bag untie !
In it, believe me, thou wilt find
A supper, better far
Than what, O Thor, thy consort kind,
Sif, could herself prepare."

And now under the green-wood tree
The giant went to sleep,
While shelter'd by the forest's lee
The rest their vigils keep :
For they would fain, by hunger press'd,
Of the good cheer partake
The bag contain'd ; and oft they bless'd
The donor for its sake.

At length said Thor : "We must, my friends!
 Our work with caution ply :
 Since Skrymur caution recommends,
 When we this bag untie.
 Methinks, 'twere better to confide
 To Roska's hand this toil :
 Her fingers soft will best avoid
 His precious bag to spoil."

Now with good will fair Roska took
 The wallet on her knee ;
 And while the task she undertook,
 Sat down beneath a tree.
 The wallet to unbind with care
 Much did the damsel strain ;
 The knots so closely twisted were,
 'Twas labour all in vain.

Then Thor from his moss-cover'd seat
 To Tialfe said : "Try thou!
 For supperless thou wouldst regret
 To go to sleep, I know."
 Now with the wallet on his thigh
 Young Tialfe sat him down ;
 But vain his active fingers ply ;
 He gives it up full soon.

“I cannot by soft means,” he cried,
“These close-tied knots undo;
Force must be used.” “Nay!” Thor replied,
“Ye all have heard my vow
The Giant’s wallet not to spoil;
But since our food we need,
Go, Lok! try thou the arduous toil!
Thou mayst perhaps succeed.

For what to man remains unknown,
Thou often canst divine;
Doubtless, thy hand, Laufeia’s son!
Will these hard knots untwine.”
Lok took the wallet up, and strove
Dextrous the knots to loose;
But vain his skill and efforts prove
Against the mystic noose.

Thor smiled; he rose, and seiz’d the bag,
By hunger gaunt impell’d;
Yet soon his strenuous efforts flag:
Lo! Thor himself hath fail’d!
The God in wrath took up at length
His sword, the knots to cut;
In vain he cut with all his strength;
The wallet open’d not.

With both his hands in fury now
 He lifts his hammer fell :
 "The fiend has juggled us, I trow,
 With some accursed spell.
 To punish him be mine the task,
 And Mjölner will, I trust,
 Athwart the Goblin's broken casque
 Its shaft with brains inerust."

With this, upon the giant's head
 He dealt a pond'rous blow :
 The giant oped his eyes, and said :
 "What hath disturb'd me so ?
 Upon my cheek hath fall'n some leaf,
 As fast asleep I lay ;
 But where's my wallet, mighty chief? (3)
 Hast thou untied it, pray?"

Now red with anger Thor became :
 "Thou bitter fiend! this night
 (He murmur'd, while his eyes shot flame)
 Shall death thy fraud requite."
 Once more to sleep the giant rude
 Address'd himself; his snoring
 Deafen'd the monsters of the wood
 In awful concert roaring.

Now Thor, much vexed, a second blow

With force redoubled gives :

His eyes roll fearful to and fro :

“ What ? still the Goblin lives ? ”

At length with rage and fury spent,

He throws his Miölner down :

But to the nib the hammer went

Into the giant's crown.

The giant woke : his mouth he screw'd ;

“ I now perceive full well,

While I was sleeping in the wood,

An acorn on me fell.

But where's my wallet ? comrades dear !

Have ye the knots untwined ?

And did ye not delicious cheer

In my good wallet find ? ”

The giant turn'd again to sleep

All on the mossy ground ;

While Thor with thoughts of vengeance deep

His belt fast round him bound :

He raised his powerful voice aloud

To Odin's throne on high ;

The very beasts that haunt the wood

Were frighten'd at his cry.

His eyes flash'd fire ; a crash was heard !

He struck with might and main !

But lo ! the giant's temples hard

Unscathed still remain !

“ How now ? what's this ? upon my brow

A branch hath fall'n, I find :

But where's my wallet ? tell me now !

Have ye the knots untwined ? ” (3)

Shaking his limbs, the giant vast

Slow from the grass rose up ;

The sun, emerging from the east,

Now gilds the forest's top.

“ Methinks, ” said he, “ O chief divine !

Our course we should pursue,

If still it be your firm design

Great Utgard Lok to view. ”

The giant now with shield and spear

Moved on, and led the way :

Close in his wake the others steer

Their course, all blithe and gay.

But lo ! the tall cloud-threatening towers,

Though distant, meet their eyes,

Where dwell the fierce gigantic powers,

Who gods and men despise !

'Tis Utgard ! rocks piled upon rocks
 Compose its ramparts vast !
And see what massive bolts and locks
 Its portals huge make fast !
Enormous bars of iron, long
 As mast of admiral,
Form palisades with sharpen'd prong,
 Which stoutest hearts appal.

“ Behold our city ! ” Skrymur cried,
 “ Its towers impregnable !
Its stony bastions stretching wide !
 Its palisades of steel !
Yet fear thou naught ! accept this pike !
 Thou needst but once the gate
With its enchanted point to strike,
 And lo ! 'twill open strait.

“ And now farewell ! I must begone,
 And leave ye here behind :
To guide ye safe to Lok's proud throne
 Giants enow ye'll find :
Take heart ! with a firm step advance !
 Valour ye do not lack ;
With such a hammer, sword and lance,
 Ye need fear no attack.”

Thus said, he grasp'd his wallet fast,
And bound it to his spear ;
Then strode on to the mountains vast,
Which towards the north (4) appear,
And soon he vanish'd from their view
The winding rocks among ;
While Thor with his companions true
'Gainst Utgard march'd along.

CANTO III.

THOR IN HELHEIM.

THE story you're about to hear
May well incredible appear :
To visit the remotest end
Of Utgard's realm the chiefs pretend :
Not easy will this project prove
 Through wastes of endless frost and snow ;
At each third step they onward move
 O'er the glazed frost, they fall back two.

The road, on which their course they bent,
Now form'd a deep and dark descent :
They grope along through ice and snow,
And though pitch dark, they hear cocks crow.
Thor ever foremost marches on ;
 The others follow the faint light
That from his brazen armour shone,
 And shudder oft from cold and fright.

Through caverns drear they move on slow,
 Which seem to lengthen as they go ;
 Pale shadows flit along ; they hear
 The rustling sound of waters near :
 Now toads croak harsh, and owlets screech ;
 Now fogs arise, and vapours damp ;
 But Thor, intent his goal to reach,
 Struggles across the frozen swamp.

At length the gloomy fogs of night
 Became dispell'd by sudden light ;
 Though faint, it fail'd not to impart
 Fresh vigour to the Asa's heart.
 Two torches burning blue anon
 A lurid flick'ring gleam display ;
 While through the cloven rock the moon
 Sends forth a pale and wizard ray.

At length a massive gate they reach :
 Two grisly fantoms there kept watch :
 One seem'd a female, one a male ;
 Their furrow'd cheeks were deadly pale.
 Lo ! slowly rising from their seat,
 They fix the chiefs with earnest gaze ;
 These halt before the pond'rous gate,
 And view those forms in mute amaze.

In shrouds of white the spectres grim,
While ague shakes each gelid limb,
Brandish aloft with angry groan
Their javelins form'd of human bone.
As Thor advanc'd, their shields they clash,
And croak aloud these words of fear :
“ Go back ! go back ! ye strangers rash !
Whence do ye come ! what seek ye here ?

“ Why seek ye in the pride and bloom
Of health and youth these realms of gloom ?
Never did such a troop before
Find entrance to this fated shore.
For those who meanly die on straw,
The Nornor have these shades decreed ;
But not for those, who Odin's law
Hold sacred, and in battle bleed.

“ Ye may not tread this threshold fell,
Bound fast by adamantine spell :
'Tis here a pale-blue female reigns,
Here stern her fearful law maintains :
Here captive holds the dastard crew,
Who on the bed of sickness die,
Who wounds and glorious death eschew,
And basely from the combat fly.”

Then Thor : " We've reach'd th' abode, I ween,
 Of Hela, unforgiving queen ;
 O Lok ! we now shall soon behold
 Thy pale-blue daughter stern and cold."
 Then Lok grew pale, and trembling said :
 " Let us return ! I bitter rue
 My grievous fault : O ! how I dread
 My frightful offspring's face to view !"

Then Thor replied with look severe :
 " A God should never yield to fear ;
 Shame ! resolution thus to lack !
 Rouse all thy nerve, and shrink not back !
 A giantess (1) thy heart subdued,
 And thou to passion didst succumb,
 Too well I know, that nothing good
 Can from the blood of giants come.

" 'Twas Skulda in her book of fate
 Did this event predestinate ;
 If she decreed thy amorous flame,
 Who shall that prudent Norna blame ?
 Thy offspring causes fear, 'tis true,
 But never can contempt excite ;
 Not only men, but Asar too,
 All view her features with affright.

" Where joy and pleasure flourish most
 And nurs'd by strength their empire boast,
 Yet still, at the bare sight of fear
 Those blessings straight will disappear ;
 Thus Fenris can embitter all
 The glories of Valhalla's feast ;
 His very look hath power t'appal,
 And freeze with dread great Odin's breast.

" And say ! how should our Asgard then
 Differ from the abode of men,
 Did not death, misery and disgrace
 A line of demarcation trace ?
 Like Midgard's snake, (2) misfortune fell
 Winds round, and gnaws the heart of earth ;
 And he too, Lok, thou know'st full well,
 From thy embrace derived his birth.

" Yet, O thou Asa dear ! 'tis well
 Thou hast engender'd the grim Hel !
 Due honour she should ever find ;
 She punishes the Nidding kind,
 She my avenger is ; 'tis she
 Who best upholds my law and right ;
 Take courage, therefore ! learn from me
 Never to think of craven flight !"

This sage discourse now caus'd the fear
 Of Asa Lok to disappear ;
 To him much consolation gave
 The prudence of his comrade brave.
 Thor rais'd his lance ; the portal vast
 He struck with force ; it swung around,
 Like leaf before th' autumnal blast ;
 The hinges creak'd with jarring sound.

Now Thor his champions onward led,
 The vault re-echo'd with their tread ;
 Now little Roska 'gan to cower,
 And closely grasp'd the hand of Thor.
 Through many a winding gall'ry past,
 They stumble on, or creep, or glide,
 Until a flick'ring flame at last
 Serves their ambiguous path to guide.

At length an opening towards the north
 They find, and 'gainst it struggle forth ;
 To where the roof describes an arch,
 And forms a vestibule, they march ;
 This vestibule to a vast hall
 Conducts them, where they now behold
 The wretches deaf to honour's call,
 Whom Helheim's bars imprison'd hold.

Along the wall pale phantoms flit,
 Who groan and shake with aguish fit !
 Palsies, catarrhs, and fevers grim
 Prey on each agonizing limb.
 When Thor advanc'd, they wept and whined ;
 Down their wan cheek a cold sweat flows !
 While slimy snakes, around them twined,
 Cause by their bite convulsive throes !

Under the vaulted roof, behold !
 A throne appears, but not of gold,
 Silver, or ivory ; this throne
 Was built of human skulls alone !
 Thereon sat Hela, fell to view ;
 Her skin a chalky hue reveal'd,
 Down from the girdle ; livid blue
 Above it seem'd from blood congeal'd !

A man's thigh-bone in moonshine bleach'd
 T' enforce new torments she outstretch'd,
 For never her vindictive mind
 Allows to rest the Nidding kind :
 This bone exhal'd a corpse-like smell ;
 On high she waved it like a wand ;
 It made all crouch ; it serv'd full well
 As sceptre in her clammy hand.

No sound, but moans to make flesh creep,
 Here interrupts the silence deep ;
 No zephyrs thaw the frost severe ; (3)
 Cadav'rous odours taint the air ;
 Three torches blue illum'd the scene !
 By each a ghastly spectre stood !
 Shapes frightfully diseased were seen,
 But on their limbs no trace of blood !

Now Thor began to smile ; exempt
 From fear himself, he with contempt
 The crowd of trembling ghosts beheld,
 And loud this stern discourse he held :
 " O wretched fools ! why did ye shun
 The dangers of all-glorious war ?
 Thus may it fare with every one
 Who dares not follow Asa-Thor !

" Ye miserable, who eschew'd
 Danger and death and scenes of blood !
 Weaker than women ! Hela now
 Grinds ye with never-ending woe ;
 Ye fear'd to don the warrior's helm,
 And trembled at the bowstring's twang ;
 Well, now, in Hel's accursed realm,
 Ye tremble with eternal pang !"

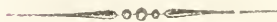
Thus Thor : the ghosts respond with moan :
 The chief advanc'd to Hela's throne,
 And though thick fogs his utterance choke,
 He still, though hoarse, thus suppliant spoke :
 " Hela, terrific queen ! whose eye
 Fills every living breast with fear,
 Ah ! not spontaneously do I
 Before thy awful throne appear.

" I cannot the desire withstand
 To visit Lok of Utgard's land ;
 I long that chieftain to behold,
 And therefore here have travell'd bold.
 Then, O ! resolve me, Hela true,
 For well thou know'st each distant clime,
 Where must I turn ? what course pursue,
 To reach the realm of Jotunheim ?"

Then Hela croak'd out thus with force,
 From throat with fogs and vapour hoarse :
 " Begone from hence ! depart ! away !
 Ye'll soon arrive where giants sway ;
 The rosy hues that stain your cheek
 My eye-balls sear to look upon ;
 Of health, and youth, and strength they speak ;
 Such sights I loathe : avaunt ! begone !"

Now Thor a sign impatient made
Behind him, which his troop obey'd.
Lok ventur'd not to raise his eye,
As he stern Hela's throne past by ;
He closed his eyes her sight to shun,
 And stumbled heavily along :
She look'd at him and breath'd a groan,
 Which echoed far the rocks among.

I will not hide the fact that Thor,
However firm and brave in war,
Seem'd anxious much and was not slow
To quit those gloomy realms of woe.
They march into the mountain's core,
 And issuing from the farthest rock,
They soon arrive, and stand before
 The palace vast of Utgard-Lok.



CANTO IV.

THOR ARRIVES AT UTGARD.

WHEN Utgard now before him lay,
The chief seem'd well content :
Its site hemm'd in by mountains grey,
Its towers, its vast extent
Excite his wonder : at the gate
A chosen band of warriors sat,
All clad in armour shining,
With cheek on hand reclining.

Down from the walls they cast a look,
And at his hammer sneer :
The shield of each was granite rock,
A huge pine trunk each spear !
But while on Thor they look askance,
And view him closer still advance,
They shout, his efforts braving,
On high their lances waving.

And now to giant Skrymur's wand
 Thor needs must have recourse ;
 He snatches it from Tialfe's hand,
 And strikes the gate with force.
 The bars and bolts receded straight,
 And open flew the massive gate,
 On creaking hinges wheeling,
 A wondrous scene revealing !

Young Roska now was like to swoon,
 When viewing with dismay
 Abodes, where cliffs in arches hewn
 Exclude the light of day.
 And strange to all appears the sight
 Of walls of alabaster bright
 In Utgard-Lok's vast dwelling,
 The giant fire-compelling.

No solar beam hath ever shone
 Within this mansion wide,
 Where seated on his marble throne
 Reigns Utgard-Lok in pride.
 Around their sovereign scornful stand
 In triple rank a numerous band ;
 Cuirasses bright of iron
 Their bodies stout environ.

When Utgard's haughty chief beheld
The glance of Thor severe,
His quiv'ring lip too plain reveal'd
Signs ill-suppress'd of fear.
His muscles were of marble grey,
Nor sense nor feeling they betray;
With eyes like rubies glaring,
On Thor he fix'd them staring.

Still fogs and darkness reign'd : anon
Lok utter'd accents strange ;
A blow his brazen shield upon
Now caused the scene to change.
Then flames burst from the vaulted dome,
And play'd around the spacious room,
A varied light displaying,
O'er gold and silver straying !

In motion seem'd the arches all ;
Then Lok : " That trembling roof
Behold ! with crush ye, should it fall ;
'Twere best ye keep aloof. "

Struck with these words Thor rais'd his eyes,
And view'd above him with surprize
A moving rock appalling,
Which threaten'd instant falling.

Intrepid thus he spoke : “ Let that,
 Which can't itself sustain,
 Fall down ! thy rocks may crush me flat ;
 Thy warning I disdain. ”
 And now down fell the pond'rous mass,
 And roll'd along the cavern's base,
 Afar its fragments scatt'ring,
 With awful din and clatt'ring !

And lo ! exuding from the ground
 A poisonous vapour grey,
 Like billow, roll'd the hall around ;
 But all at onceto stay
 Its course at Aukthor's feet it seem'd,
 And in a circle 'bout him steam'd ;
 But naught he fear'd, when gazing
 On all those sights amazing.

Then Thor : “ In vain to cause my death
 Thy rolling rocks conspire ;
 And naught avail to quench my breath
 Thy poisonous vapours dire :
 From noble Frigga's womb I spring,
 My sire is Odin, puissant king
 In lofty Asgard dwelling,
 All other gods excelling. ”

Then Utgard Lok with accent grim :
 “ I know the reason well,
 That brings thee to these realms of gloom,
 Where swarthy giants dwell :
 I know thy lineage and thy blood,
 Yet laugh to scorn the Asar brood,
 Thy hammer’s force despising,
 And naught thy merit prizing.

“ Thou boastest of thy strength sublime
 And all thou canst effect ;
 We giants still fore Arild’s time
 Were giants, recollect !
 Before the Asar we held sway,
 Before thou, Thor, hadst seen the day ;
 Before thy hammer’s glory
 Had furnish’d theme for story.

“ Let me our earliest records trace !
 Before the world’s creation
 There was a vast and empty space ; (1)
 Therein no vegetation.
 Ice, snow, and fog from Niffelheim
 Lay northward ; south from Muspelheim
 Proceeded sparks of fire,
 That warmth and growth inspire.

" Against the frost i' th' vast abyss
 Winds from the south now came ;
 They mix'd ; then matter dropp'd, and this
 One solid heap became :
 Now cold 'gainst fire, and fire 'gainst cold
 Long struggled hard the palm to hold ;
 But fire remain'd victorious :
 Thence Ymer sprang the glorious !

" Him we acknowledge as the sire
 Of our gigantic brood :
 E'en ye our towering size admire,
 With strength immense endow'd.
 At that time thy earth-shaking car
 Did not exist, presumptuous Thor !
 " Let me, quoth Thor, this history
 Expound and all its mystery !

" The wond'rous facts I now relate,
 Than I none better knows :
 Alfader gave the word ; and strait
 The cow Audumbla rose !
 She lick'd the frost from the hard mass ;
 Thence sprang the noble Asar race
 From solid strength descended,
 With warm blood ever blended.

" With matter cold mix'd genial flame ;
 Then Bure sprang to life:
 After him Bor ; a giant dame (2)
 He carried off as wife :
 This pair combined in high degree
 Strength, beauty, grace, and symmetry ;
 His birth from their embraces
 Each Asa proudly traces ;

" The Alfs and Vaner too : in fine
 Whate'er in Heimkringlas
 is found most precious, rare, and fine,
 Was join'd to build our race.
 The finest oaks must flourish tall,
 Be fell'd, and cut in faggots small,
 When fuel we require
 To feed the nuptial pyre.

" Therefore, that first ye saw the light,
 Ye giants proud ! 'tis true ;
 Yet Bor, our ancestor, in fight
 Your hero did subdue :
 Ymer could not the force withstand
 Of Bor ; he perish'd by his hand ;
 That giant so presuming
 In his own blood lay fuming.

“ Then down into the deep abyss
Bor Ymer’s body cast ;
This form’d the Earth’s vast edifice ;
His blood the Ocean vast ;
The mountains from his bones arise ;
His brains compose the cloudy skies,
And still continue dreaming,
With constant changes teeming.

“ Then all around and up and down
The eye-brows thick he spread,
And lo ! from these the lofty town
Of Midgard lifts its head !
The scull was next spread out, and bent
To build the heavenly firmament,
Which Freya tinged with azure,
The fav’rite hue of pleasure.

“ Now Bor in haste from Muspelheim
Took many sparks, and threw them
High ’midst the firmament sublime,
And there ye still may view them :
There still they glow with brilliant light ;
There still, as they revolve, excite,
Above their heads and under
Their feet, the Asar’s wonder.

“ Now Bor and Bure fell'd two trees .
Which grew by the sea-shore ;
A man and woman's form to these
Was given by mystic lore :
From the strong oak the man was made ;
The fragrant rose produced the maid,
In grace and beauty shining,
All hearts to love inclining ;

“ Askur and Embla hight : and lo !
Bure this couple led
To Midgard's city : from those two
The human race proceed :
There still they dwell and multiply,
And render to the Asar high
Their constant adoration,
With many a rich oblation.

“ Full well can I this hist'ry trace,
And every fact relate,
What time befel the giant race
Destruction and defeat :
Bergelmer only and his wife,
Saved on a wreck, escaped with life :
From them thy giant nation
Derives its generation.

" To dwell in caverns 'neath the earth
 We Asar have compell'd ye :
 Why boast ye then your earlier birth,
 Since thus we gods have quell'd ye?
 Spite of your spells and magic song,
 Ye dwell perforce these rocks among :
 At night alone ye rally,
 And forth on mischief sally.

" As noxious herbs and weeds incline
 To spread afar their roots,
 Fraud, rapine, evil to enshrine,
 Such are your main pursuits!
 Ye think once more in arms to try
 Your strength against our dynasty;
 Your boasts are out of season;
 Ye'll bitter rue your treason.

" For not content with mischief done
 To Askur's sons of earth,
 Ye've dared to wreak your malice on
 Upsala's sacred hearth.
 Down have ye cast the temple's walls,
 And this aloud for vengeance calls ;
 Ye've quenched the sacred fire :
 Tremble for Odin's ire ! "

His eye shot flames as thus he spoke,
His nostrils breath'd disdain;
Proud and contemptuous was the look
He cast on Utgard's train:
His brazen armour's brilliant sheen
Made every Jotun quake, I ween;
Himself stood calm, defending
His right with soul unbending.

The wild flames caused him no affright,
Which all around him shone;
Sudden a stream, as silver bright,
Rush'd like a torrent down:
It near'd his feet, and fain would go
Beyond, but, stopping, ceased to flow,
As if with fear congealing
At Aukthor's look repelling.

At length the giant king rejoin'd,
While fear assail'd his heart:
" I would not, that with angry mind
Thou shouldst from hence depart:
Then tarry here with us awhile,
And on our pastime deign to smile!
This realm, trust my assertion,
Can furnish rare diversion.

“ We'll enter on a course of games,
When ye've repose enjoy'd.
Such as a noble race beseems
Of hate and envy void.
In such a combat we can well
Prove, without wrath, who most excel
In wit, strength, or invention,
In generous contention.

To this proposal Thor agreed :
Lok rising from his throne
His guests with courteous gesture led
Into a wide saloon.
Golden its walls; of marble neat
The table rests on golden feet :
There stand with liquor glowing
Carbuncle cups o'erflowing.

Loud through the echoing rocks around
The various metals clang !
Cascades of quicksilver resound
A strange and wizard twang !
Now Thor sat down with conscious pride,
His three companions by his side,
Their minds, without misgiving,
To joy and pleasure giving.

CANTO V.

MAGIC SPELLS IN UTGARD.

Now at the festive board sat down
The chiefs in social converse. Lok
Arose, and thus in jesting tone
The ever sprightly Asa spoke :
“ To pass the time, while here we sit,
Let us some mirthful game devise.
Some trial of our strength or wit,
And prove who best deserves the prize.”

“ To this proposal I agree.”
To him thus Utgard-Lok replied ;
“ And what the game or sport shall be,
Let thy ingenious brain decide !”
Then catching up some roasted meat,
The Asa laughing cries : “ ’Tis well ;
Be this my first triumphant feat !
In eating none can Lok excel.

" I find my appetite increase
 By what I have endured of late ;
 By plenteous cheer 'twere not amiss,
 Methinks, my strength to renovate :
 Good trencher-men in troth we are,
 Of limbs robust and stomachs able :
 Go, therefore ! bid the cook prepare,
 And set the viands on the table ! "

" To what best suits thee I accede,"
 Still jesting, Utgard-Lok replies ;
 " There can be nothing worse, indeed,
 Than hungry from the board to rise :
 Yet, my good friend ! thou'lt soon perceive,
 However strong thy stomach be,
 In eating thou canst naught achieve
 'Gainst one of my good company."

This speech annoy'd Laufeia's son ;
 He jump'd up hastily, and said :
 " Thou whoreson fiend ! thou evil one !
 Think'st thou my purpose to dissuade ? "

The swarthy chief made no reply,
 But call'd to one amidst his crew :
 " Come forth ! " and lo ! with fearful cry
 Starts forth a goblin (1) fell to view !

Obedient to his master's call,
 Who now his zeal and service claims,
 He stalks across the spacious hall,
 In armour cover'd o'er with flames:
 The most were yellow; some were red;
 Some blue; anon with scornful look
 Towering above his rival's head,
 He cast his eyes on Asa-Lok.

His widely gaping mouth reveals
 A double row of grinders long;
 At every finger, 'stead of nails,
 Were likewise teeth both sharp and strong:
 And strange to tell, each tooth displays
 On mouth or hand a pow'rful light.
 Young Roska view'd them with amaze,
 And shrunk back trembling with affright.

The shadows that obscured the rock
 All vanish'd at the goblin's sight.
 "I do perceive," said Asa-Lok,
 "Each of thy limbs hath power to bite:
 Yet trust me! though thou hast the power
 Each finger to employ as tooth,
 Thou'lt not be able to devour
 More food than Loptur with his mouth."

Into the hall by Lok's command
A dish was brought of purest ore;
'Twas vast in size, and it contain'd
Of joints of meat an ample store.
The ugly fiend and Asa-Lok
Set to and crunched with all their might;
They eat, as though they both would choke :
This caused much wonder and delight.

Each sat at one end of the dish,
But in the middle soon they meet :
Lok from the bones had clear'd the flesh ;
At length he could no longer eat.
Not so the goblin ; he devour'd
The hard bones, golden dish, and all :
He roll'd his eyes around the board,
And for more viands fain would call.

Now loudly laugh'd the giant crew ;
E'en Thor the serious laugh'd outright :
Young Tialfe grinn'd, and Roska too
Was much diverted at the sight.
The guests now sitting round the board,
As arbiters pronounce the doom ;
They loud proclaim with one accord,
That Asa-Lok was overcome.

Then Utgard-Lok in jesting mood
 Call'd out to Tialfe by his name :
 " Since we are cloy'd with drink and food,
 Let us arrange some other game!
 We practise here, the time to kill,
 Jokes and diversions not a few :
 Go thou, brave youth! and try thy skill!
 I fain would see what thou canst do."

" What callst thou trying? do not boast
 Too much!" the ardent Tialf replied :
 " Though Asa-Lok the prize have lost,
 That cannot, sure, our worth decide.
 He gave me armour; and ye' ll find,
 Though ye can bones and dish devour
 Like dogs, that with undaunted mind
 I brave, and hope to quell your power."

Then Utgard's Chief with knitted brow
 Rejoin'd: " Twere bootless to contend
 On what is past and gone: do thou
 Propose some game, my youthful friend!"
 Good! answer'd Tialfe: " Be it so!"
 And strait his corslet 'gan t' unlace.
 " An ye consent, I'm ready now
 With any of your train to race."

Then thus the swarthy chief: "'Tis well;
 And such a sport, methinks, is meet:
 For when our arms in vigour fail,
 We find our safety in our feet.
 Come then! begin! trace out the course!
 Yet I suspect, thou'lt soon succumb,
 However great in speed thy force,
 When racing with my little Thumb." (2)

Now Tialfe's limbs with anger shook,
 He threw around a scornful glance;
 And view'd forth crawling from a nook
 A strange and dwarfish elf advance!
 Though little strength he seem'd to boast,
 Yet supple as a bow was he:
 A veil enveloping his bust
 His features none allow'd to see.

"I see his body swells or shrinks,"
 Quoth Tialf, "at pleasure 'fore the wind;
 In elasticity, methinks,
 He leaves all creatures far behind.
 Come, little hero! come along,
 And let us strait begin our course!
 Much need we, when the race is long,
 Not merely suppleness, but force."

The signal given, off they set!
 The rocks re-echo with the sound!
 The dwarf first reach'd the goal, and met
 Full butt his rival, turning round.
 Tialf bit his lips, and scarce suppress'd
 His anger; panting thus he spake:
 "'Tis not enough our speed to test;
 Let us another trial make!"

Now off they start again: and though
 With all his might young Tialfe raced,
 Swifter than dart from archer's bow
 The supple dwarf the goal embraced.
 He halted, while his rival still
 Distant a half bow-shot was seen;
 Thus easy baffling Tialfe's skill,
 He chuckled in his sleeve, I ween.

One trial more the chiefs ordain'd;
 The dwarf the gage rejected not;
 He flew, and quick the goal attain'd,
 And strait returning, reach'd the spot
 From which they started, long before
 Tialfe himself could reach the goal.
 The youth sank breathless on the floor,
 With jaded limbs and anguish'd soul.

That Tialf was vanquish'd all agreed :
 Like wind the dwarf now vanish'd fleet.
 Then Utgard's chief to Aukthor said :
 " Now try thyself some dextrous feat!
 Thy champions hitherto have shown
 But little skill and little power ;
 But thou perhaps, and thou alone,
 Mayst all our efforts overpower."

Thor drily then : "It may be so ;
 I seek not our defeat to screen :
 In eating, certes, I allow,
 That Asa-Lok hath vanquish'd been
 But that which most is thought in me
 Surprising, is my power of drink :
 Bring me a drinking horn ! ye'll see,
 From no competitor I shrink."

The chief gives signal ; quick as thought
 Into the spacious hall is borne,
 Of curious yellow metal wrought,
 And carved with runes, a drinking horn.
 Its point extreme, so vast its length,
 Afar without the cavern lies :
 E'en Thor, though conscious of his strength,
 Was stagger'd at its awful size.

With anxious eye and strict attention
 See Thor this vessel contemplate !
 It seems in truth of vast dimension,
 Yet for his stomach not too great.
 Then Utgard's chief. "Well mayst thou doubt,
 If thou hast power that horn to drain :
 He who can see its measure out,
 Certes, will not of thirst complain.

"But when through guile or negligence
 A giant hath our laws profaned,
 To empty that whole horn's contents
 Is oft the punishment ordain'd.
 One draught the horn can seldom drain,
 In two the feat we sometimes see ;
 But there is none among my train
 Who cannot empty it in three."

To him thus Asa-Lok replied :
 "'Mongst all the chiefs in Odin's realm,
 If my experience may decide,
 In drinking Thor bears off the palm.
 Whene'er he calls aloud for drink,
 And grasps the horn with nervous arm.
 The Asar back with terror shrink,
 And Valhall trembles with alarm.

" For him Iduna's tender care
 Provides the luscious apple-wine ;
 And scarcely more delicious are
 The kisses from her lips divine :
 In drinking, as in fighting great,
 One single draught doth Thor suffice
 The largest horn to empty strait ;
 And none with him dispute the prize.

" A well known fact I now declare ;
 As'-Odin every morning hies
 To Mimer's sacred fountain, where
 He courteous for a drink applies :
 Then Mimer from those bounteous rills
 A beaker, of dimensions vast
 In depth and breath, with water fills ;
 That water boasts of wine the taste.

" Odin once Valaskialf forsook ;
 To travel far it seem'd him fit :
 While absent, Thor that beaker took,
 And at one draught he emptied it :
 Since then, the mighty warrior's fame
 Resounds from every Asa's mouth,
 And Asgard's chronicles proclaim
 The feat. I tell ye naught but truth.

When Odin learn'd this act of Thor,
Thus burst he forth in angry tone :
“Ha! what presumption! thou art far
Too daring and too rash, my son!
That fountain fresh with wisdom glows ;
Thor drank and straight did wit obtain :
How canst thou, then, our chief suppose
Incompetent thy horn to drain?”

Then answer'd Utgard's prince : “Who knows ?
In Odin's hall perhaps they feel
Less thirst than here.” Then Thor arose,
And with that arm, whose nerves are steel,
The horn he lifted from the ground ;
Nor difficult this effort seem'd :
This movement caused an echoing sound,
And was alone a marvel deem'd.

“Of drinkers we will hail thee first,
If in that horn thou naught dost leave ;
And certainly thy tongue with thirst
Unto thy palate will not cleave.”
Thus sneering said the fiend : awhile
The Asa stood immers'd in thought :
Then grasp'd the horn with sudden smile,
And took one long and pow'ful draught.

E'en as the sandy wilderness
 Drinks in th' impetuous floods of rain,
 That pour down from the heavenly space,
 Thus Ankthor drank, and drank amain :
 He stopp'd, and with complacent look
 Began the vessel to explore ;
 Yet spite of the long draught he took,
 It seem'd as full as 'twas before.

But Thor's high courage never fails ;
 He leans upon his hammer bright :
 Again the beaker he assails,
 And quaffs with all his soul and might.
 In furrows deep his forehead rolls ;
 His veins swell at the effort rude :
 He drank, as do the clefts and holes
 Of the ravine drink in the flood.

Once more the chief review'd the horn ;
 Full, as before, the horn remains :
 How deep did then our hero mourn
 His baffled strength and bootless pains !
 Well might this horn with wonder fill
 Those, who knew not its mystery ;
 For, spite of all he swallow'd, still
 The smallest space was not left dry.

Again the god his mouth applies
 Th' unfathomable horn to drain :
 He drank, e'en as the deep abyss
 Drank in the blood of Ymer slain :
 The giants who this feat beheld
 All with astonishment turn'd pale,
 But prudently their fear conceal'd :
 Yet e'en this draught did nought avail.

When Asa Thor at length perceived,
 How fruitless all his efforts were
 To drain the horn, he inward grieved,
 And thus he spoke : " I must declare,
 Ye chiefs of Jotunheim are first
 In power of swallowing drink, as well
 As flesh ; for such unnatural thirst
 We sons of Asgard never feel.

" The bowl we Asar do not drain
 The feverish heat of thirst to quell ;
 We feel it not ; 'tis strength to gain,
 That we imbibe our hydromel.
 How joyous at the board we meet !
 What lovely maids our drink prepare !
 'Tis far less water'd, and more sweet
 Than your insipid beverage here."

Then to the god these words address'd
The chief of Utgard's gloomy state.
"When with broad shoulders we are bless'd,
The stomach also should be great ;
But since 'tis only sport, I fain
Some other proof of skill would see ;
Some cheerful game do thou ordain !
The choice, O chief ! I leave to thee.

"Our custom in this vast saloon
Is to divert ourselves with play ;
Tis thus with my companions boon
Fast glide the tedious hours away ;
Then let us now at once proceed
To try some sport, the time to pass
I have it : Who can best succeed
In lifting up a ponderous mass ?"

Quoth Thor : "I do consent to that."
Lo ! from a hole came running out
A big and curious broad-tail'd cat,
And twirl'd itself the hall about.
It look'd at Thor, and seem'd to quake
With terror ; then it shrank, and bent
Itself in folds, like wily snake,
To spring upon its prey intent.

With its red eyes so small it peep'd,
 Hunger and malice in its frown ;
 Then on its belly forward crept,
 And gently by the god lay down.
 No furs enwrapp'd this creature's skin,
 But rings of horn its limbs encased ;
 When first call'd forth the sport to join,
 It seem'd with terror sore oppress'd.

It play'd and frisk'd the guests among
 With tail so scaly long and thick ;
 Its mouth protrudes a forked tongue,
 With which 'twas wont its lips to lick.
 Then Lok : “ Canst thou lift up that cat,
 O Thor ! thy strength is great indeed.”
 “ Nay !” answered Asa Lok, “ a weight
 Far greater he can lift at need .

“ The hammer that our chief doth bear,
 Alone outweighs one hundred pound ;
 But mark my words, while I declare
 A feat, for which he's much renown'd :
 Once into lovely Freya's hall
 He enter'd, while she sleeping lay ;
 He seiz'd the goddess, couch and all,
 And bore them in his arms away.

With freshest rose-leaves fill'd, the bed
 Was wrought of massive golden ore ;
 But though so heavily it weigh'd,
 With ease he raised it from the floor ;
 Then to his castle, Trudvang light,
 Triumphant bore it through the air ;
 So noiseless was the Asa's flight,
 He naught disturb'd the sleeping fair.

The goddess bright with roses crown'd
 Awoke at midnight's solemn hour,
 And much did it the fair astound,
 To find herself in Aukthor's bower :
 Himself was kneeling by her side ;
 Till roused from her surprize at length
 She rose in all her beauty's pride,
 And trembled at the hero's strength. (3)

Since charged with load of such vast weight,
 He bird-like cleaved the liquid air,
 Dost thou suppose thy frightful cat
 Too heavy for his arm to bear ?
 Two sable cats draw Freya's car,
 And what they draw, he raised alone :
 Than both his strength was greater far ;
 Think ye, he cannot lift up one ?"

The prince of Utgard smiled : “ Take care !”

Quoth he : “ be not too sure of that !

For I suspect, that Freya’s car

Is far less heavy than my cat.”

Now Thor prepared in Utgard’s hall

His strength to prove with eager zest ;

But silence he implored from all,

And all complied with his request.

Fixing the cat with watchful eye,

Thor ’neath its belly threw his arm ;

It claw’d and spat most frightfully,

And whined with fury and alarm.

’Twas vain with this vile beast to cope,

And Thor soon found his efforts weak ;

The more he strove to lift it up,

The higher still became its back.

On high, as far as arm could reach,

He raised the creature towards the roof ;

But higher still the cat could stretch

Its strange elastic form at proof :

So hard the struggle, e’en the soul

Of mighty Thor felt some dismay :

Now through the roof he breaks a hole,

And fain towards heaven would lift his prey.

But spite of all his efforts, he
 Could raise but one leg from the hearth ;
 Tenacious clung the other three,
 As if fast rooted, to the earth.
 At length exhausted he became,
 And down he let the creature fall ;
 And though he strove to hide his shame,
 'Twas clearly visible to all.

The cat was then removed. The fiend
 With look demure and wily sneer
 Then said to Tialfe's lord : " My friend !
 Thus goes it with our pastimes here.
 Like all things else in our domain,
 That cat can wond'rous strength deploy ;
 E'en Thor, great Odin's son, 'tis plain,
 Cannot in strength with giants vie."

To him thus sharp the god of war,
 For much those words his spirit grate :
 " Now by my hammer and my car,
 Talking and boasting much I hate ;
 But since with sneer and bantering
 The force of Thor thou seemst to doubt,
 Come forth thyself, O swarthy king !
 And try with me a wrestling bout !"

With soften'd voice the chief rejoin'd,
 For now fear made him lower his crest :
 " Nay ! why so hasty ? bear in mind,
 That all things here are done in jest !
 No malice here disturbs our sport ;
 But since a wrestling match you chuse,
 I've an old woman in my court,
 To cope with Thor she'll not refuse."

To him Laufeia's crafty son :
 " She comes not for our chief too late ;
 She'll rue the sport ; his grasp alone
 Has power her limbs to dislocate :
 In ancient runes bath she not read,
 How on the giant's isle of rock,
 'Midst a vast female troop he sped,
 And made them feel his hammer's shock ?

" 'Twas sport to see him deal such blows
 On those fierce virgins ; none unscathed
 Escaped ; though numberless his foes,
 'Midst flames his look defiance breathed :
 To drown him one the thought conceived,
 And urged him to the ocean's brink ;
 But such a blow her scull received,
 She ne'er again had power to think. (5)"

Angry and deeply blushing, Thor
 Struck on the forehead Asa Lok :
 Down to the earth he sank before
 His feet, while thus the thund'rer spoke.
 " Thus I chastise thy sland'rous tongue,
 On calumny and lies intent :
 Doubtless the Asar's choir among
 Thou art the most impertinent !

" Wretched buffoon ! base weather-cock !
 Vile mimic of the giant race !
 How darest thou Asa Thor provoke,
 And falsehoods thus insidious trace ?
 Thyself an Asa, thou do'st e'er
 Delight thy peers to vilify :
 As sure as Fenris howls, I swear
 Thy punishment shall dreadful be."

Now rising slow with blushing cheek,
 And forehead bleeding, Loptur spoke :
 " Why, cruel ! on thy comrade wreak
 Thy vengeance for a harmless joke ?
 'Twas but in jest ; since 'twas agreed
 That all we do should be in sport,
 Why not in word as well as deed
 With temper bear a sly retort ?

" Are then thy strength and bravery
 At once become so weak, O Thor,
 That a mere joke, a raillery,
 To damp their energy hath power?
 No signs of fear or weakness show'd
 Those virgins: clad in steel and brass,
 With clubs they to the battle strode;
 In strength no males could them surpass.

" Yes! female goblins fell were they,
 Who sank beneath thy shaft divine;
 And this old woman here, I say,
 Reminds me of that act of thine:
 Meagre, decrepit, toothless, old,
 Can such a witch with Thor contend?
 Then quickly answer'd Thor the bold:
 " Enough! here let our quarrel end!"

Now tottering in the hall appears.
 Leaning a knotty staff upon,
 A woman deep advanced in years;
 Her eyes were sunk, her cheek was wan;
 Her coarse white locks, her shrivell'd skin
 Announced extreme decrepitude:
 To pity much did Thor incline.
 When such a fragile form he view'd.

" It is not fit, " the Asa said,
 " That thou shouldst cope with me before
 Thou hast a cup of juice essay'd,
 Whose fruit grows in Valhalla's bower."
 Now from a hole within his shield
 He took a fruit of luscious taste: (6)
 With courteous look and accent mild
 To taste it much the dame he prest.

" Eat this! my venerable dame!
 Thy days of youth 'twill straight restore;
 This fruit from Bragar's garden came;
 Iduna guards the sacred store:
 'Twill make thy veins beat high with youth;
 'Twill fill with eloquence thy tongue."
 Then thus the dame: " I'm old, in truth,
 Yet I remain for ever young.

" All things do I devour, yet naught
 Consume; as for thy fruit divine,
 Keep it thyself! I need it not!
 But come! let us the sport begin!"
 Thus said, her arms around her foe
 She cast with wondrous force and glee:
 Thor, struggling hard the crone to throw,
 At length fell breathless on his knee.

His comrades trembled, sore afraid
 To view their chieftain's sad mischance :
 Now Thor to them a signal made
 To succour him with sword and lance.
 Then turning round in wrath extreme,
 To Utgard-Lok he fiercely cries :
 " Let me this instant quit thy realm,
 Where frantic witchcraft gains the prize !

" I cannot bear such magic spells,
 Such visions strange : Odin alone,
 My sire, who in Valhalla dwells,
 Can from such mischief shield his son :
 Unknown to him I've travell'd here ;
 Ah me ! I do repent me now !
 Deceit, misfortune, checks severe
 Are all that I have proved below.

" But when we next renew the fight,
 Naught shall thy spells thy person shield :
 Odin can magic runes indite,
 As Thor knows how his mace to wield :
 Allied we shall one day descend
 From thy vile yoke the world to free,
 And Utgard-Lok, arch-traitrous fiend,
 In his own realm shall vanquish'd be."

Indignant then he faced about,
While shame and anger tinged his cheek ;
The chief of Utgard led him out,
With mind perplex'd and gesture meek :
The mountain deeply sigh'd and mourn'd ;
Down rush'd its silv'ry blood amain ;
The gate slow on its hinges turn'd,
And Thor once more bestrode the plain.



CANTO VI.

THE SPELLS UNRAVELLED.

WHEN now from subterranean gloom
Emerged, again the hero stood
Amidst the plain where flow'rets bloom,
With joy the azure sky he view'd :
His hammer shed around a light ;
His armour seem'd on fire :
He feels once more his wonted might
Through all his veins transpire.

He waved his hammer. Utgard's lord
At once in him could recognize
The god by Jotunheim abhorr'd,
The god, whose thunders shake the skies :
His hair now stood upright with fear,
His heart began to beat,
For though in Utgard's nether sphere
The chief had met defeat,

He fear'd, that when the bright domain
 Of Asgard Thor again should reach,
 Odin would all the spells explain,
 And surest means of vengeance teach.
 " That fatal consequence to thwart
 I must some scheme devise :
 Were it not best myself t' impart
 To Thor those mysteries,

And frankly thus at once reveal
 How all things happen'd there below ?
 The key to each enchanted spell
 'Twere better he from us should know,
 Than learn it elsewhere ; this would move
 Still more the Asar's wrath,
 And hard would then the contest prove
 'Gainst Thor and Odin both.

Thus to himself thought Utgard Lok :
 Then full of cunning and deceit
 To Thor he thus embarrass'd spoke :
 " 'Tis well for us, thou hast thought fit
 To leave our kingdom : thou shalt ne'er
 With my consent return ;
 Much from thy visit did I fear,
 We might have cause to mourn.

“ But now that for our giant race
All danger's past, will I relate
Frankly, how all things came to pass :
And here, O chief! thy prowess great
We all confess, and all admire ;
Thy sword and hammer bright
All foes with terror must inspire,
When thou appearst in sight.

“ I learn'd with much astonishment
And no small dread, O chief! that thou
Hadst form'd a project of descent
From Valaskialf to earth below.
But when thy further views I learn'd
To visit Utgard's realm,
Methought, O chief! thy brain was turn'd
To harbour such a scheme.

“ Doubtless, I did not dare offend
A god as frank as he is strong ;
I only sought my realm to fend
By wizard spell and mystic song :
The winds and waves in wild commotion
I urged from pole to pole ;
But neither winds nor waves of Ocean
Have power to daunt thy soul.

“ I straight assumed a shape, of more
Than human size or human strength ;
Upon the ground I ’gan to snore,
With all my limbs stretch’d out at length :
I thought to fright thee from the heath,
And check thy bold advance ;
But vain my threat’ning size and teeth
Against thy sword and lance.

“ I trembled for thy hammer too
Forged in the gloomy dwarfs’ abode ;
He whom that strikes, full well I know,
Is forthwith deluged in his blood.
By strange illusions I inclined
To give thy nerves a shock ;
But it ne’er enter’d in my mind
So brave a chief to mock.

“ What I had plann’d, I did fulfil
Forthwith ; but thou wert naught afeard :
Naught didst thou else, but closer still
Thy belt around thy body gird :
But I acknowledge, when I view’d
Thy footsteps turn my way,
A cold sweat all my limbs bedew’d,
As on the grass I lay.

“ Thy eyes were thus deceived : the blow
That first thy hammer gave my head,
Though not thy heaviest, would, I trow,
If felt, have my quietus made :
When I beheld thee raise thy arm,
My limbs with terror shook,
I conjured by a powerful charm
Thy blow against that rock.”

At this discourse Thor stood aghast,
Then bied the rock to scrutinize ;
He there beheld three caverns vast
Hewn in the rock before his eyes.
While Thor with wonder view'd this cave,
The giant humbly said :
“ Behold ! the blows thy hammer gave
Those caverns three have made.

“ But still th' illusion to maintain,
And further still thy sense deceive,
I rubb'd my brow and feign'd some pain
At every blow thou thoughtst to give.
I must confess thy hammer's shock
Could lay the mightiest low ;
But thou didst split the granite rock,
Instead of Skrymur's brow.

" I thought to lead thee 'stray amidst
 The mcountain's windings intricate ;
 By my contrivance 'twas thou didst
 Arrive at pale-blue Hela's gate.
 I thought to frighten thee away
 From our snow-cover'd zone ;
 But fear to thee, I needs must say,
 Is utterly unknown.

" And now will I relate to ye
 How all occur'd in my domain :
 Then listen to my words, I pray,
 While those enigmas I explain.
 And first, O Lok ! I gave to thee
 A dish well fill'd with meat ;
 Thou didst thy duty manfully,
 'T was sport to see thee eat.

" Though thou with all thy force didst eat,
 And we thy powers did much admire,
 Yet how couldst thou escape defeat,
 When thy competitor was Fire ?
 For thus the goblin fierce we call
 With ever-craving maw :
 What wonder, that bones, dish, and all,
 He should consume like straw ?

“ And, Tialfe! though in racing thou
Didst manifest a wondrous speed,
Yet to thy rival thou must bow,
His swiftness far did thine exceed;
But where’s the wonder that sharp elf
Should first the goal embrace?
For know! it was my Thought itself,
The dwarf, (1) who won the race:

“ All things in swiftness Thought excels:
Who can so plain a truth gainsay?
And mine I charged with magic spells,
To lead thee from the course astray.
Yet though but ill-success ye’ ve met
On Útgard’s gloomy shore,
Believe me, we shall ne’er forget
The mighty deeds of Thor.

“ I cannot from thy praise restrain,
O Asa! for thy powers of drink;
For though the horn thou couldst not drain,
Thou didst not from the effort shrink.
Each of my vassals stood aghast
At such a bold essay;
For one end of that horn so vast,
Think! in the ocean lay!

" While thou didst so much water quaff,
 O Asa! we could well perceive
 The horn by suction did one half
 The sea of its contents bereave :
 Dost thou of my assertion doubt?
 Go to yon cliff's high brink,
 And see how much thy drinking bout
 Has made old Ocean shrink!"

Now Asa-Thor moved towards the sea ;
 Him follow'd Roska, Lok, and Tialf :
 They lean'd upon their swords to see
 The ocean ; it had sunk one half.
 The depth immense they all admire
 From a stupendous height ;
 But terrified, they quick retire
 From the appalling sight.

Then thus the chief of Utgard : " Thor,
 I hope, will bear me no ill-will ;
 I trust he hath absolved me, for
 I've giv'n him scope to prove his skill :
 My spells have only served to show
 His powers in clearer light ;
 The sands from whence the waters flow
 Have testified his might.

“ When thou, great chieftain, shalt return
To thy bright dome in Trudvang’s grove,
There shalt thou find that drinking-horn :
Accept it as a pledge of love.
’Twill serve thy visit to recall
To Utgard-Lok’s abode,
And cause, when drinking in thy hall,
The daily ebb and flood.” (2)

Then Thor : “ In fraud and artifice
Thou art a most accomplish’d elf ;
Methinks it would not be amiss
To try my strength upon thyself.
Thou dost deserve with broken head
Thy treason to deplore,
And that this hand be tinged with red,
And moisten’d with thy gore.”

Then Utgard’s chief to sigh began,
With quiv’ring lip and falt’ring tone :
“ It would not, sure, the stronger man
Become to slay the weaker one :
Thy struggle with the cat we saw
To raise it towards the roof ;
When it began to spit and claw,
With fear we stood aloof.

“ With all thy thund’ring from the sky,
Thou ne’er hast caused such fear as then ;
For know, the cat, that thou didst try
To bear aloft with effort vain,
Was the enormous serpent fell
That Midgard’s sphere enfolds,
And circling all the earth, its tail
In its own mouth it holds !

“ Proud of thy strength of heavenly proof,
Thou strov’st the struggling beast to raise,
And high as the vast cavern’s roof
Thou seem’dst to lift it up with ease :
But still, however high from earth
Thou strov’st to lift it up,
With angry tail it lash’d the hearth,
And made thy prowess droop.

“ And lastly, the old wrinkled dame,
Who, wrestling, show’d such skill and power,
Weak and decrepit though she seem,
Had strength enough thy crest to lower.
But where’s the wonder that her arm
Should conquer Thor sublime ?
To conquer all the fatal charm
She boasts : her name is Time.

“ That crone so greedy, gaunt, and grim,
 Wanders about with hungry mouth ;
 Old though she seem in face and limb,
 Yet still she boasts eternal youth.
 In every clime she proves her pow’r
 By great Alfader’s doom ;
 And though she every thing devour,
 She nothing does consume.

“ One day her grinders will devour,
 I tell ye truth, our giant breed ;
 She’ll likewise crush the Asars’ power,
 For thus the Nornor have decreed.
 Thou wert compell’d to bend the knee
 Before that ancient dame ;
 Let that defeat a warning be,
 And thy presumption tame ! ”

Now Aukthor’s eyes with fury glare ;
 He rais’d his mace, and fain would slay
 The fiend ; but he, dissolv’d in air,
 Had fled to Utgard far away.
 The god no longer now beheld
 A mountain o’er his head :
 He stands upon a spacious field
 With clover thick o’erspread.

CANTO VII.

THE RETURN HOME.

GIRDING his belt still closer round
His loins, the chief his way pursued :
Towards eve a meadow vast he found,
Where herds of cattle grazing stood.
Still moving on with soul on fire,
His eyes a distant dwelling reach,
The humble cot of Tialfe's sire
Embosom'd in a grove of beech.

Then Tialfe blush'd, and towards the cot
Ran lustily along the grass :
Him follow'd Roska light of foot
With streaming hair and rosy face.
To view the spot how great their joy,
Where first the breath of life they drew !
Shouts of delight reveal the boy ;
Roska shed tears like morning dew.

Close to the cottage-door outspread
A linden-tree its branches wide :
The peasant there beneath its shade
Sat with his consort by his side.
Soon as the children met their eyes,
High beat their hearts with ecstasy ;
“ Lo ! there is Tialf !” the Galfer cries :
“ Lo ! there is Roska !” echoes she.

The dame gave vent to many a tear,
When clasping Roska in her arms :
Much wonder caused the shield and spear,
And eye that spoke of war’s alarms.
The ancient dame felt never tired
Upon her daughter’s charms to dwell ;
Her size improved she much admired,
Her slender waist, and bosom’s swell.

“ I scarcely can believe, that I
Gave birth to such a daughter brave :
Whence gottest thou that flashing eye ?
And who that shining corslet gave ?”
Young Roska gravely thus replied :
“ My gracious master Asa-Thor
The corslet shield and sword supplied :
His lessons fit my soul for war.”

Then the old man with locks so grey
 In close embrace his Tialfe held :
 The youth with self-esteem swell'd high,
 Proud of his casque, his lance and shield.
 " My darling boy! in truth, 'tis strange,"
 Thus sobbing did the parent say :
 " Whence comes so wonderful a change?
 Thou wert a child but yesterday.

" Whence gottest thou that martial brow,
 And strength the toils of war to brave?
 Who gave thee force to bend the bow,
 And who that glitt'ring armour gave?"
 Then Tialfe: "Thor my gracious lord
 Gave me these arms; the art of war
 From him I learn; to wield the sword,
 And poise the lance, and mount the car."

When to his parents Tialf reveal'd
 The presence of the puissant Thor,
 The old man and his consort kneel'd,
 Inspired with awe, the god before :
 With timid sigh the old man said :
 " O god! whose fame the world doth fill,
 Thy car is safe beneath my shed,
 And thy two goats are living still."

This speech the Asa's nerves restored ;
His wrath quick vanish'd like the wind :
Reflecting on the giant's word,
He felt consoled in heart and mind.
Now to the stable straight he goes,
And opes the door : with joy he swell'd,
And quick forgot all cares and woes,
When he his goats and car beheld.

And now the giant queller took
(His custom 'twas) his hammer bright ;
A well directed blow he struck,
And slew his goats of colour white.
Now jump'd th' old woman up in haste,
Upon the board to spread the cloth ;
While Lok began the meat to baste,
And feed the fire, and mix the broth.

Lo ! from the wood the peasant's son,
Laden with faggots, now appears ;
He piles them on the hearth : anon
The smoking flesh the trav'lers cheers :
No dish had they ; Thor's buckler broad
This want supplied : and now they feed
With hearty zest, while the goats' blood
Furnish'd, as wont, delicious mead.

No sooner was the supper past,
 Thor rose observant of his rite ;
 The bones within the skins he cast :
 But Tialfe's father at the sight,
 Mindful of what before was done,
 Quits hastily the festive hearth,
 And grasping by the arm his son,
 Into the forest leads him forth.

Then Thor, the mighty, cried aloud :
 " Why dost thou lead that youth away ?"
 But the old peasant only bow'd,
 And to the grove pursued his way :
 " What once he did, I recollect,"
 Quoth he ; " I must not hesitate ;
 I'm fearful, if he be not check'd,
 He may his former trick repeat."

The giant-queller laugh'd amain :
 " Nay, father! leave the youth alone ;
 I wager, Tialfe will ne'er again
 Be tempted by a marrow-bone :
 To renovate his strength he now
 No longer needs to suck the marrow,
 As whilom, when he drove the plough,
 Or fell'd the wood, or wheel'd the barrow.

Cheer'd by the Asa's blithesome mood,
 The old man let Tialf's kirtle go :
 The trav'lers now, with savoury food
 Refresh'd, their thoughts on sleep bestow.
 But Thor, the mighty god of war,
 Whose soul with thoughts heroick glows,
 Doff'd not his armour ; in his car
 He stepp'd, and there enjoy'd repose.

The morning dawn'd : with choral lay
 The feather'd songsters fill the skies :
 The sun ascends ; the trav'lers gay
 From slumbers light refresh'd arise.
 To war and bold adventure prone,
 Each buckles on his armour strait,
 And whets his weapon on the stone,
 That stands without the cottage gate.

On the goats' feet Thor went to nail
 The shoes of gold ; the silken reins
 He fasten'd, and prepared to sail
 Across the vast celestial plains.
 He grasps his hammer ; in the car
 His followers place them by his side :
 'Midst thunder's crash and lightning's glare
 They mount, and skyward rapid glide.

The car swift rolling through the sky
 The peasant views with mute amaze :
 The more he marks them mounting high,
 The more he stares with stupid gaze.
 Soaring aloft, what words can paint
 Roska's and Tialf's extreme surprize,
 When stretching cross the firmament
 The rainbow ring salutes their eyes ?

When Asa Thor, the god renown'd,
 Arrived within his bright domain,
 Behold a purple blush around
 Spread itself o'er the azure plain :
 Heimdaller, when he view'd the car,
 Sounded his horn in glorious style ;
 And the seven Virgins greeted Thor
 With wave of hand and gracious smile.

Then said the Miolner-brandisher
 To the young Roska lily-white :
 " 'Twere best I bring thee strait to her,
 Who rules in Folkvang, Freya hight ;
 For never since the world has been
 The world, was female, wife, or maid,
 In Trudvang's warlike castle seen ;
 Nor will I now that rule evade."

The dome of Freya, queen of love,
The fairest of the Disar fair,
Stands in a vale, where many a grove
Of rose-trees sweet embalms the air.
From earthly sorrow and annoy
For ever freed, each constant youth
And faithful maid doth there enjoy
The guerdon bright of love and truth.

In that abode of joy and bliss,
Where many a graceful form is seen,
The greatest ornament, I wis,
Is Freya's self, the lovely queen.
Her golden hair, her eyes deep blue,
Her bosom turn'd with finest swell,
Her slender waist, her skin's soft hue,
Her teeth which brightest pearls excel,

Her breath of sweetest flower perfume,
Her soul-enchancing smile, her cheek
Which emulates the peach's bloom, (1)
All these to sing my voice is weak.
In either hand she holds a rose ;
Each doth delicious odour spread :
Each with the liveliest colour glows ;
One tinges morn, one eve with red.

So gentle is her soul and mind,
 All painful cares and griefs she heals :
 Her breath, which forms the vernal wind,
 The earth with vegetation fills.
 When morn displays its roseate hue,
 Tears glisten in her orbs so bright ;
 These fall to earth in shape of dew,
 And fill each flow'ring with delight.

Two daughters claim her tend'ring care,
 Their faultless forms what graces deck !
 Like waterfall, their radiant hair
 Streams down their alabaster neck !
 Hnos, who the moon's bright chariot guides,
 The paragon of children shines :
 Siofna, who over sleep presides,
 All hearts to peace and love inclines.

“ Folkvangur is the place, methinks,
 Most suitable to Roska fair ;
 From danger, oft I've seen, she shrinks,
 And fails in strength the shield to bear.”
 Thus Thor in disappointment said,
 Then from the girl her armour takes :
 “ Give up thy sword ! thou peasant maid !
 Such weapons ill become thy sex.

" P'll lead thee strait to Freya's grove,
 Where every female loves to dwell :
 Better wilt thou in sports of love,
 Than in the toils of war excel. (2)
 Good will and spirit too thou hast,
 But oft thy vigour fails at proof :
 For thy soft-fibred hand 'twere best
 To hold the harp, or weave the woof."

Thereat to Freya's blest abode
 He march'd, with Roska by his side ;
 The maid accompanied the god,
 With confidence of joy and pride.
 The goddess praised her graceful air,
 Her shape, her eyes, her youthful bloom ;
 And from that moment Roska fair
 Remain'd for aye in Folkvang's dome.

Now Thor to Valhall hastens on,
 With Tialf his swain in armour clad ;
 Odin beholds him from his throne,
 And hails his son with accents glad.
 Now the Valkyrior bright advance
 With brimming cups of hydromel :
 Th' Einberier all with horse and lance
 Now charges make, and now repel.

CHAPTER VIII.

THOR VISITS THE GIANT HYMIR.

THOR, though vex'd in mind, his anger
Prudently resolv'd to hide;
Thus to be the butt of mock'ry
To the giants gall'd his pride :
Vengeful thoughts his heart corroding
Urge him 'gainst that lawless crew;
Down to Ocean's deepest cavern
He would fain his foes pursue.

Now to Odin's throne ascending
In his brazen armour clad,
Low with filial reverence bending,
To Alfader thus he said :
" Force 'gainst giants naught availeth ;
Wisdom too must bear its part :
Father! from thy cup of science
Grant one drop to cheer my heart!"

Quaffing now from wisdom's beaker,
 New conceptions fill his brain :
 Naught this time to Lok his comrade
 Of his plan will Thor explain.
 Sole his bold career pursuing,
 Think ! what joy his bosom feels,
 Proudly Dovre's lofty pine-tops
 Crushing with his chariot wheels.

Now the rocky cave approaching,
 Near the vast white-foaming sea,
 Where for ages Midgard's serpent
 Coil'd amidst the sea-weed lay ;
 When he view'd it put in motion
 Treach'rously the billow blue ;
 Swell'd his heart with deep emotion ;
 Glances proud towards heaven he threw.

Monster vile ! thou shalt no longer
 (Thus in thought discourse he holds)
 The affrighted earth encircle
 With thy venom-swelter'd folds.
 Thou shalt cease thy hateful pastime,
 Hurling seamen down to Ran :
 Thor shall crush thee ; from thy fury
 Thor shall free the race of man.

Now the god assumes the figure
Of a youthful rustic clown :
Where the whirlwind eddies howling,
There he throws his helmet down.
Like a rock well planed and hollow'd,
Crested with a grove of pine,
Thus the brazen helm and horse-hair
Glitt'ring in the sunbeam shine.

Now his beard he doff'd, and threw it
On a rock ; a bush to view,
There it lay : himself moved onward,
Changed to swain in kirtle blue.
Dext'rous was the transformation ;
Who could now the Asar know ?
Heimdal view'd the change with pleasure,
Perch'd on Bifrost's radiant bow.

Giant Hymir's rocky dwelling
Thor proceeded now to find,
With red cheeks and locks so yellow
Streaming 'fore the morning wind :
Round his waist his belt fast girded
Show'd like strip of crimson wool :
Thus the Asa, arm'd with cunning,
Giants shall no more befool.

Like an axe he bore his hammer,
 Trudging o'er the dusty plain ;
 Scarce can he disguise his fierceness,
 Scarce his vengeful thoughts restrain.
 Entering in a gloomy cavern
 Near the rustling waterfall,
 In his morning dream indulging,
 There he found the giant tall.

Crown'd with dusky hair, his forehead
 Seem'd a sea-weed-cover'd rock ;
 Hard his loins and tough his fibres,
 Like the trunk and roots of oak :
 In his mouth, which wide extended
 Show'd like cavern vast and dark,
 Glared three rows of frightful grinders
 Like the teeth of rav'nous shark.

Near this cave a fertile meadow
 Varies with the rugged scene :
 Flowers of divers hues contrasting
 With the dew-clad grass so green :
 Lambkins frisk and bleat delighted,
 Nibbling leaves from ev'ry thorn ;
 There in richest clover revel
 Oxen fat with crumpled horn.

Now the giant woke, and casting
 Round his eyes of fiery hue,
 In a corner Thor discovered,
 Like a weak-limb'd lad to view.
 "Ha! who into Hymir's dwelling
 Rashly dares to force his way?
 Wretched stripling! for thy boldness
 Thou with loss of life shalt pay."

Then the stripling, nothing daunted :
 "Here I stand with conscience clear ;
 Time doth all conditions level ;
 Nought is to be gain'd by fear.
 Though before I never trembled,
 Now I well may feel alarm :
 Sure, a chief so strong and mighty
 Will not deign a boy to harm ?

"Much doth it become a giant
 Magnanimity to show !
 Nought would it, O chief ! avail thee,
 Should my blood in torrents flow :
 Why then should I feel down-hearted ?
 Thou wouldst but despise me more ;
 Thinkst thou, I have left my courage
 At my father's cottage-door ?

" Pale to turn and fear exhibit
 Baseness proves, and naught avails ;
 See the hedgehog, who a pris'ner
 In his bristly castle quails :
 Naught he deems himself in safety,
 Though his quills erect he rears ;
 Still to peace and joy a stranger,
 E'en the slightest noise he fears.

" Not so acts the little sparrow,
 Far more delicate and weak ;
 Though not cased in mail, in ev'ry
 Cleft and nook he shows his beak ;
 Mark, his bold, advent'rous spirit
 Ne'er from danger keeps aloof ;
 Frank and free, he often perches
 Twitt'ring on the peasant's roof.

" Here I stand, a simple sparrow,
 In the giant's dark abode ;
 Sure the mighty eagle will not
 Deign to shed a sparrow's blood !
 Coarsest food, naught else I ask thee ;
 Crumbs, that from thy table fall ;
 And whene'er thou goest a fishing,
 I will aid thy net to haul."

Then the giant, loudly laughing,
 Stretch'd his lip from ear to ear :
 " Him, who thus implores my pity
 Slay I will not ; do not fear !"
 Much he laugh'd to hear a story
 Told in such a simple strain,
 And his laugh so wild and boist'rous
 Made the forest ring again.

Then said he: " In th' early morning
 Rudely blows the northern blast ;
 Here thou'rt from its force protected,
 Couch'd within this cavern vast.
 But when sitting in the fragile
 Bark on the tempestuous sea,
 If thy sprightliness and courage
 There stand by thee, we shall see."

" Since my nerve thou doubtest, giant,"
 Thor replied, " No more delay !
 Put me quickly on the trial ;
 Hast thou any bait, I pray ?"
 " Friend, the bait that best will suit thee
 In my garden thou wilt find ;
 There doth many a caterpillar
 Round the bushes crawl and wind.

" But if on the leaf thou findest
 None, of other means I know :
 Take thy spade and dig yon barrow,
 Worms enough thou'lt find, I trow !
 Take thy shirt-pin off and bend it ;
 Lo ! a fish-hook hast thou strait.
 Then thou art prepared for fishing ;
 I myself use eels for bait."

" Ha ! the worm shalt not escape me,"
 Angry Thor replied, " I know ;
 Round my arm in anguish writhing,
 It shall perish by my blow.
 Come, no more delay ! allow me
 But to take what suits me best."
 " Go and do so," said the giant ;
 Off the stripling sets in haste ;

To the meadow straight he hies him,
 Where the giant's cattle stood ;
 There full butt a bull ferocious
 Barr'd his way in threat'ning mood.
 Now with levell'd horns he rushes
 On the youth his rage to wreak ;
 Thor, its head with both hands seizing,
 Tore it from the bleeding neck !

With the head upon his shoulder
Of the proudly-horned bull,
Thor came running 'cross the meadow,
High in glee, of courage full.
With the greatest ease he bore it,
And he needs must run in haste,
For the giant had already
Hoisted in his boat the mast.

When the giant on the shoulder
Of the youth the bull's head view'd,
Loud he praised his strength and courage,
Much admired his hardihood.
Launching now the sloop for fishing,
Each the oar with ardour plies,
While the keel 'with noise and creaking
Through the dark blue billow flies.

Then thought Aukthor: To the serpent
Could I once approach as nigh,
So that I could thrust my Möilner
Into his ferocious eye,
This would give me greater pleasure,
Than to hear the clash of arms,
Or to gaze in proud Valhalla
On the bright Valkyrior's charms.

All the world's distress and mis'ry (1)
 From that serpent fell proceeds :
 Couch'd in ambush, on the vitals
 Of th' affrighted earth he feeds :
 From his fangs all dire diseases
 He to plague mankind distils ;
 And his venom in vast globules
 Sea and land with havock fills.

When a man by ling'ring sickness
 Tortured, feels th' approach of death ;
 When he, during life's last struggle,
 Faint and fev'rish pants for breath ;
 When the wife reads in her husband's
 Sunken eye his last farewell ;
 Then his scales the serpent shaking
 Hisses with enjoyment fell.

When the mother views with anguish
 At her breast her dying child,
 Which but lately, like an apple,
 Blooming grew in autumn mild ;
 When the child will suck no longer,
 When life's strength is vanish'd quite ;
 Joyous then the serpent rises,
 Loudly hissing in the night.

When man's brain in death is frozen,
Loud he testifies his joy ;
Shakes his scales, when from the topmast
Falls the luckless sailor boy.
When a constant swain his darling
Maiden on the pyre beholds,
Foams the ocean, where the serpent
Coils itself in endless folds.

All the serpents foul and frightful,
That infest the lab'ring earth,
Are engender'd by that monster
From the froth it vomits forth :
From it springs the fatal boa
On the distant southern shores,
Which insatiate still with hunger
Oft the biggest ox devours.

Now this snake in motion spiral
Twines itself the trees around ;
Now to catch the heedless cattle,
Steals along the swampy ground.
Those of lesser growth with equal
Malice their bright hues display,
And with eyes deceitful gleaming
Askur's hapless offspring slay.

Beautiful with rings encircled
 Are their skins like flowers to view,
 Vying oft in brilliant colour
 With the rose and violet's hue :
 Vapours poisonous exsuding
 Under hedges oft they lie ;
 And the birds upon the branches
 Fascinate with magic eye.

Fenris certainly is frightful,
 Friend of the malignant night ;
 Oft he hurls men down to Helheim,
 From the steep cliff's dizzy height :
 Oft he guides the midnight robber,
 Steel excites him to employ,
 And whene'er the robber murders,
 Fenris howls with frantic joy.

'Gainst the forest-king the lion
 He the tiger fell begot :
 Formerly the bear suck'd honey,
 Guileless in his mossy grot.
 Next engender'd he th' hyæna,
 Lynx, and fox, to plunder given ;
 And 'gainst these the bear and lion
 Are to endless contest driven.

Fenris, when a wounded body
He perceives at midnight hour,
Makes it carrion; but this serpent
Hath a far more dang'rous power :
I will, therefore, quick destroy it ;
Man shall cease to be its prey :
Thor shall Askur's race deliver
From their fiercest enemy.

Blest with health and strength to Freya
Shall they mount to realms on high !
And when they become too numerous,
Let them fight and bravely die !
They should ne'er give way to hatred,
Even where the sword decides :
Wrath becomes not gallant warriors,
Whom the voice of honour guides.

They shall move in ranks to battle,
No sea-serpent cause them fear ;
There like merry youths and lusty,
Enter on their bright career :
Manfully rush on each other,
Wave the sword, the pennon spread,
And in fair and open combat
Joy their generous blood to shed.

Then when blood streams forth in torrents.

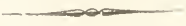
Thor in arms shall tread the sky,
And 'midst thunder's crash and lightning
Summon them to Valhall high :
There admitted 'mongst the Asar
Shall they quaff delicious mead,
While with heavenly harpings Bragur
Chaunts aloud each glorious deed.

Thus the Asa thought, and onward
'Gan to row with all his might ;
With his oar he made the billow
Fly before him foaming white.
Fired with anger, he continued
On with furious zeal to row :
Streams of brine in spray dissolving
Down his back and shoulders flow.

Now the boat half fill'd with water,
Giant Hymir cried in wrath,
" Hold ! I bid thee ! row no longer !
We shall swamp, and perish both."
" Nay," said Thor, " let us go farther !
Soon we'll make a glorious cast ;"
But the giant stamp'd with passion,
Leaning 'gainst the quiv'ring mast.

“ If thou rowest any further, ”
Said the giant, “ we shall reach
Just the spot, where Jormundgardur
His enormous length doth stretch. ”
“ As for me, I fear no serpents, ”
Thor replied, the fisher good ;
“ Boiling wave and howling tempest
Only serve to cool my blood. ”

Now he lifts with all his vigour
Up the giant's anchor vast,
Fixes the bull's head upon it,
To his belt then makes it fast :
One end fasten'd to his body,
Now it serves him as a line ;
Overboard he throws the anchor,
Trusting to his skill divine.



CAPO IX.

THOR'S FISHING ADVENTURE.

Lo! coil'd in folds voluminous and vast,
Behind huge beds of coral buried fast,
Far in the deepest cavern of the sea,
The Midgard serpent Jormungardur lay!
While o'er him free and active sports the whale,
He foams, and with vexation bites his tail.

Full oft he strives to lift his frightful head
Above the wave, and terror round him spread;
But cased in boney rings and cartilage,
Vain are his efforts, impotent his rage.
Dozing amidst the sedge with half-closed eye,
Oft has the deep re-echoed with his sigh.
The dark blue billow from his vision shields
The starry vault, the bright celestial fields:
And as the bear, when angry, licks his paws,
Thus oft he threatens, while his tail he gnaws:
Oysters and muscles thickly cluster'd deck,
In guise of beard, the scaly monster's neck.

Lashing the coast, his body mines the rock ;
The waters mount ; earth feels the frequent shock ;
Nastrond wide gapes, and Hecla vomits smoke !
With flames of joy the ice-crown'd mountain glows,
While down its side the liquid lava flows !

There, while the wave drips from his shaggy mane,
Lok's frightful offspring doth his post maintain :
There doth he lie, and heave, and pant, and rock,
Impatient for the day of Ragnarok.

But lo ! his sluggish eye he opens wide,
And marks the Asa's bait before him glide :
The bull's head floating 'fore his mouth he sees,
And eager his fell hunger to appease,
Prepares with swallow wide the tempting bait to seize.

When at his belt Thor feels a vig'rous pull,
The snake has bitten, and his gorge is full.

Thor towards him draws the belt : the serpent's head,
With weeds, the growth of centuries, bespread,
Must needs the will of Asa Thor obey,
And rise perforce to view the light of day ;
The anchor to disgorge in vain he toils,
And struggling hard in knots his body coils.
In vain ; Thor is a fisherman endow'd
With perseverance, strength, and hardihood ;
The serpent pow'rless with extended jaws
Must blindly follow, when the Asa draws.

But when above the wave appears his head.
Earth trembles with astonishment and dread ;
The sky is overcast with sudden gloom,
And mix'd with sand the billows swell and foam.
When high in air protrude his long fore-teeth,
All nature shrinks, infected by his breath :
Small is his left, and large his dexter eye ;
His scales present a many-colour'd die :
His jaws wide gape, his palate swells with pain ;
As wont, like fighting cock, he screams amain :
The dryness of his throat with sultry heat
Charges the air—now threatens to upset
The fragile bark ; but Thor around his loins
Tighter and tighter still his girdle twines :
Naught fears the god, whom heroes all revere ;
He puts forth all his strength, and shines without compeer.
Towards him he pulls his prey with effort rude ;
The serpent writhes, his jaws are fill'd with blood ;
The bark is swamp'd ; but lo ! on shallow ground
The chief already has a station found,
And drags the monster forth from the abyss profound.
The monster shakes and bellows ; from his eye
Shoot flames ; but Thor, the fisher good stands nigh,
And threatens Nastrond's brood with hammer lifted high
When now the giant saw the danger grave,
Thus with himself he reason'd : “ I must save
This serpent, for the sake of Jotunheim :
For is it not foretold in mystic rhyme,
At Ragnarok this snake with pois'ous breath
Thor, our arch-enemy, will crush to death ?”

The wolf-faced giant, vex'd his bark to lose,
 And anxious from the hook the captive snake to loose,
 His dagger grasping (fashion'd 'twas with skill
 By the dwarf's labour) strives the belt to file ;
 But Thor, with his vast hammer rising now :
 Strikes at the monster's head a fearful blow.
 Deep was the sound! the pines along the shore
 Scatter their leaves; and loud the billows roar!
 Fresh 'midst the murky skies the rainbow glows;
 Heimdall rejoicing loud his clarion blows!
 The rain comes hissing down, the lightning glares;
 The sun's bright eye, but lately fill'd with tears,
 Bursts through the blanket of the dark, to view
 The Asa's valour, and his triumph too.

On high now Thor his hammer lifts again :
 The giant shakes with fear; the serpent yells with pain.

Though still the giant strives the belt to file
 With his sharp dagger, naught avails his toil ;
 Now on the anchor he would fain essay
 His force ; and, wading fish-like, bends his way,
 To where, still struggling hard, the hook-bound serpent lay.
 He puts forth all his strength, and files : the sight
 Makes Heimdall tremble, e'en from Bifrost's height.

Now dark as pitch become the heavens, for lo !
 Filed by the giant's steel, the anchor bursts in two !
 The serpent freed now sinks beneath the main,
 And hark ! resounds a loud triumphal strain ;

'Tis Loptur's (1) daughter, who the gods on high
Insults with gibing laugh, and bitter mockery.

Inland the giant towards his mountain flies :
Up to his waist in water Aukthor cries,
And fills with imprecations dire the skies.

Now through the yeasty wave he wades ; his rage
And deep vexation nothing can assuage :
He hurls his lightning o'er th' affrighted main,
And still he hopes, and thinks the monster serpent slain.

The serpent 'midst the rushes roll'd and raved,
Severely wounded, though his life was saved :
Again his crest he raises, on the rock
Again he lies, and waits for Ragnarok.

Now in his fury Thor his hammer threw
After the serpent : deep the nib pierced through
The monster's flank ; the gods beheld with pain
Such glorious feats of strength deploy'd in vain.

Now Thor without his hammer homeward hies :
Between the serpent's scales deep-buried Miölner lies.



CANTO X.

LOK BECOMES ENAMOURED OF SIF.

With pensive look
In Valaskialf sits Asa-Lok :
His head hangs down ; his spirits fail ;
To cheer him naught Valhalla's joys avail :
The mead hath lost its wonted zest ;
Sáhrimmer's flesh he scorns to taste.

Naught good his gloomy look betides ;
The Asar he unceasingly derides.
Whene'er on Asa-Thor he thinks,
His dusky front in wrinkles sinks.

“ On fresh adventure art thou started,
Thou mighty one !
And this time all alone ;
Naught of thy plan hast thou to Lok imparted.”

He cannot easily digest
Such slights : his soul can find no rest :
Nowhere he feels at home :
And longs once more through the wide world to roam.

Tis flattering to his pride
In arms to follow Asa-Thor,
And carry, by the hero's side,
The iron gauntlets of the god of war.

As round the oak fast twining thrives
The mistletoe, that supple parasite,
And strength and growth therefrom derives :
Thus Asa-Lok, the artful wight,
Clings to the god, although with hate
He views him ; hoping some bright beam
Of Thor's renown on him may gleam,
And shed some lustre on his humbler state.

As, gleaning from the sun its light,
The moon dispels the gloom of night :
Thus doth the cunning Loptur aim
To shine with Aucthor's borrow'd fame :
While Askur's race know not the truth,
And equal homage pay to both.

He sits at th' entrance of a grot :
A stream transparent murmurs near.
To bathe in this sequester'd spot
The lovely Disar oft repair.

By cowardice and treachery
Alone is Loptur known to fame ;
The Disar all abhor his name,
And ever from his presence fly :

Love's arrows keen he oft doth prove,
But never meets return of love.

Now towards the brook th' Asynior pass ;
They dance in couples on the grass.
With Siofna her beloved child
See Freya dance in measure wild !
See Eir Iduna fond embrace,
And o'er the mead the mystic circle trace !

Now as in mazy rounds they wheel,
Their robes fall off, and all their charms reveal.

Now Loptur from his lurking place
Gloats on each feature, charm, and grace ;
His ravish'd eyes at leisure scan
All that can tempt the heart of man :
The semi-globes of each voluptuous breast,
The well turn'd haunches, and the slender waist :
The Disar little thought that Lok
Enjoy'd the sight with prying look.

Like swans they sail adown the stream,
Attended by their handmaids fair :
Like birds of passage now they seem,
Who seek a softer clime and milder air.

Now round each other's loins their arms they wreath ;
Like wild ducks now they dive the stream beneath :

Their snow-white arms they oft employ,
Like fishes' fins, to stem the wave ;
The wave transported foams with joy,
Such graceful-fashion'd limbs to lave.

But who of these in Loptur's eyes
In beauty bears away the prize ?
Thor's consort, Sif, he most admires ;
For ne'er his roving eyes could find
Such beauty with such strength combined :
His veins with wildest flames she fires.

In charms this goddess yields to none,
Except to Freya ; she alone
(To whom Alfader, when he meant
To fill the world with ravishment,
Gave life and being) doth surpass
Fair Sif in beauty and in grace.

Sif cannot boast that mild soft beam
In th' azure eye, that melts all hearts,
E'en like the moon, when it imparts
To beechen grove its silver gleam ;
Strong limb'd and with majestic mien,
She shines a lofty heroine ;
And Sif all tongues aloud proclaim
A true high-minded northern dame.

Her shoulders broad so milky white,
Her juicy, plump, and well-turn'd arms

Are fit for love's or war's alarms,
 T' embrace, or to defend her right.
 These shoulders fascinate Lok's eyes,
 He views her with extreme surprize ;
 Her haughty look excites in him
 A passion never felt before ;
 With gloating eye he scans each limb,
 And sinks a slave to Astrild's power.

The arches of her eyebrows meet ;
 This would all other dames disfigure ;
 But naught doth this her charms defeat,
 But adds to each peculiar vigour :
 For in her awe-inspiring gaze
 Her lofty soul itself pourtrays.

Proud and indifferent to desire,
 No passion seems her breast to fire ;
 Not small her hands, but dainty white
 Like swan's-down, or new fallen-snow ;
 Her nails like polish'd almonds grow ;
 On well-turn'd feet her tow'ring height
 Securely stands ; her hair loose streaming
 Down to her feet descends, with golden radiance gleaming.

Behind the bush conceal'd,
 Are all these charms to Lok reveal'd.
 Then thus he thought : What pleasure should I prove
 To be encircled by such arms !
 To taste all those luxurious charms,
 And in the beechen grove—revel in joy and love !

Close to my lips those coral lips I'd glue,
Those lips, which offer to my ravish'd view
Teeth fine as pearls, and whiter far, I trow,
Than any beast of prey can show.

What tumult fires my blood!
Oh! that I could,
While Thor is gone a-fishing far,
Fish him to shame in the same bath with her!

Thus thinks the lustful treach'rous elf,
And still behind the bush conceals himself:
For Sif her dwelling soon will seek,
Which lies midst Dovre's rocks so bleak,
Where fir-trees undulate with many a spire:
Her robes resuming quick, the Disa veils
Each charm, while passion Loptur's breast assails
With still increasing fire.

She claps her helm her golden locks upon,
Which, moisten'd by the wave, less brilliant shone.
Now far inland she climbs the mountain steep:
Lok follows after cautious and unseen.
Arrived at her abode in the sequester'd glen,
The rustling waterfall lulls Sifia soon to sleep.

The wind invading now the bower
With burning kisses dries her hair,
And gives back to those tresses fair
Their golden tinge and magic power.

CANTO XI.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN LOK AND SIF.

LOK.

PARDON the lowly slave of love,
Whom thy enchanting form inspires
Once more to plead in amorous strain !
O that thy heart would deign to prove
The fervour that my bosom fires,
And urge thy will to soothe my pain !

SIF.

With cautious step draws near the thief,
And dextrously he opes the door ;
The cunning mouse creeps through the hole :
While Lok, the dark insidious chief,
Steals to my couch at midnight hour,
For never rests his lustful soul.

LOK.

To catch the fish the worm is held ;
 The trap ensnares the artful fox :
 All to some tempting bait must yield ;
 Lok is allured by female locks.

SIF.

To thy own wife, to Sigyn hie !
 In flowing locks descends her raven hair :
 Or Angurbod with fond caresses ply !
 She will not, sure, refuse thy couch to share.

LOK.

Whene'er with thirst we languish,
 And no delicious fruit is nigh,
 The sourest apple to assuage our anguish
 We pluck, and swallow greedily :
 But when such charms as thine, O Disa dear !
 Before our ravish'd eyes appear,
 Who would not ?—but while thou in sleep
 Indulgest, Thor goes fishing on the deep :
 Thoughtless of home he braves the gale,
 And with the giant bobs for whale.
 While he that wild career pursues,
 Do thou a softer pastime chuse !
 With foliage soft is fill'd thy bower—
 Love points—propitious smiles the hour.

SIF.

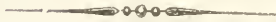
Hast thou forgot in Mimer's fane
The banquet held? with amorous pray'r
My heart thou strovest to ensnare ;
What was my answer? cold disdain
I am not changed ; and Sif bestows
Once more contempt on all thy vows.
But be advised, and quickly flee !
Thor may return, and on a tree
He'd quick suspend thy odious form,
To dangle in the midnight storm .

The Disa spoke : indignant pride
Inflamed her look ; she turn'd aside,
And reckless of her suitor's pain
To sleep address'd herself again.
Her golden tresses in profusion
From the bedside hung streaming down,
While Lok with anger and confusion
Beheld all chance of conquest flown.
But when her forehead's grove appears
In sight, by vengeance fired, the shears
He takes, and with malignant pleasure
Lops from her head its golden treasure.

Aloft the catiff bears away
With outspread wings his gorgeous prey!
How meteorlike the tresses gleam,
As through the murky heavens they stream !

And falling down, where'er he flew,
Give to the corn its golden hue!

Where'er he flew, down fell the hair
In flakes, and tinged with colour fair
The peasant-maidens' locks, who dwell
On Hertha's isle or Guldbrand's dale.
Their locks of yore were black as jet,
As Finnish women bear them yet :
But now their tresses' golden die
May well with Freya's, or with Gefion's vie.



*An attempt to translate the 11th canto in the alliterative metre
of the Icelandic or ancient Scandinavian poetry, something
in the style of the original.*

CANTO III.

LOK'S CONVERSATION WITH SIF.

LOK.

FORGIVE love's lowly
Liegeman, O Sifa!
Again thy beauty
His bosom burns.
O that my passion,
Pleading for pity,
Could chafe thy fainter
Feelings to flame!

SIF.

Through holes creep rats
Restless roving;
The thief undoeth
Dextrous the door;

Sleep is not safe from
The snares of Loki,
Who with lust leering
Lurks in my bower.

LOK.

With hooks bait-blinded
Beguiled are fishes ;
In traps fallacious
Oft foxes fall ;
By locks luxuriant
Of lovely females
Seduced, e'en subtle
Loki succumbs.

SIF.

Go seek thy own spouse
Soft-hearted Sigyn,
Wreathing in raven
Ringlets her hair!
Or to thy jet-black
Giantess hie thee !
She to thy wanton
Wishes will yield.

LOK.

By hunger harass'd
Haws must content us,

When no well-flavour'd
 Fruit we can find.
 Be not disdainful,
 Delicate Disa!
 Hear with complacent
 Pity my prayer !

On the high seas with
 Hynir, thy husband
 Sits in the wherry,
 Wheedling the whale :
 Or, of home reckless,
 Roves by the rivers,
 Intent the silv'ry
 Salmon to snare.

While he his own way
 Wilfully wanders,
 Do thou more pleasing
 Pastime pursue!
 Thy blooming bower is
 Bestrew'd with foliage ;
 The hour so long'd for
 Lures us to love.

SIF.

Of Mimer's bounteous
 Banquet bethink thee,
 When thou to Sifa
 Sigh'dst forth thy suit !

This time again fate
Frowns on thy frolic ;
Vain are thy vows to
Vanquish my heart.

Get thee hence, heartless
Hater of Asar!
Thund'ring terrific,
Thor travels home :
To loftiest larch-tree
Lash'd, he'll suspend thee
Mournful to moulder
In midnight storms.

Thus the disdainful
Disa derided
Her lustful lover's
Languishing suit :
Turning away from
The fiend false-hearted,
Sinks the fair Sifa
Softly to sleep.

But now the fraudulent
Felon's eye fixes
From the bedside her
Hair hanging down :
From the head of Sifa
(Seizing her seissars)
Clips he its golden
Glittering grove.

Through airy regions
 Rapidly rising,
 Loptur licentious
 Launches his flight:
 Proud of his precious
 Prey, he deploys it ;
 Like shooting star, he
 Scuds through the sky.

Thus shone the recreant
 Ravisher roaming,
 Vaulting thro' veering
 Vapours of night :
 For though in murky
 Mists mourn'd the heavens,
 Sifa's locks dismal
 Darkness dispell'd.

Where'er he flew, in
 Flakes fell the hair down
 O'er Hertha's fertile
 Flower-crown'd fields ;
 Stiffning the wheat-stalks
 Wide-around waving,
 Yarely with yellow
 Gilding the green.

Where'er he flew, in
 Flakes fell the hair down.
 Gleaning on Guldbrand's
 Grain-cover'd vale :

Now on each lively
Lassie it lowers, (1)
Tinging with topaz
Tresses of jet.

Of yore in ringlets
Raven-hued rolling,
Their hair o'ershadowed
Shoulders of snow :
Now they display their
Tresses triumphant,
Golden, like Gefion's,
Like Freya's, fair.



CANTO III.

LOK PROCURES THINGS OF VALUE FROM THE DWARFS.

Lok sat in his hall and thought on his deed,
With his vengeance well content ;
But Sif, o'er the lake as she bow'd her head,
To a flood of tears gave vent :

For no more in ringlets she now can wreathe
Her hair so golden, so shining ;
When her face she view'd in the stream beneath,
She never could cease repining.

But Lok sat under the greenwood tree,
Like the cunning fox by his hole :
Now the earth felt a shock, and began to rock,
And the thunder began to roll.

And well he knows what that sound betides ;
'Twas a sign that Thor was coming :
So, changed to a salmon, he quickly glides
All into the flood so foaming.

But Thor in the shape of a gull dived down,
 And the salmon he caught with his beak :
 “ Thou knave,” quoth he, “ well I knew ’twas thee ;
 Thou shalt bitter rue thy freak.

“ I’ll break and pound every bone of thine,
 As the mill-stone pounds the corn.”
 Now Lok, resuming his shape divine,
 His mischief affects to mourn :

“ Why this rage ?” quoth he, with humble prayer ?
 “ By slaying me where’s thy gain ?
 Sif will not recover a single hair,
 Bald-headed for aye she’ll remain.

“ If thou wilt forgive my frolic this bout,
 (’Twas a sorry frolic, I own,)
 Why then I swear by leek and by crout, (1)
 By the moss on the Bauta-stone, (2)

“ By Odin’s (3) eye, and by Mimer’s fountain,
 By thy hammer and golden car,
 I’ll straight descend to the caves of the mountain,
 To the dwarfs, who my vassals are.

“ And for Sif a new head of hair I’ll bring
 Of gold, before dawn of day ;
 She then will rival the youthful spring
 All deck’d in her flow’rets gay.”

“Thou swear’st by my hammer, but that I’ve lost,”
Indignant the god replies ;
Which well thou know’st, in the ocean toss’d,
In the hands of Ran now lies.”

“Well, then, I’ll procure thee a hammer new,”
Says Lok, the deceiver sly,
“And at the bare sight of that hammer bright,
All the giants, thy foes, will fly.”

“Thou pleadest in vain ; I come with Frey,
My brother in arms so brave :
Thy flesh to the ravens shall food supply,
Thy brains shall float on the wave.”

“O spare me, Frey !” thus Lok made reply,
“Thy mercy I humbly implore ;
I’ll procure thee a steed of such matchless speed,
As the world never saw before.

“All the earth around this courser shall bound,
To mortals a cheering sight ;
And o’er the salt sea ’twill bear thee free,
And shine like herrings at night.”

Now the tears he shed and the vows he made
Have soften’d the Asar twain :
“Go, the depths to brave of the mountain cave,
And, what thou hast sworn, obtain !”

Now like a mole through the rocky hole
He glides, and reaches the place,
Where with all their might, by the sulph'rous light,
Stood working the dwarfish race.

There the bellows blew, and the sparks outflew
Through the vaulted roof so glowing ;
In leathern frock stood the dwarfish flock,
And crystals they all were blowing.

They melted sand in the sea-coal brand,
And mix'd with it leaves of rose ;
By the furnace flame it harden'd became,
And a ruby proud arose.

Now the females stout have gather'd without
Fresh bunches of violets blue ;
And the sapphire bright, to dazzle the sight,
Was produced from the magic stew.

From the juicy mass of concocted grass
An emerald fashion'd appears ;
And pearls they distill'd from a limbeck, fill'd
With widows' and orphans' tears.

In this cavern dark one could straight remark,
That chieftains had play'd of yore ;
For a table there stood, of muscle-shell good,
And of counters and fish a store.

In the rock inlaid was a giantess' head, (4)
 With the bust all changed to stone ;
 And the cascade fell, with its deafening yell,
 All over the calcined bone.

From the giantess' mouth jutting forth he saw
 Huge teeth, as frightful and long
 As those which fill the elephant's jaw,
 Or like those of the walrus strong.

Now Lok to the dwarfs declares his mission,
 The dwarfs to his mandate bow :
 " To thee," they cried, " we all owe submission,
 For our sovereign, Lok ! art thou."

A wild boar's skin was then brought in,
 The largest they well could find ;
 And with their bellows those hardy fellows
 To the work compel the wind.

Now blow upon blow their hammers they throw,
 Till sparks from the skin outflow ;
 But with envy's smart rankled Loptur's heart,
 And his purpose he 'gan to rue :

" To those Asar two I'm compell'd, 'tis true,
 The things I promised, to give ;
 But by Hel I swear, that those presents rare
 Unscathed they shall not receive."

The dwarfs in a ring, round the anvil spring,
And busy the bellows ply ;
But Lok, in his guile, became changed the while
To a huge blue-bottle fly.

On the blower's hand now he took his stand,
And began his skin to prick ;
But he prick'd in vain, the dwarf felt no pain,
For his skin was hard and thick.

But behold ! the steed ('t was for Frey decreed)
Burst forth from amidst the flame,
And the form it bore of a huge wild boar,
And Gyllinbörste its name !

When dark is the night, and no stars give light,
It a meteor's shape assumes ;
Then on it mounts Frey, and rides through the sky,
While its mane all the earth illumines.

Now into a mould a handful of gold
These workmen so skilful threw ;
But when drawn from the flame, O! then it became
An ornament bright to view.

For now 'twas a ring of burnish'd gold ;
Two hands that each other grasp
Were figured thereon, and a precious stone
Was carved as a flower for clasp

'Twas a jewel of weight ; for Odin the great
Was destined this precious ring ;
'Twas a worthy charm, to encircle the arm
Of the Asar's lofty king.

This ring so bright boasts a wondrous might,
'Tis a fact in the north well known,
That eight other rings, on each ninth night,
From the parent ring drop down.

Such rings are the meed, so Odin decreed,
For each constant and loving pair ;
And this ring was found, at the funeral mound,
On the bosom of Balder fair.

Now more iron the crew on the anvil threw,
No flame they for this required ;
And though black and cold, they hammer'd it bold,
Till they gave it the form desired.

When the hammer for Thor, fit weapon of war,
Drew near to its termination,
Lok, fraudulent in mind, and to mischief inclin'd,
Undertook a new transformation,

And, changed to a hornet with painful sting,
He stung the dwarf on the chin ;
And this time the smith felt the pain forthwith,
For the blood flow'd down his skin.

And he drove the hornet away with his hand
 Ere the hammer was finish'd quite ;
 Thus its shaft fail'd in length, but the god of strength
 Grasp'd the weapon with keen delight.

Next a female dwarf took a lump of gold ,
 To her distaff's spindle she bound it ;
 And the wheel went round with a whizzing sound
 And the gold in threads around it.

And she span and span, while the gold thread ran,
 New hair for the Disa mild ;
 She sang by the rill, that flowed from the hill,
 This strain so wizard and wild :

“ The goddess her hair henceforward shall bear
 Loose streaming before the wind ;
 Nor in plait nor in fold shall the ductile gold
 Hereafter her temples bind.

“ Each swain who above shall behold it move
 Like a meteor through the sky, (5)
 His heart 'twill ensnare, for her ringlets fair
 With those of Freya shall vie.

“ Though gold be dead, when it touches the head
 Of that Disa in beauty's bloom,
 'Twill life receive, and easy to weave
 Like flax will it straight become.

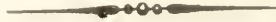
“ Like the high-plum’d crest by the winds carest,
It shall wave and enchant the sight ;
It shall never decay ; like the sun at mid-day
It shall pour forth a wondrous light.”

Thus she sang, and with glee now she bent the knee,
And presented the gift to Thor ;
He gazed on each tress, and must needs confess
Such locks he ne’er saw before.

From the mountain Frey vaults his steed on high,
Thor follows with hammer and hair ;
To the regions of light, where the sire of the fight
Rules in glory, they both repair.

Now on Sifia fair Thor fasten’d the hair ;
It took root like sea-weed on rocks :
Down her lovely face, fraught with ev’ry grace,
It fell down in luxuriant locks.

At Valhalla’s Ting to Odin the ring
Was tender’d with homage due ;
And Lok this time was pardon’d his crime,
But too soon he sinn’d anew.



CANTO III.

THE RAPE OF IDUNA.

ODIN, with Hænir and with Asa-Lok,
Assuming human forms, once on a time
To view the earth a journey undertook.
Odin felt weary of his throne sublime
On Hlidskialf, and he fain would rove
Throughout the world, mankind himself to prove :
While through the forest dark he bends his way,
He gasps for breath, and feels himself but clay.

O'er mountains cover'd with eternal snow
They wander now, and now through Orkner's vale ;
Before them stood, perch'd on the dizzy brow
Of a projecting rock, huge as a whale,
An ice-bear fierce ! naught did the sight
The travellers alarm ; the monster fled,
'Midst heaps of snow to hide himself with dread,
For inwardly he felt the Asar's presence bright.

Thus they advance to where the snow gives way,
 And grass luxuriant grows, and flowers, and corn :
 The rocks, which now before them lay,
 Birch, pine, and larch, and various shrubs adorn.
 Ice-clumps upon the roof no more they view'd,
 Where sleeps the dwarfish Lapp in gloom and smoke ;
 But in the vales strong houses built of wood
 More polish'd life and milder clime bespoke.

No longer rolling in his sledge they view
 The dark-hair'd Finn by nimble rein-deer drawn ;
 The horses' hoofs here boast the iron shoe ;
 The (1) Jarl's proud mansion on the well-trimm'd lawn
 Tow'ring arose, where lay in nuptial dress
 His youthful bride, all grace and loveliness :
 The lark with blithesome carol fills his throat,
 And silences at once the dark owl's screeching note.

Down falling o'er the grass, the dew of heaven
 With pearls besprinkles every flower and stem ;
 Home crawl the peasant's geese by urchin driven ;
 Oxen stand drinking at the limpid stream ;
 He yokes them to the plough ; then whistling, light
 Of heart, with many a furrow scars the field ;
 While the three Asar on earth's bastion sit,
 Like warlike champions arm'd with spear and shield.

Then smil'd the father of the fight,
And said to Lok, who by his side was placed :
“ Methinks, if I have read thy soul aright,
The peasant's provender thou fain wouldst taste.
Of hunger too myself I feel the power ;
By the long march fatigued, my spirits fail :
From Vardoe we are come, in one short hour,
To the dark birchen grove in Guldbrand's dale.

Then laughing, Lok replied : “ Be sure,
Since each ingredient's here at hand,
A good repast Lok's genius will procure ;
Fat oxen in the meadow lowing stand ;
Like the red fox, give but the word,
I'll hie me to the peasant's pantry board ;
To baste our meat his butter will I steal,
At his expense we'll make a glorious meal.

“ In the meanwhile an ox must Hœnir slay,
And with its tepid blood refresh the earth ;
Then with his dagger's point the carcase flay,
While I steal bread from the good peasant's hearth.
Some humble charge thou wilt perhaps consent
To exercise, and think thereof no shame ;
To strike out sparks, for instance, from the flint,
And with dry reeds and faggots feed the flame.”

Then Odin answered, sighing: "Ah! too plain
 I feel, I'm clothed in human clay and dust:
 Men live by rapine; 'tis their trade accurst;
 And what one loses doth another gain.
 Go, then, employ thy nimble heel!
 Follow thy fav'rite trade and steal!
 That we are gods did the good peasant know,
 He'd slaughter all his herd, methinks, his zeal to show."

Now Hœnir kill'd an ox, and Loptur ran
 To th' pantry, where his store the peasant kept;
 Slily on tiptoe through each room he crept,
 And with fresh butter fill'd his can.
 He then took bread made of the finest rye,
 In a white napkin wrapp'd; and as he pass'd
 The hen-roost, all the eggs that met his eye
 He snatch'd up quick and in his basket placed.

Meanwhile did Hœnir not remain
 Inactive long; with much dexterity
 He bound in cords and truss'd the cattle slain,
 And fix'd it 'gainst a trunk of osier nigh.
 He took the bowels out and stripp'd the skin
 From off the flesh; then wash'd away the blood
 From the fat-cover'd thighs and ample chine,
 And with his prize content, exclaim'd that all was good.

But Odin, he who through the world's expanse
Hath launch'd the sun in sempiternal course,
And lighting with his torch her golden lance
Instructs her how to guide her matchless force ;
Who, from that sun borrowing her fainter rays,
Hath to the moon a milder radiance given,
And bade small sparks innumerable blaze
Athwart the pole, when night envelops heaven :

Now humbler functions Odin's labours claim ;
With flint and steel he now proceeds
To elicit many a spark, and feed the flame
With faggots, wither'd branches, and dry reeds ;
And soon the smoke's white column rose
In spiral motion from the burning straw.
With conscious pride now Odin's bosom glows
To mark the strict observance of his law.

His glorious eye moisten'd with many a tear,
Thus he exclaims, with pride and joy elate :
“ O wonderful in small things as in great,
In what is distant as in what is near !
In one small rain-drop equally divine,
Ægir ! as in thy ocean : Odin too
In one small flint-drawn spark doth equal shine ,
As when the sun's vast orb he launch'd in ether blue !

"And Thor! when thou dost hurl thy lightning down,
 What dost thou more than I do now, my son?"
 Now Lok return'd with butter, salt, and eggs,
 Proud of his robbery and nimble legs;
 The weazles, foxes, rats, as he pass'd by,
 Jump'd from their holes and thus began to squeal:
 "Lo! there he goes, our god, so trippingly!
 Well doth he teach his subjects how to steal."

Then Odin laugh'd: "This loss will I repair,
 Lok's theft the honest swain shall not regret,
 For harvests thousandfold his fields shall bear;
 This for the stolen bread will compensate.
 His flocks and herds with wondrous increase fill'd
 Shall for the butter make amends, I trow:
 And for the salt, on every child
 Of his will I prudence and wit bestow.

While Hænir to divide the carcase toil'd,
 To a sharp spit a pine-branch Loptur filed;
 Then felling two small trees, firm in the ground
 One end he fix'd; the other end he clove
 Of each, and on them turn'd the spit around:
 Nor did he long delay his skill to prove;
 He skewer'd each joint, then fed the flame, and plied
 The labours of the cook with joy and pride.

While thus he stood watching each bubbling joint,
To some short distance were his comrades gone ;
When he surmised the roast enough was done,
He prick'd it often with his dagger's point :
Yet still dropp'd from the flesh the tepid gore,
As if it from a living creature came ;
And though the fire he nourish'd more and more,
Heavier and duller burn'd the flame.

Thwarted by such delay, he stands aghast,
And ever and anon consults the sky ;
When lo ! an eagle of dimensions vast (2)
With threat'ning aspect fix'd his eye,
With outspread wings, as midnight vapours dark,
Perch'd on the branches of an elm-tree lithe ;
Forth jutting from the leaves, its beak so stark
Shone crook'd and polish'd as a reaper's scythe.

As th' *ignis fatuus* over marsh and mire
At midnight a malignant radiance flings ;
Thus glared the giant bird with eyes of fire,
And gazed upon the roast, and clapp'd its wings.
Behold a dire mischance the cook befell !
Down fell the cloven trees ! and with them fell
The ox ! the eagle still with frightful leer
Gazed on the flame, which now went out from fear.

" Why sitst thou there ? by what accurst device
 Thus jugglest thou, " said Lok, " to spoil the meat ? "
 " Of thy good cheer I fain would taste a slice, "
 Answer'd the eagle, " for my hunger's great :
 If then thou'lt treat me as thy guest,
 Thy roast shall expeditiously be drest. "
 Thus said, the bird his swarthy pinions shakes,
 And hops down from the tree, and gnaws the steaks.

With bitter gall now swell'd the breast of Lok ;
 He grasp'd in both his hands a pond'rous spear ;
 But vain his efforts all, as if he struck
 In the dark night the vacant air.
 The eagle's beak caught one end of the lance,
 While Loptur's hands fast to the other clung ;
 High soar'd the eagle through the heaven's expanse,
 While dangling to the lance his foe with terror hung.

Borne by the goblin through the airy space,
 O'er forest, hill and dale flies Asa Lok ;
 Now dip his legs into the deep morass ;
 Now strike against each sharp projecting rock :
 The frogs all grin, the eagle laughs aloud ;
 Who feels compassion for a Nidding base ?
 The marsh bespatters all his limbs with mud,
 And brambles, brakes, and thorns his features fair deface.

Bruised by the rocks, now drip with blood his feet ;
He weeps ; but cold the cliff beholds his pain :
Against his bosom mercilessly beat
The howling tempest, hail, and snow, and rain.
Now in the ocean deep immersed he lies,
A hedgehog like with mackerel bedight :
Now borne aloft athwart the sunny skies,
A swarm of bees upon his forehead light.

Much did he pray and promise, but in vain ;
Now Thor invoked, now loud to Odin screech'd :
The goblin still pursued his course amain,
Until a mountain's snow-clad top he reach'd :
He there with iron fetters strong and tight
Bound fast the caitiff to a rugged rock ;
Then jeering cried : " Sit there, thou treach'rous wight !
Sit there, and groan in chains till Ragnarok ! "

Then Lok with humble mien and piteous face :
" Thou viewst me, I perceive, O chief ! with hate,
And I deserve it ; how could I forget,
That I too sprung from the brave mountain race ?
But if my arguments thou'lt deign to hear,
And give me back my liberty so dear,
My cunning shall the Asur's strength enthrall,
And in one common ruin plunge them all.

“ Well then ! ” the goblin drily thus replied,
“ If I release thee from these realms of night,
And give thee back to liberty and light,
Wilt thou by my conditions strict abide ?
Then ponder well, and swear to my demand !
Thou shalt procure, and place at my command
That which is held in greatest estimation,
The gods’ best gift, since first the world’s creation.

“ Behold where Bragur’s wife, Iduna hight,
Dwells in her bower employ’d in household care !
Like shell of snail, (3) around her forehead bright,
Is wreath’d in many a fold her radiant hair ;
Straight as the poplar is her shape ; her mien,
Her varied grace, no words have power to tell ;
While bounding ’neath the silken veil so green
The plump luxuriant snowy hillocks swell.

“ A vessel rare of burnish’d gold
That Disa in her hands is wont to hold ;
From Asagard ’twas brought, where on the ground
By Odin, Vil, and Ve ’twas found ;
Not easy ’tis the images pourtray’d
Thereon to guess ; one reaps, another sows ;
The sun, emerging from dark vapour, glows,
Charm’d by the magic murmurs of a maid.

“ An apple in that vessel claims her care,
Red as a rose, yellow as wax to view;
A power divine reigns in that fruit so rare,
The power, health, youth and beauty to renew.
The influence of time is never seen,
Or felt by those, who on that apple feast;
And every Disa, who its juice doth taste,
Maintains the bloom and freshness of eighteen.

“ Without this fruit so precious, where, Oh! where
Would be their godlike strength, and beauty rare?
Each goddess would resemble Hela grim,
Did not this juice invigorate each limb.
E'en as each furrow on the sandy waste
Is levell'd by the wind, and disappears,
Thus full and white becomes the flabby breast,
As when the funeral mound its snowy vestment wears.

“ Just as the spark ignites the branches dry,
That juice gives lustre to the old man's eye:
But for that drink, youth's fervid glow
In Odin's veins long since had ceased to flow:
Did not Iduna mingle every morn
That apple's juice i' th' liquor brew'd for Thor,
The world his boasted strength would laugh to scorn,
Spite of his belt, his gauntlets, and his car.

" No raven's scream in Idun's grove is heard ;
 Nor ever jars the ear the cricket's cry :
 For Asa-Bragur the celestial bard
 All nature animates with harpings high.
 Now towards the east he turns his fond regard ;
 And when the sun, fresh bursting from the sky,
 Spreads o'er the ravish'd earth its magic shine,
 He strikes the golden harp, and chaunts a lay divine.

" Cheer'd by the glorious sound all creatures smile,
 From every flower and plant bright tear-drops flow ;
 Then feels the earth a soft and holy thrill,
 And the spring blushes with a deeper glow ;
 Then beats with love the maiden's heart still more ;
 Then dreams of bliss the dying old man soothe ;
 Immortal strains console his parting hour,
 And to bright Gimle's realm the awful passage smooth.

" If in my power thou'lt place the beauteous wife
 Of Bragur, with her vessel rare of gold,
 I'll give thee liberty again and life,
 And loose thee from this mountain-prison cold. "

" Well then," quick answer'd Lok, " I swear, I swear,"

" Nay ! " Thiasse grim replied with bitter mock,
 " Thy ape-like oaths and vows thou well mayst spare ;
 No one, be sure, will trust the oath of Lok.

“ To all an object of contempt and scorn
Thee gods and giants equally despise ;
Mere froth and scum each oath by thee that's sworn,
A cloud that into vapour melts and flies :
No ! vacillating traitor ! fraudulent swain !
For thy good faith I must have surer ground :
The peasant's dog is fasten'd with a chain ;
With his own mouth shall Lok be bound.

“ The venom-swelter'd serpent brood
Their poison in their hollow teeth collect,
And only then the venom takes effect,
When, pierced the skin, it mingles with the blood :
If from its gums each tooth be torn,
Harmless becomes the snake and innocent ;
Around the neck, or arm, or waist 'tis worn,
A strange, but still innocuous ornament.

“ But far more mischief, traitor ! than the snake,
Thou causest with thy sland'rous tongue alone :
Well, then ! this trial I'm disposed to make :
Deprived of speech, thou shalt thy crimes atone.”
No sooner said than done, the giant took
A diamond pin, steel thread ; and now with glee
Together fast he sew'd the lips of Lok :
Ye gods ! in truth, 'twas droll to see.

" Hold! hold! I faint—I die," said Lok
 With frightful howl—" one word—I feel such pain—
 For mercy's sake—I cannot breathe—I choke—"

" Breathe with thy nostrils! thou hast twain ;"—
 Answer'd the giant : and with double seam
 Continued fast his captive's lips to sow,
 Naught caring for his piteous scream :
 This done, some magic runes he murmur'd low.

" Now, then, I have thee safe : now, caitiff! hie
 To the green bower, where fair Iduna dwells!
 To my own hall i' th' hardwood grove I fly,
 Where Cape North's granite front the surge repels.
 There bring to me forthwith my wish'd for prey!
 Once in my arms the fruit and goddess lay!
 Then will I straight thy mouth unbind,
 And all our mountain race shall hail thee friend."

Then of his own contrivance proud,
 And loudly laughing, Thiasse let him go.
 And now behold the once loquaciousg od,
 Dumb, spiritless, the lowest of the low!
 Like partridge, when by hawk pursued across
 The sky it flies, glad to escape within
 Its straw-built nest, though with the loss
 Of half its plumage, and with bleeding skin.

But now, when near to Asa-gard arrived,
 Tortured in mind and raging with his smart :
 “ Unheard of (thus he thought), of speech deprived,
 How shall I now seduce a female heart ?
 By cunning, not by force, must this be done ;
 But how can I my cunning bring to pass ?
 Who both as weak and dumb to all is known,
 Must ever for a hopeless blockhead pass.”

Much musing on his errand night and day,
 His brain a thought conceiv'd that pleased him well :
 Could not a rune, carv'd on a staff, convey,
 As well as word of mouth, a fraudulent tale ?
 Warm, unsuspecting is Iduna's heart ;
 As genuine spouse of Bragar well she loves
 To listen to a strain that pity moves ;
 And Lok is no small master of his art.

He drew his knife, delighted with the plan,
 And cut a long stick from a neighb'ring wood ;
 His theme of lies he then forthwith began,
 And lied, as far, as the stick's length allow'd.
 These were the runes he carv'd. “ There is a tree
 In th' giants' orchard, on whose branches grow
 Apples of wondrous flavour, three by three,
 With tint, like the sun's purple blush on snow.

" These apples a more powerful juice contain,
 Than those thou keepest in thy golden cup.
 This liquor rare could once the Asar drain,
 All Jotunheim before their arms must stoop.
 To hide that precious fruit from the world's eye
 Has been the giants' constant industry:
 Thus have they, to avert the menaced doom,
 Enwrapp'd that grove in sempiternal gloom.

" But a young giantess (O power of love!)
 Th' important secret hath to me reveal'd,
 And shown the road to the mysterious grove,
 Where flourishes that glorious tree conceal'd.
 But lo! while on our route, a goblin lay
 In wait for us behind the brazen wall,
 And, fearful we the secret might betray,
 Hath let on Lok peculiar vengeance fall.

" To close my mouth the giant has thought fit
 With diamond needle, and with thread of steel;
 Yet naught his ruthless act, nor murmur'd spell
 Hath power to damp my mother wit:
 That, thanks to Mimer, in the hour of need
 To Lok will never fail; that still is free:
 And thus upon this staff with speed
 The giants' secret have I traced for thee.

"If with thy apple of eternal youth
 Thou wouldst attend me to the giants' grove,
 Then would the threads burst from my bleeding mouth,
 Without thy aid the task would idle prove.
 So sure and simple is the stratagem,
 I need not pluck those apples from their stem,
 Thou needst but touch them with thy fingers white,
 They'll instant fall into thy vessel bright."

These runes he carv'd, and with the staff he flew
 To th' arbour in the grove across the sea,
 Where sat Iduna with her eyes of blue,
 Under the shade of her own apple-tree.
 Mindful of wondrous scenes, she fix'd her look
 Stedfast on every beast that wander'd by ;
 But most the graceful stag engaged her eye,
 Ogling his own proud form in the pellucid brook.

A fountain bubbling near with eddying flow
 Fills the transparent stream : with motion fleet
 A cygnet scuds across, and at the feet
 Of his fair mistress makes obeisance low :
 There with her vessel sat the goddess meek,
 And fed her fav'rite swan with crumbs of bread
 While ever and anon he plunged his beak
 Within the circles by the bread-crumbs made.

Absent was Bragur; he Alfader's might
 Was chaunting in shield-cover'd Valaskialf :
 With rapture listen'd every Asa bright,
 And every Disa fair, and radiant Alf.
 Mimer had also left his fav'rite care ;
 Thus like an artless child Iduna lay,
 And unsuspecting fell an easy prey
 Into the treach'rous Lok's malignant snare.

His bleeding mouth with pity she beheld ;
 And when to reinforce his runes of guile
 His eyes shed tears like those of crocodile,
 With grief oppress'd her gentle bosom swell'd :
 She reach'd to him her hand so lily white,
 And spreading wide her feather'd garment light,
 Wafted herself and Loptur far away
 Towards the dark hard-wood grove, where Thiass expect-
 [tant lay.

Soaring athwart the azure plains on high,
 Radiant was she and glorious to behold,
 As in the groves of Ind or Araby
 The bird of paradise with train of gold :
 When lo ! a griffin black rush'd from his lair,
 Pounced with his talons on th' affrighted fair,
 And bore her far away ! the giants' scream of joy
 Reechoed from the rocks to welcome their decoy !

The Disa then too late her error found,
And wept: the winds with zeal and love intense
Waft down her tears to Ocean's caves profound,
And there to pearls those precious drops condense.
And when her last farewell Iduna sigh'd,
A mournful plaint re-echoed from the vale:
The stagnant air blasts all the lily's pride;
No more the roses' perfume scents the gale.

A dew lethargic, noisome, humid, cold
Around the heavens its veil malignant spread!
And lo! the sun shorn of its rays of gold
In midst of vapour stood with disk blood-red!
And cold became the whilom jocund breast
Of-ev'ry hero and of ev'ry maid;
Far towards the south the feather'd songsters prest,
And with them too all joy and gladness fled!

CANTO XIV.

THE DELIVERANCE OF IDUNA.

As vanish 'fore the wind the vapours light,
Thus sinks each action of the human race
Into th' abyss of sempiternal night ;
One billow sinks ; another mounts apace :
Alternate peace coquetting plays with war ;
Now in the sheath the glaive inglorious lies,
And now with glitt'ring menace flouts the air :
'Tis all a juggle—a butterfly, that hies
Careless from flower to flower—pairs with its kind—and
[dies.

Why boast in fight thy prowess, warrior wild ?
What was it ? scum—mere froth upon the sea
Of time—self-love impell'd thee—fortune smiled—
Thy docile troop must needs their Chief obey.
But come, lay bare thy heart ! and at the shrine
Of truth confess ! (concealment now were shame)
Where is the merit of that act of thine,
That made thee rival of thy father's fame ?
That thou didst death defy ? Doth not a beast the same ?

Where Timour pulverized in days of yore
Whole hecatombs of foes at Samarcand,
The loose sand whirls in eddies as before,
Nor of that triumph doth one record stand :
The meadows still display their emerald sheen,
Forgetful of the day, when frantic war
With streams of blood incarnadined the green ;
No longer now the traveller's vision scare
Huge piles of human skulls, long since dispersed in air.

And who art thou whose quenchless thirst of fame
Thus furiously lays waste th' affrighted earth ?
Not near so puissant as the nightly flame,
Which the volcano's entrails vomit forth.
The harden'd lava-streams *its* force attest,
And though a thousand long long years have fled,
Give to the swelling grape its poignant zest :
Thy deed, like ashes, moulders with the dead ;
The ravens on thy fame, as on thy limbs, have fed.

Yet do not thou crow neither, little gnome
Who sittest in thy workshop snug, and filest ;
Who safe intrench'd within thy rocky dome,
Lookst down securely on the fight, and smilest,
As looks the lamb upon the wolf below :
Who thinkst the awl a better instrument
Than Aukthor's hammer : thou requirest too
Iduna's apple, if thou beest intent
To reach thy labour's goal, and shine pre-eminent.

Whoever, dwarf or giant, seeks to rise (1)
From his low cave to genius' source divine,
Let him towards thee, Iduna! lift his eyes,
And view, where burning incense at thy shrine
Bragur with Mimer, Balder, chaunt all hail,
And in thy praise their lofty strains unite:
No real hero will thy blessing fail,
And future Scalds his actions shall recite,
And o'er his tomb describe an endless halo bright.

How flat unprofitable life would flow,
Unquicken'd, Idun, by thy apple's zest!
Deprived of Mimer's fount, how mean and low
Were man's existence, by vile cares opprest!
Dark Surtur chaunts the song of triumph loud,
To see the lov'd Iduna captive borne:
While Lok, of his successful mischief proud,
Joys in his heart to see the Asar mourn,
And Valhall's glories fled, and Valaskialf forlorn.

Now when the sun arose, by vapours foul
Obscured, it fill'd no bosom with delight;
When the dull moon slow climb'd from pole to pole,
It heard no amorous plaint disturb the night.
No longer travels with his car and goats
The once aspiring Thor; now deaf to praise
He throws aside his club; he raves; he dotes;
While Illidskialf, Odin's dome, shorn of its rays,
No longer warms the earth with heart-consoling blaze.

And Freya's bosom, once so proud to view,
 Now sinks like snow before the solar beam :
 Her golden hair assumes a silver hue ;
 Her once blue eyes two gelid rain-drops seem.
 Heimdal, who on his rainbow stood betimes
 Shining amidst his seven colours bright,
 Discover'd frightful witches mutt'ring rhimes
 Of direst import, with black caps bedight,
 And wings, like those of bat, loud flapping in the night.

With a lethargic mist they veil the sky,
 And summon Skada from her grot profound :
 While Niord, before whose lance all vapours fly,
 Rests in his cell, in magic slumbers bound.
 Now Skada, mounted on her glander'd horse,
 Whose nostrils, frightful snorting, taint the gale,
 Each night uncheck'd pursues her baneful course :
 Athwart the clouds her murky sisters sail,
 And with loud shrieks of woe th' affrighted earth assail.

Each star now veils its front, which once in guise
 Of lamp illumed the heavens : the seaman bold,
 Who, sailing in the Kattegat, (2) defies
 The foaming billow and the tempest cold,
 Hath lost his rudder ; and when in despair
 He to his anchor needs recourse must have,
 Behold ! the cable stiff with frozen air
 Cannot be bent : death rides upon the wave.
 And stares with beamless eye, and shakes his icy glaive !

When summer came, no sunbeam cheer'd the vale ;
 Like slave, the wretched swain must groan and sweat :
 His house, his tools, his clothing he must sell ;
 His only thoughts were rye, and oats, and wheat :
 He had forgotten quite to bend the knee
 In humble duty fore Alfader's throne :
 His horse was far more dignified than he ;
 He felt with inward pang, and needs must own
 His watch-dog's heart more warm, more faithful than his
[own.

No longer now the warriors, as before,
 Sit at the board of their crown'd chieftain high,
 Gentle yet awful, worthy sons of Thor,
 Soft temper'd by the radiance mild of Frey :
 In scurrilous abuse and words of shame
 To jealousy and hate they now give vent ;
 To slur and vilify his comrade's fame,
 More than to raise his own, each chief is bent ;
 Ignoble quarrels mark their envious discontent.

When the Scald sung, 'twas raving coarse and wild,
 No longer Gimle's inspiration sure ;
 No longer from thy breast, O nature mild !
 He drew the milk so bountiful, so pure ;
 His only nurses now were prejudice
 And discord, each a foul-mouth'd envious quean :
 His aim is now, deep grovelling in vice,
 To please the multitude with jest obscene,
 To flatter or to mock, calumniate and feign.

Once Saga sat, and on her shield engraved
Each act of virtue generous, good, and great :
Of graver and of buckler now bereaved,
She pines, unconscious of the world's debate :
The fond devotion to the public weal,
The scenes of Nidaros and Leir in vain
Crowd fore her eyes, and to her sense appeal :
The heron of oblivion clouds her brain ;
Self-interest views the oak and laurel with disdain.

Sage Mimer griev'd the world's mischance to know,
And Balder mark'd it in his bright abode :
With bitter tears see Mimer's fountain flow !
The sap no longer gives the kernel food.
And Balder, gentle-hearted as a maid,
Visited Mimer in his cavern cold :
At once the rueful change they both survey'd :
'Twas night, and Balder sat with locks of gold,
His once unruffled brow in gloomy wrinkles roll'd.

'Twas easy to perceive all joy was fled ;
Each goddess had her youth and beauty lost.
What wonder Mimer bow'd his laurell'd head,
At such discovery sad, dishearten'd, crost ?
What wonder Balder, once serene and meek,
To omens dire should yield himself a prey ?
Hear him with quiv'ring lip and hectic cheek,
Grief in his heart, and madness in his eye,
Rave incoherent strains, wild gazing at the sky !

Now at the ash Yggdrassil they alight,
Whose branches o'er the earth their shade extend ;
The holy tree, to which the Asar bright
Down from the bridge of Bifrost all descend.
There, as a shepherd watches o'er his flock,
Odin, enthroned as judge supreme, appears ;
Examines every cause with piercing look ;
Enacts new laws ; pronounces doom ; and hears
What from the nether world his courier Hermod bears.

In this immortal ash an eagle lives ;
All things it sees, and straight imparts the same
To Odin's ravens : (4) but no longer thrives,
Vigilant as before, its look of flame.
Thick murky vapours an unwholesome veil
Spread o'er the tree, and glide with motion fleet
O'er rock, and marsh, o'er forest, hill, and dale :
The squirrel crouching at the eagle's feet
Hath naught but rotten fruit and hollow nuts to eat.

Balder and Mimer now direct their course,
Passing that tree, to Urda's mystic stream :
The forest path conducts them to the source,
Which from the rock bursts forth with silv'ry gleam :
Fragments of stone with ivy overspread
Choke up the passage to the silent dell,
To all impervious, but the Asar dread :
Berries and flowers the sacred fount conceal ;
Pine forests thick around each eye profane repel.

But every growth was blighted! and behold
 On the stream's brink the Norna Skulda sat,
 With finger on her lips, and aspect cold,
 The awful guardian of the book of fate:
 Omniscient queen, whose mind can fathom all
 That to Alfader's self remains unknown.
 Enormous wings adown her shoulders fall:
 A fillet broad upon her forehead shone,
 With many a mystic rune and strange device thereon.

Green was her garment; towards the fountain now,
 Now towards the days to come she turns her eye.
 Wrapp'd in a sable shroud with tranquil brow,
 But with averted face, sits Urda nigh.
 Here with her sisters twain Verdandis too,
 Mistress of time, resides: her garment bright
 Was interwov'n with scales of various hue.
 These females all are of gigantic height;
 None dare dispute their will; resistless is their might.

Sleep never ventures here: the Nornor's eyes
 Do never close, whether the mid-day sun
 Or radiant stars illuminate the skies:
 Awake they sit, though motionless like stone.
 Urda the actions of the past unveils;
 Skulda the future cons with prudence meet:
 Meanwhile Verdandis weighs in golden scales
 The present gifts, the gods to send think fit,
 A sceptre or a grave; a triumph or defeat.

Immoveable they sit, mute as the grave,
 Like sphinx of marble on the Theban plain ;
 While shine reflected in the limpid wave
 The figures of the awful virgin train.
 Impatient the decrees of fate to learn
 Oft to this grove the proud Valkyrior come ;
 With questions sharp assail the Nornor stern,
 Then soar aloft, through the wide world to roam,
 And fill the troubled air with strange prophetic doom.

Thus Mimer to the lofty Skulda spoke :
 " O thou ! who feelest neither joy nor woe,
 Hostile to none, friendly to none ; whose look,
 Like that of falcon ardent, can pierce through
 The blackest night, whether the dove doth coo,
 Or the sword clash, alike unmoved ; my prayer
 Do not reject ! and O resolve me true
 The great enigma ! shall Idunà fair
 Again, freed from her chains, respire her natal air ?"

The virgin breast of Skulda swell'd awhile :
 What marble seem'd, now moved with high pulsation ;
 She gazed on Mimer ; and he thought, a smile
 Play'd on her mouth ; it gave him consolation.
 Urda's fount ceased to rustle through the dell ;
 From Skulda's lips resounds this solemn strain :
 " When bravery shall fickle time compel
 To constancy, and fast the recreant chain,
 Upon the wings of love health shall fly home again."

She spoke. In sable clouds Night veils her brow ;
 And sooth'd with hope, Earth's bosom gently heaves:
 The fount calls to its water: "Swell and flow!"
 The blast loud whistles through the arid leaves.
 Homeward with joy now hie the Asar twain,
 For well the Nornor's speech they comprehend:
 They oft repeat the heart-consoling strain,
 While floating in the air they swift ascend,
 And eager still their course towards bright Valhalla bend.

"When bravery shall fickle time compel
 To constancy, shall health fly home again
 Upon the wings of love." Thus through the dell
 Re-echoed wide the solemn Nornor's strain.
 "What other god but Thor can solve this spell?
 Juggler of time is Lok, we all agree;
 And Thor alone can Lok subdue—'tis well—
 The Queen of Love preserves the prison key,
 'Tis said, that Queen alone can set Iduna free.

These words were ponder'd oft the gods among;
 Thor seized their import; red as blood his cheek
 With anger, from his bench he quickly sprung,
 And grasp'd the pallid Loptur by the neck:
 And lo! as round the spindle turns the wheel,
 When busy housewife spins her flax with glee,
 Thus Thor twirl'd Lok around from head to heel;
 And now he touch'd the moon, and now the sea,
 While at the caitiff's screams the gods laugh'd heartily.

"Thy being is a composition strange
 Of Asagard and Helheim (thus said Thor):
 Force must compel thee to repent and change;
 Thou must be shook like oil and vinegar,
 When in a vessel mix'd: but, traitor! say!
 Ere from thy worthless trunk thy head be torn,
 Wilt thou amend? wilt thou my voice obey?
 Wilt thou, on the light wings of Freya borne,
 Bring back Iduna straight to Valaskialf forlorn?"

A coward and a traitor both is Lok,
 And want of firmness all his acts reveal:
 Fearful to be whirl'd round again and shook,
 Lowly at Aukthor's feet behold him kneel!
 "If the bright Queen, the fairest of the fair,
 The lily, which adorns Folkvangur's plain,
 Freya, will lend her wings, I solemn swear,
 Spite of all spells, to loose Iduna's chain,
 And bring the goddess back to Asagard again.

"My soul's resolv'd; naught shall my purpose bend,
 The beauteous captive's sufferings deep I feel:
 Foul Thiase was to blame; by him constrain'd
 Was I the goddess and her vase to steal.
 But o'er the forest's pines and ocean's wave,
 Cloth'd like a bird with gentle Freya's wing,
 I'll hie me swiftly to the giant's cave,
 And back in triumph fair Iduna bring:
 Health, youth, and strength again in Valaskialf shall spring."

To fetch her pinions Freya was not slow ;
 Her hands to fix them on Lok's shoulders deign.
 Aye, and much more would she have giv'n, I trow,
 Her own lost youth and beauty to regain.
 Now Lok for his past conduct feeling shame,
 And mindful too of Thiasse's bitter mock,
 O'er hill and dale, and marsh, and forest, came
 To where, deep in the bowels of the rock,
 The fair Iduna sigh'd, conceal'd in gloom and smoke.

But in the dark Lok finds his way most sure :
 Naught was he daunted by the giant's spell ;
 On Freya's wings relies the god secure,
 Which time defy, and brave the power of steel.
 His course he steers, thorns, brakes, and briars among ;
 Now like an owl he has recourse to flight ;
 Now like a cat he needs must creep along.
 At length the secret cave appears in sight,
 Where rocks piled upon rocks conceal the treasure bright.

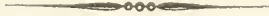
Immers'd in grief the fair Iduna sat
 Like marble statue on a monument ;
 Upon the sea of time so desolate,
 Which never ebbs, her look despairing bent.
 But spite of every hindrance, Asa-Lok
 Into the gloomy cavern forced his way,
 Where pined the Disa fetter'd to the rock :
 Some words of comfort scarce he stopp'd to say,
 But caught her in his arms, and bore her far away.

While they together flew o'er land and sea,
 Behold ! a bale fire vast illumes the north !
 'Twas Asa-gard whence Odin, Vil, and Ve
 Sent messages to Lok o'er all the earth.
 But now blest tidings all Valhalla cheer :
 Iduna, borne by Lok, arrives in view !
 Scarce did the nymph in Odin's dome appear.
 Away all care and pain and sorrow flew ;
 Each flow'ret oped again its chalice to the dew.

The lark now sang ; each goddess felt the charm ;
 Again their bosom with youth's fullness swell'd :
 Odin again felt vigour in his arm,
 And Thor once more aloft his hammer held.
 Again the sun lent to the moon its gold,
 And lit anew the radiant rings on high.
 Mimer no more his brow in wrinkles roll'd :
 Balder no longer, madness in his eye,
 Raved incoherent strains, wild gazing at the sky.

And lo ! obscures the sky a vision vast,
 Awful, but not unpleasing to behold !
 'Tis Thiase ! who his prey pursuing fast
 Hath become dazzled by the bale-fire's gold.
 He flutters round it long with sable wings ;
 E'en as the moth, attracted by the fire,
 Into the flame abrupt its body flings ;
 Th' enormous Jotun-fly doth thus expire,
 By his own impulse hurl'd against the blazing pyre.

E'en so doth every frightful vision dire,
Which terrifies mankind i' th' hour of night,
Dissolve, when blazes forth the gorgeous pyre,
Which from the east dispenses warmth and light.
And thus the genial dew, which falls in spring,
Sheds tears of gladness on each plant around:
And every lively bird doth tuneful sing,
Inspired with joy, like Bragur, when he found
His darling wife once more in his embraces bound.



CANTO XV.

THE VANER. (1)

ERE in days of yore the lofty Asar
Schemes of conquest to devise began,
Ruling their ancestral mountain region
Near the plains of bounteous Ginnistan; (2)
Ere they, on proud coursers prancing,
Scorning danger, sallied forth,
Giants quelling,
Dwarfs compelling,
Towards the granite strong-holds of the North.

Oft with friendly mien the peaceful Vaner
With them sought alliance to cement :
'Twas the Vaner taught the race of Odin
Art and science, life's best blandishment :
Taught them to root out the thistle,
And with flowers to deck the field ;
Then to prove
Faith and love,
Niord the horseman swift as hostage yield.

Drought severe oft forest, vale and meadow,
 Suffer'd from the ardent solar flame ;
 But no sooner Niord bestrode his courser,
 Fresh and cool the air at once became :
 He dispels each noxious vapour,
 Paints the sky with azure hue ;
 Precious arts
 He imparts,
 Nature to adorn and strengthen too.

By his sister he became the father
 First of Frey, and then of Freya fair ;
 By the Vaner's law he chose his consort.
 Such a tie is not illicit there.
 Both were lovely, joy'd to kindle
 In man's breast the amorous flame :
 Such a nation
 Still keeps station
 On Caucasian steeps, with well-earn'd fame.

Now behold the dynasts of Valhalla
 Swift their course from Asia's valleys bend,
 Southern fire and Orient's lofty genius
 With the North's more sober blood to blend !
 Naught their earnest wish concealing,
 Niord their soft entreaties gain :
 Straight doth Niord (3)
 Pledge his word,
 And with son and daughter join their train.

Odin spake : " Th' unconquer'd North invites us
 With her fir-clad mountains wild and drear !
 There the beechen forest waves majestic,
 Redolent with Ocean's healthful air !
 Thither will I lead my Asar,
 On those rocks my legions spread :
 Thou, O Thor !
 During war.
 During peace shall Odin take the lead,

Planting on each isle and rock their banner,
 Shall our bands victorious still advance :
 On those rugged cliffs shall oft give battle ;
 Oft our skiffs on foaming billows dance.
 Think ! when with the force of iron
 Mingles Orient's genial flame,
 What a race,
 Full of grace,
 Rising there, the world's applause shall claim ! "

Joyful on his winged courser mounted,
 Niord for the whole army clear'd the road ;
 Drying up each marsh, each mist dispelling, (4)
 Fearless through impervious wilds he rode.
 Never weary, flying, swimming,
 Proud his steed pursues his course :
 Winds compelling,
 Skiffs propelling,
 Nature bows to Niord's resistless force.

Glorious to behold was Niord the hero,
 As he pranced along the meadows gay :
 Graceful through the sky his courser's pinions
 Floated like a dream i' th' morning grey :
 Quick he views, and leaves as quickly,
 All he finds, both far and near :
 With bright beams .
 Proudly gleams,
 Perch'd upon his helm, the morning star.

Of your aid deprived, O skilful Vaner !
 What were in the north the Asar's power ?
 What would then avail thy wisdom, Odin ?
 What avail thy boasted strength, O Thor ?
 Frey midst thorns and brakes and briars
 Flax and corn benignant sows :
 On mankind,
 Ever kind,
 Freya offspring beautiful bestows.

She herself obtain'd a handsome bridegroom ;
 Odur was he call'd on India's plain : (5)
 On the banks of Ganges first she met him,
 Tow'ring midst a numerous warlike train :
 Crown'd with garlands, hymns reciting,
 Swains and maidens round him throng :
 With loud crash
 Cymbals clash :
 Rocks re-echo the triumphal song.

See him on his golden car high seated
Drawn by lions and by tigers strong !
These, compell'd by his heroic valour,
Humbly drag his chariot wheels along :
Laurel wreaths aloft extending,
Nymphs precede the car and sing ;
Drum and flute,
Lyre and lute,
To the chaunt their aid harmonious bring.

From the dark recesses of the forest
Started forth the grim ferocious bands !
Ravish'd at the sound of drum and cymbal,
With delight they danced and clapp'd their hands.
Odur by the crystal fountain
Stopp'd them in the shady glen ;
There he tamed,
And reclaimed
To the arts of peace those savage men.

Now on every slope and sun-tipp'd mountain
Most exposed to Muspel's genial heat,
Near the wave, the branches green he planted,
Which produce the raisin's treasure sweet :
Soon from him the valley's children
Learn the art to press the vine :
From its blood,
Grateful food,
Love finds nurture for its flame divine.

In the grove the amorous god presented
 To the goddess bright the jovial bowl :
 Clust'ring grapes and leaves adorn his forehead ;
 Pleasure-breathing looks reveal his soul :
 Smooth his limbs like those of woman,
 Still a vigorous male was he :
 Yet the fair
 Disa's hair
 Bound him fast, and made him bend the knee.

From the trees so green the birds delighted
 Mark each fond caress, each amorous freak ;
 How she with her hands of alabaster
 Fondly pats the hero's sun-burnt cheek :
 Like the billows' foam, her bosom
 Proudly swell'd, exposed and bare :
 Every flower
 Witness bore
 To the transports of the beauteous pair.

Freya now became the spouse of Odur ;
 Seldom could the lovers separate.
 When the Asar from their old dominion
 Sallied forth to found the northern state,
 In his chariot drawn by leopards
 Odur seated with his spouse
 In his arms,
 On her charms
 Gazing ever, plights eternal vows.

Much it cost the hero to relinquish
 Such a land, the parent of the vine ;
 But who would not, far beyond the raisin,
 Prize a lovely female's charms divine ?
 Still he took his vine-plants with him,
 Mindful of his precious art :
 Oft in glowing
 Cups o'erflowing
 Odur's gift refreshes Odin's heart.

Thus, while all the other gods of Valhall
 Drain the goblet fill'd with mead and ale,
 Odin with the apple of Iduna,
 Or with wine, enjoys his best regale :
 And when Odur fled from Freya.
 'Scaping from the gelid north,
 He bestow'd
 On the god
 What he deem'd the gift of greatest worth.

How could he forget the lovely Disa
 After such enjoyment rich and rare ?
 How thus tear himself away unfeeling
 From a bosom so divinely fair ?
 Yet he'd oft, in bliss dissolving,
 Term his spouse his greatest treasure ;
 With delight
 On that night
 Oft he thought entranced, and wept with pleasure.

But when Thiasse carried off Iduna,
 Vanish'd every trace of Freya's bloom ;
 Old and wrinkled, flabby and repelling
 Was the Disa, once so fair, become :
 From the couch he leap'd in anger,
 Drew his sword in wild alarm :
 O confusion !
 Curst delusion !
 Vainly now he seeks each wonted charm.

“ Is it thus thou hast deceiv'd thy lover ?
 Ugly witch ! ” disdainful thus he said :
 “ Grace of birth divine and youth perennial
 Didst thou feign to lure me to thy bed ?
 But the mask hath dropp'd — I find not
 Of thy charms one single trace :
 Old in mien,
 Shrivell'd, lean,
 How canst thou unblushing show thy face ? ”

Naught avail'd the tears of Freya : Odur
 Fled disgusted from her nerveless arms,
 Where he once such poignant pleasure tasted,
 Where he revell'd in celestial charms.
 There he left his car and leopards :
 Freya sits, to grief a prey,
 Sad, despairing,
 Wildly staring
 At the heaven's expanse, or dark blue sea.

Never more the Asar race beheld him ;
To his Vaner he return'd again.
Golden tears now shed the wretched Freya,
When she gazed upon the stormy main.
Though she found again her beauty,
Odur never more she found :
Tears of woe
Constant flow
From her eyes : the groves her plaint resound.

When the apples of the fair Iduna,
Fruit of health and youth, were found again,
Much it griev'd Valfader's heart to notice
Beauty sorrowing on her couch in vain :
Straight he sent in search of Odur
Hermod with his magic spear.
Now his fate
I'll relate,
If my harpings ye will deign to hear.

Odur hied him to the grove of laurel,
Where first Freya met his amorous glance :
Vain the satyrs with their music greet him ;
Vain voluptuous damsels round him dance :
Callow now to all about him,
Dwelling on his loss severe,
Much he groan'd,
Wept and moan'd
In the sandy waste, forlorn and drear.

Grapes and vine-leaves from his brow dependin_g,
Now with vacant gaze he fixes heaven :
In the spring of youth thus solitary,
Swim his eyes, with melancholy riven.
Sweet illusion charms his spirit ;
Yielding to the frenzy bland,
Lost in dreams
Still he seems,
On his bosom ever press'd his hand.

Hermod, from behind the bush advancing,
Touches Odur with his magic wand :
Straight transform'd e'en to the very marrow
See him now a marble statue stand !
To this day through Asia roving,
Him, 'tis said, the Scald hath found
Thus alone
Changed to stone
In the forest, still with vine-leaves crown'd.

For the death of her beloved Odur
Deeply Freya mourns with grief sincere :
In the ecstasy of melancholy
Down her lovely cheek flows many a tear :
Oft her heart's profound emotion
Pours she in each lover's breast ;
Pleasing thrill,
Flowing still,
Painful longing ! from thy poignant zest.

CACTO VII.

THE NUPTIALS OF SKADA.

WHILE captive pined Iduna, Valhalla seem'd a grave ; (1)
A fruitful isle was swallow'd by the remorseless wave ;
In each nook of the palace, each god, morose, alone,
Sat looking straight before him, as motionless as stone.

No longer the Einherier, eight hundred at a time,
In the arena skirmish for Odin's prize sublime ;
They now no longer sally from Trudvang's brazen port,
To give wounds and receive them, in Hildur's (2) fav'rite sport.

They cease the glaive to brandish ; their blood no longer flows ;
They spring not up with laughter from the well-level'd blows :
Nor roast flesh of Sâhrimner with appetite assail ;
Nor drain the horn capacious, brimming with mead or ale.

No more in Freya's garden are faithful lovers seen,
In ecstasy conversing under the bowers so green :
By passion warm'd no longer, they to the fountain throng,
Nor listen by the moonlight to Philomela's song.

No more Hagbarth and Signe, when the blue wave beneath
The sun descends, now descant on their heroic death,
When they, upon love's pinions, were wafted from the vale
Of bitter care and sorrow to bright Gladheimasal.

While Valaskialf is shrouded by mists and noisome dews,
In th' absence of the apple, that youth and strength renews,
The giants, wild rejoicing, in arms all ready stand
To lay waste proud Valhalla with vengeful sword and brand.

The first who thought on vengeance with helm and buckler bright
Was giant Thiasse's daughter, mischievous Skada hight :
Clad in her brazen armour, to Valhall's gate she came,
And knew not that her father had perish'd in the flame.

This female was to Freya unlike in mind and grace,
Yet wit she had and vigour, nor homely was her face :
When mounted on her courser in the dark stormy night,
Under her sable head-dress her eyes gave dazzling light.

Though with impure old witches she revels in the wood,
Yet she herself was blooming in health and youthful blood :
On her fair cheek the tempest the rose's hue bestow'd ;
Her hair adown her shoulders in jetty ringlets flow'd.

Like two white foaming billows her bosom swell'd half-bared ;
Her arms smooth and well-rounded ; her flesh was plump and hard :
Like the storm-wind in temper, capricious, wild and proud ;
Fearful the rocks re-echo, whene'er she scolds aloud.

But when she came to Vingolf, her anger vanish'd quite :
 She view'd with admiration the fair-hair'd sons of light ;
 With love her heart beat wildly, when Balder came in view ;
 With rapture fill'd her bosom his eyes so soft, so blue.

Those eyes, 'tis true, lack'd lustre ; the cause ye well may guess,
 'Tis since Iduna's apples no more the Asar bless.
 Shouts Skada : " Peace I offer, and all my wrongs forgive,
 If Balder fair as husband, Odin to me will give."

That Skada might not sicken from unrequited love,
 They bound her eyes, and bade her her skill in coursing prove :
 'Twas Odin's own proposal. " Begin the sport," quoth he ;
 " Whom (3) she blindfolded catches, shall Skada's husband be."

Now like a sea-bird flutt'ring, the black-hair'd virgin stout
 Rustled, and breath'd like whirlwind the spacious hall about :
 The gods draw back ; now forward they move ; now halt, afraid ;
 No easy task they found it to shun the giant maid.

Though far more skill and swiftness th' Asynior all could boast,
 Before Iduna's treasure was to Valhalla lost,
 Yet Skada now excels them ; she jumps about as brisk,
 As silver-scaled fishes through billows glide and frisk.

A pair of legs now catching, she laugh'd and straight began
 Their measure and proportion with eager hand to scan :
 She much admired the ankle, the powerful calf, the foot ;
 These well-turn'd limbs, thought Skada, a happy prize denote.

At first she thought 'twas Balder : she utter'd not a word,
 But rising, tore her band off, and saw that it was Niord :
 She burst into a loud laugh, which caused the walls to shake,
 And pressing to her bosom her captive, thus she spake :

“ Ha ! we shall suit each other ; in truth a well-match'd pair :
 As soon as with her apple returns Iduna fair,
 Begin once more thy blowing ! I'll raise the wind by night :
 In tempers diff'rent moulded, by turns we'll prove our might.

“ On gold-maned Skinfax mounted, thou shalt prevail by day :
 At night, upon dark Hrimfax, will I pursue my way :
 With flowers thou lov'st to dally ; to barren rocks I cling :
 Health to the north thou bringest ; I Skada mischief bring.

“ In summer and in autumn, then are thy seasons meet ;
 My vapours thou dispersest, and coolst the sultry heat :
 Then I, on skaits, o'er Finnmark with bow and arrow fly,
 And through fog, sleet and snow-storm my course unseen I ply.

“ With cricket on thy shoulder, with beechen branch in hand,
 While nightingales sweet singing upon thy helmet stand,
 Thou ridest on thy courser, o'er forest, hill and dale,
 With rays of light proceeding from his long mane and tail.

“ Short mane and tail hath Hrimfax ; he's black and small in size :
 Hoar frost clings to his nostrils ; his breathings chill the skies :
 But fearful are his neighings ; and when he rears, then mark !
 Unroof'd becomes each dwelling, unmasted every bark.

“ Me gulls and sea-mews follow with shrill ear-piercing cries ;
 The Mermaids from the water, at my command, arise :
 The seal jumps in the billow, when I am close at hand ;
 He dares no longer sun him upon the rocky strand.

“ Dost thou not comprehend me ? thou seemst to hesitate :
 Hath not Ægir a consort i' th' ocean with a net ?
 Is not Ægir an Asa ? is not Ran giant-born ?
 Why then shouldst thou of Skada reject the love with scorn ?

“ How long 'twixt gods and giants shall last the hateful feud ?
 'Tis time, methinks, the quarrel to end with ties of blood :
 'Twill soon to peace eternal all obstacles remove,
 If thou to me wilt promise fidelity and love.

“ The bitter must be mingled with all that is too sweet,
 And life recall to living what lies in death's retreat ;
 Joy must with grief alternate ; night shift the rule with day ;
 The herring shoals, when shining, become of whales the prey.

“ Not every plant can flourish ; thus were the cherry-tree
 Ever from storms protected by the wall's friendly lee,
 Did not the wind its blossom scatter around like snow,
 Its trunk would soon be rotten, the tree soon cease to grow.”

By such convincing reasons the wavering god she plied :
 At the command of Odin the marriage knot was tied.
 But Idun still was absent ; dull pass'd the nuptial feast ;
 Each Disa mourn'd ; but Freya wept more than all the rest.

Hoarse was the voice of Bragur ; the mead-horn ceased to cheer :
A knife lay in Frey's bosom ; the cause ye soon shall hear :
He greeted not his father, but sorrowful in mood
He to the height ascended, where Hlidskialf's castle stood.

On Hlidskialf's tower so lofty stands Odin's mystic throne ;
From thence all the world's actions are to his eye made known :
No other god but Odin dare mount that awful seat ;
Frey on that day, however, this rule seem'd to forget.

He fix'd the royal garland in thought upon his head,
But half its wonted splendour with Idun's fruit was fled :
There gazed he, sad and pensive, o'er mountain, rock and field ;
And now my rhimes shall tell ye, what there the god beheld.



CANTO XVIII.

THE AMOUR OF FREY.

A SPACIOUS chamber met his eyes hewn in the cavern grey;
Therein reclining on a couch a beauteous damsel lay:
In slumbers light indulged the maid so innocent and meek;
The blush of morning tinged with red her alabaster cheek.

Careless reposed her graceful arm across her forehead bright,
Her raven locks in ringlets twined between her fingers white;
Her small white hand quite buried seem'd i' th' streaming coal-black hair,
Thus doth a lamb behind the leaves of a dark bush appear.

E'en as a serpent coiled within the lily's chalice rests,
Thus curl the silken jetty locks adown her swelling breasts:
As loving as two sisters kiss, thus kiss the lips of rose;
But proudly from each other turn away the breasts, like foes.

Tow'ring the slender waist above, each claims preeminence;
But, as between two rain-drops, none could see the difference.
Frey gazes on the rosy lips, and on the breast of snow,
And quite forgets Iduna's loss, and all Valhalla's woe.

But while he gazed, his longing eyes witness'd a wondrous sight!
 For now to white the red was changed! and red became the white!
 When cherries burst, they show their stone; when her lips part, behold!
 Two rows of teeth, as bright as pearls or ivory, they unfold!

And when the tunic fell aside with the pulsation strong,
 Up from the lovely damsel's breast a pair of rose-buds sprung!
 Then she awoke, and with her hand those treasures sought to veil;
 But strict their duty to fulfil the parted fingers fail.

Now rising from her couch she flies, as nimble as a roe,
 To where a fountain's limpid stream adown the rock doth flow:
 She bathes her cheek, her large dark eyes and eke her snow-white arms
 A genial glow, unfelt before, the favour'd fountain warms.

In order not to lose its strength, between the rocks it ran
 Fermenting, and a source of health became to suff'ring man:
 The grot with crutches was hung round; the lame, who hither come,
 No longer need their crutches' aid, to gain their native home.

The blind too, who had lifted up their eyelids oft in vain,
 Found, when they drank the holy wave, the power of sight again:
 This caused much marvel; all mankind this silver stream adore;
 But it from Gerda's youth derived its wonder-working power.

She takes out from a case a comb of burnish'd gold so rare,
 And with her fingers white divides her glossy raven hair:
 She combs her locks; they glisten bright; what pleasure they impart
 To love-sick Frey! he felt each spark; they melted in his heart.

She wreath'd a band of twisted hair around her forehead high,
 Adorn'd with sapphires blue, which shone with wondrous brilliancy :
 She then put on a costly robe of asbest silver white ;
 The border of the robe was hemm'd with garnets rare and bright.

A milk-tub made of polish'd deal he saw her take up now,
 And to the flow'ry mead repair, to milk her brindled cow :
 In clover deep there grazing stood the cow with crumpled horn ;
 I' th' middle of the meadow spread its blossom the black thorn.

She sat down on the clover green, and with her fingers neat
 Under the cow she fix'd the pail, and grasp'd the swelling teat ;
 While the milk foam'd, the beast to stare with much indifference seem'd :
 " O thou cold-hearted stupid cow ! " thus Asa Frey exclaim'd.

His look the graceful Jotun nymph now follow'd ev'rywhere ;
 He sigh'd : " I ne'er before beheld a maid so wondrous fair. "
 His words she heard, but innocence dwell'd in her radiant eye,
 And intellect was deeply stamp'd upon her forehead high.

Her cheek a glow unusual felt ; bewitchingly she smiled ;
 With piety and steady faith was fill'd her bosom mild :
 He saw her then sit down to spin, and much admired the zeal,
 With which her younger sisters all she taught to turn the wheel.

Her arms around her much-loved sire with tenderness she flung ;
 She smooth'd his beard, and 'gainst the wall his bow and quiver hung :
 When from the forest home he came, she piled the hearth with logs ;
 And in the milk put many a slice of bread to feed his dogs.

Of this last race was Gerda fair : her sire would oft invite
 The wild Hrimthusser (2) to his board ; she view'd them all with slight.
 " Gerda's in truth a handsome girl, 'tis pity she's so cold : "
 This was remark'd by Horse-leg young, and eke by Goat-beard old.

Against her robe they rubb'd themselves ; they pinched her arms and thighs ;
 At this the Jotun damsel blush'd with anger and surprize.
 " If ye cannot behave yourselves," said she in threat'ning tone,
 " I'll instantly retire, and leave ye here to sup alone."

Of beauty with good sense allied so powerful is the charm,
 The sturdy giants felt ashamed, and swore they meant no harm :
 She fill'd their cups with foaming ale, and gave them savoury food ;
 But when their jokes obscene and coarse the giant carles renew'd,

She kiss'd her sire, and sought her bower : there stood she all alone,
 And look'd out at the wide expanse, and gazed upon the moon :
 She sigh'd with longing, but for what, she could not rightly tell ;
 She felt so warm, that from her breast she doff'd the silken veil.

The moon benignant shone ; it seem'd towards earth its course to lower,
 And sent strong rays of light within the lovely Gerda's bower :
 She thought it was the sun of night, the silver-helm-clad moon,
 But it was Asa-Frey himself peeping from Hlidskialf's throne.

Now when, by sleep oppress'd, her limbs upon the couch she laid,
 Frey wish'd a thousand times good night to the bewitching maid.
 Descending then from Hlidskialf's tower, he strait began to rove,
 Like dreamer in the midnight hour, towards Freya's beechen grove.

Towards Freya's grove the love-sick god pensive pursued his way :
Its glories at Iduna's rape became of frost the prey ;
The leaves all lay in yellow heaps the wither'd trunks around ;
The silver brook, once used to flowers, now flint-stones only found.

And now throughout the grove resounds the tempest's awful yell !
Scared by the shock, the rain-drops bright from the dry branches fell !
So much had love absorb'd his thoughts, when this the god perceiv'd,
He thought each branch upon the trees, like him enamour'd, griev'd.

The howling of the storm amongst the trees with joy he hailed ;
It much resembled, as he thought, the sighs his breast exhaled :
He knew not it was Skada's self, that through the forest blew
Behind her cloud : the whole wide world appear'd to him as new.

How dreadful was the change ! now seem'd Heimkringlas dead indeed,
Since from its native soil was torn the life-renewing reed !
But it was not Iduna's form, that Frey long'd to embrace,
But thee, o Gerda ! scion fair of Jotun's swarthy race.

As thus he sat immers'd in thought, sudden his eye survey'd
His sister Freya ; there she stood in linen white array'd,
With silver ringlets, like a dame in the decline of life,
Who on her beauty's vanish'd spring looks back with inward grief.

She heard her brother's plaintive sigh. "Unfortunate," she said :
"Why didst thou Illidskialf's tower ascend ? hath magic turn'd thy head ?
Were I in all my glory now a Disa, as before,
In the dark vales of Jotunheim naught would avail my power.

“And if it could, would Odin e'er permit Frey to espouse
A giantess? hath he not long for Eir reclaim'd thy vows?
The Disa, who when Idun fair in Valhall takes her seat,
Gives health to all the Asar's blood with liquor from the beet.”

“Odin cannot compel my choice,” her brother answer'd sore,
“E'en if he still possess'd his strength and glory, as before:
Giants to slay Thor boasts the power; but not to quench the flame,
Which burns impetuous in my heart for the fair mountain dame!”

Thus the fraternal pair conversed, and shared each other's grief;
But Freya breath'd the deepest sigh, despairing of relief.
She said: “My dearest brother! thee the future may console;
But as for me, no hope remains to sooth my anguish'd soul.

“For he, who hath not yet possessed what he desires, may still
Hope to obtain it; time one day may on his efforts smile:
But he, who, which he once enjoy'd, hath lost the darling bliss,
Looks from a height, and views below a fathomless abyss!

“Alas! a Vaner I'm no more;” thus sigh'd despairing Frey;
E'en were I handsome as before, when Idun's fruit was nigh,
Still vanish'd is my peace of mind; no longer I'm the same;
Nerveless and weak I feel; and Lok, the traitor Lok's to blame.”

While Frey thus reasons, lo! a change (3) strikes his astonish'd sight
The sun dispels all mist and fog! day follows upon night!
The frost dissolves in genial dew! azure becomes the sky!
And in a whirlwind from the grove the wither'd branches fly!

The trees stood full of buds! these swell'd! flowers blossom'd forth! and lo!
 Freya now feels a pressure strange before her heart! below
 She casts a hasty glance, and views with pleasure and surprize
 The rose-buds on her breast again with youthful fullness rise.

Frey gazed upon the brook; of late slowly it crept 'midst stones,
 But now through banks of violets blue with rapid course it runs:
 The spot, where grew a noisome weed, now odours sweet exhales;
 He look'd; and in its place, behold! a rose the air regales!

Now on each other gazed the pair with mutual ecstasy;
 Of all the females in the world the handsomest was she:
 In him she view'd the paragon of males with rose-crown'd brow,
 And had she ne'er felt love before, she would have felt it now.

A clapping loud of wings was heard: they look'd, and with delight
 Beheld the stork, who with his mate had homeward wing'd his flight:
 They had been far in southern climes, the swarthy tribes among;
 What could they not relate, had they the power to use their tongue?

The stork now sought his clay-built nest all in the beechen grove:
 Again over the daisied mead the cattle grazing rove:
 And bursting from his tomb, soon as the sun resumed his power,
 The butterfly each flower caress'd, himself a living flower,

The cold dissolves, while breezes mild and gentle fan the air:
 The genial warmth was felt by Frey and by his sister fair:
 They marvel much, and listen; on each other gaze, and sigh:
 Hark! tones resound from Valaskialf; they were the tones of joy.

CASTO XVIII.

JOY IN VALHALLA.

SKIRNIR the messenger of Frey now running towards them came : (1)
Such now is the good news he brings, he well deserves the name.
Soon as he saw them, loud he call'd to Frey and Freya : Ho !
Idun to Valhall is return'd ; ended is all our woe !

When these glad tidings met their ear, delight they both express'd,
And flew to Valhall to partake of Odin's mid-day feast :
Great was the joy and revelry ; each Asa swell'd with pride,
When Idun sat at the right hand of Odin, like a bride.

Before her stands the golden vase that holds the sacred fruit,
From which the gods the purple bloom of youth and health recruit ;
Next to Iduna Bragur sits ; his eyes with constant gaze
Devour her charms : thus from the sun the sun-flower drinks the rays.

Frigga the bounteous mother smiled : the Earth, deliver'd now,
A wreath of flowers and ears of corn had sent to grace her brow :
She carves Sahrinner's roasted flesh, and sends the slices round
By a young nymph, whose temples shine with golden fillet crown'd.

'Twas Fulla, Frigga's handmaid. Gna, who joys to mount the steed,
 Hofvarpur hight, for every guest pours out delicious mead :
 When bearing round the brimming horns the bright Valkyrior move,
 The charms of those attendants fair inspire each god with love.

A seat by Odin's dexter hand just between him and Eir
 Remain'd unoccupied ; 'twas meant for Freya and for Freyr : (2)
 By Thor his consort Sif was placed ; the warlike god was seen
 Oft on the shoulders of his wife his awful front to lean.

Next them sat Heimdall ; when his eyes Freya and Frey behold,
 Smiling he draws his lip aside, and shows his tooth of gold :
 So sharp his ears, he hears wool grow and grasses upwards shoot,
 And well he knew what in the grove those two had talk'd about.

Next to Heimdaller Gefion sat, the proud shield-bearing maid ;
 But naught avail'd to gain her heart the courtship that he paid ;
 Like rose-bud just about to burst blooming and fresh her hue ;
 Yet with indifference profound doth she love's pastime view.

All the young maidens who, uncrown'd by Freya and by love,
 By death are stricken, refuge find in Gefion's holy grove :
 Here they converse and oft in sport around the meadow run,
 When cold and sharp the weather feels, and clouds obscure the sun.

Their greatest pleasure is to view each plant and flow'ret grow ;
 But in this grove no rose is pluck'd ; no garlands bind their brow ;
 The fountain, where they love to bathe, is shielded well from sight
 Profane, by a thick hedge ; secure they sleep the long long night.

Yet it is whisper'd, when the moon shines forth, their thoughts on love
 Will sometimes dwell; oft stolen looks they cast towards Freya's grove:
 But no one may such thoughts indulge, Gefion is so severe,
 No male, not e'en a little boy, dare in her grove appear.

In front of her a goddess sat, whose temper's diff'rent mould
 With that of Gefion constract forms, as heat compared with cold :
 'Twas gentle Siofna, whose blue eyes with love and softness beam,
 'Tis she who fills the heart of youth with the first pleasing dream.

Clad in a vest of muscle-shell, with crown of sea-weed green,
 Sat Ægir, Ocean's king : he drank out of a conque marine.
 Next to him sat his consort Ran, with temper given to strife :
 The timid Disar view with dread Ægir's ill-favour'd wife.

Harsh-featured was her face, her look malignant, ne'er was she
 So joyous, as when vessels sunk in the wide-yawning sea :
 She dwells in Ocean's deepest cave : seldom to Valhall came :
 With pain in their bright choir enroll'd the Asar view'd her name.

With th' Asa who sat next to her she form'd a contrast wide ;
 They seem'd the images of love and hatred side by side :
 'Twas Balder, who with youthful bloom renovatèd shone :
 The Disar all cast looks of love on Odin's fair-hair'd son.

His light gold tresses, parted, gleam'd over his forehead bright ;
 His brows resembled just the flower "*the brows of Balder*" hight :
 His aspect's majesty divine no language can impart ;
 Where'er he turn'd his eyes, their glance went deep into the heart.

The guardian of a secret grave confided to his care,
 For which the world no language hath, nor mortal clay an ear,
 Such Balder seem'd; spite of his mild and gentle soul, I trow,
 If he but cast a glance on Thor, with reverence Thor must bow.

Such softness with such strength combined no Asa boasts but he;
 Spite of his blithesome brow, it bears the stamp of sovereignty:
 It could appease the wrath of Ran; on him she loved to gaze:
 Then smiled she like a wave, on which a star benignant plays.

Mother of pearl and coral bright upon the board she laid: (3)
 To Nanna, Balder's consort, she presented them, and said:
 "Whatever mortal thou mayst chuse to rescue from the grave
 Beneath the billow, with these gifts thou shalt have power to save."

To Nanna sat just opposite Lofna with flower-crown'd brow:
 When with thy dreams two youthful hearts, O gentle Siofna! glow,
 Then Lofna, when invoked, to sooth the lover's pain delights,
 And spite of every obstacle, the amorous pair unites:

And if this union be denied on earth, affliction's vale,
 Aloft she bears them on her wings to Freya's blissful hall.
 Nanna she gave to Balder's arms; and pitying Signe's fate,
 Burst Hagbarth's noose, and from the tree bore him to Folkvang's gate.

Now Hædur, fumbling through the hall, cheerless and sullen goes;
 He mutters words in Vidar's ears, the god with the thick shoes:
 Stone blind is Hædur, though robust, the sovereign of the night;
 A tunick black as jet he wears with silver stars bedight.

The secrets of eternity are all to Vidar known ;
 Their stern unflinching guardian he, amongst the gods alone,
 Ne'er opes his mouth ; his shoulders are like Aukthor's, broad and strong,
 And strong like Vidar is the man who can restrain his tongue.

Two gods, whose qualities on earth are seldom found allied,
 Eternally in Odin's hall are seated side by side :
 Resistless is their power combined ; all view them with respect ;
 Loder, the god of beauty reigns ; Hænir, of intellect.

The next to Hænir on the bench the serious Var appears,
 Stern awe-inspiring goddess, who the rod of conscience bears ;
 She hears the oaths of all mankind : whoever breaks his vow,
 To Nastrond down she hurls the wretch, to endless wail and woe.

Near her were many vacant seats ; Forsete just and stern,
 Var's firmest prop, will not so soon to Valaskialf return :
 As soon as Idun was released, down to the earth he hied,
 As judge supreme by Urda's wave the causes to decide.

Saga Forsete's footsteps close with graver and with shield
 Had follow'd, to record in runes whatever time reveal'd :
 But every morning her return the anxious gods await,
 To hear her 'fore Alfader's throne her narrative relate.

But Niord, to Skada married, soon the ill-match'd union rued :
 She bade him to the nuptial-couch on Dovre's summit rude ;
 In every corner of the rock the eddying whirlwind roars,
 While Skada's brother o'er the sea, the tall Vandhose, soars :

His arms cling to the sky ; his legs drop dangling o'er the wave ;
 He laughs ; the seamen at his sight are fill'd with terror grave :
 Now all at once, to water changed, he gushes down amain.
 And all he meets in his career drives headlong down to Ran.

Now Skada with dishevell'd hair from Dovre's cliffs arose ;
 She grasp'd her lance, to deal around dire wounds and mortal blows :
 "Up! come to help me! bridegroom dear!" thus call'd she out to Niord :
 The god turns pale with anger, when he hears her voice abhorr'd.

But luck would have it, Idun fair was on that very morn
 Replaced in Valhall ; at her sight Niord felt his strength return ;
 Like tempest from the south he rose, and vanquish'd the east-wind,
 And Skada fled to hide herself drear Finnmark's rocks behind.

Lately at Garderik she put in force a strange resolve ;
 With fragments of sharp ice, which should not on the tongue dissolve,
 She fill'd her lungs ; with these she sought the ambient air to freeze,
 But Niord the mischief soon dispell'd with flower-scented breeze.

At length they peace conclude : nine days was Niord to wear the crown,
 Healthy and free the north remain, subject to Niord alone :
 Skada the three succeeding days might march with flag unfurl'd :
 Thus with alternate change do Good and Evil rule the world.

Ere Niord to Skada was allied, the north was far more mild ;
 Often with fire from Muspelheim the northern air he fill'd :
 But longer now the mists prevail, so doth the grim east-wind ;
 For no one boasts the power to tame Skada's malignant mind.

While Skada slumbers in her cave, 'tis Niord's peculiar care
 In arches o'er the verdant earth to mould the light-blue air ;
 And where are more delightful woods and meadows to be found,
 Than those of Denmark, when the lays of nightingales resound?

Niord weeps with rage, while Skada fell lays waste his rich domain,
 But changed his precious tears become to fecundating rain ;
 When rain descends, it never fails to damp the tempest's wings ;
 Thus ever 'gainst his consort's spells some antidote he brings.

From Vingolf Niord was absent, when the mead was handed round,
 For while Forsete sat as judge by Urda's wave profound,
 He clear'd the air from vapours foul : where'er extends his power,
 Healthy and free each peasant breathes, sickness prevails no more.

Not far from Balder Snotra sat with mild and graceful look :
 She blush'd, while from a silver dish small cakes her fingers took ;
 In gesture, movement, and in speech her gentle grace she blends,
 And often to the poet's lay her soft expression lends.

Hlyn too was there, whom Frigga sends to guard the race of men
 From danger, when dark, Surtur spreads his snares o'er marsh and fen.
 Next Uller sat the archer good, with bow across his loins :
 Instead of war, to end all feuds by duel he enjoins.

The Asar thus in Valaskialf their joyous vigils keep,
 Which on the arches vast of heaven rests its foundation deep ;
 Each azure-colour'd cupola on columns doth repose ;
 Straight as the forest's finest fir each marble column rose.

Bucklers and swords with silver hilts around these columns shone.
 Now Bragur strikes the golden harp, and in pathetic tone
 He sings the danger that the gods so lately had incurr'd,
 And while he sang, Iduna's cup pass'd round the festive board.

Now far beyond Valhalla's roof ascends each swelling note,
 And melts away towards Hlidskialf's tower far in the air remote :
 E'en as the loftiest pine in height exceeds the humblest flower,
 Thus Ervin's minster is eclips'd by Hlidskialf's awful tower. (4)

Now Frey and Freya take their seat : then joins the banquet Tyr,
 Brother of Thor ; no danger doth that valiant stripling fear :
 Behind Valfader's chair he stands, while lasts the sumptuous feast,
 And waits upon him like a page, in scarlet kirtle drest.

But still insensible to joy and mindful of her woes
 Sigh'd beauteous Freya ; copious tears bedew'd her cheeks of rose :
 Ah ! what is beauty ? (thus she thought) and why should it return,
 If from the heart the heart's beloved remain for ever torn ?

While Freya thus indulged in grief, Odin, the mighty lord,
 His courier Hermod call'd ; he came, and, charged with Odin's word,
 Went out again, but reappear'd, quick as a waterfall,
 And Freya's daughter, little Hnos, he led into the hall.

The little creature smiling stood behind her mother's chair,
 Over her shoulders delicate stream'd down her well comb'd hair :
 The mother wept still more ; her child close in her arms she prest ;
 A flood of golden tears humect the lovely Freya's breast.

See Odin now the god sublime quick from the table rise !
To Hermod whispers he a word with anger in his eyes : (5)
Straight Hermod vanish'd from the hall, arm'd with his magic wand :
Not half so swift the falcon flies, launch'd by the hunter's hand.

O that Alfader had not mark'd the beauteous Freya's grief !
Alas ! how anger's haste destroys all prospect of relief !
If Odur could have seen, methinks, his consort fair once more,
Repentance' sting he would have felt, and lov'd her, as before.

But now to marble statue changed, what can he feel ? 'Tis true,
His eyes wide open stand, but naught those eyes have power to view :
No animation from the grapes doth wretched Odur prove
That deck his brow ; on feet he stands, but those feet cannot move.

Now Freya must for ever grieve, and her own grief impart
To other hearts ; henceforward love was mix'd with painful smart :
Happy, as handsome, Hnos became, as she advanced in size ;
She brings delight and joy to love ; but Freya tears and sighs.



CANTO III.

THE EINHERIER.

FROM Valaskialf to the next hall Odin repairs in state,
Where thousands of th' Einherier their king's approach await.
The folding doors, at Syn the porteress' touch, wide open fly!
Then enters, 'mongst the champions brave, Odin the lord so high.

With kindness he salutes them all, for every one he knew ;
A troop of warriors lately slain had just appear'd in view :
Their limbs were all besmear'd with blood, deep gashes on their breast ;
They stared as in a dream, and thought : Who could this scene have
[guest?]

Then Eir advanced ; she follow'd close Odin the chief so great :
In all their gaping wounds she poured the liquor of the beet ;
These closed again, changed to slight scars ; then woke the warriors
[brave,
And found they were recall'd to life, and rescued from the grave.

Pale from the fight, a strong old man enter'd with snowy beard ;
His skull was cloven by a sword ; frightful the gash appear'd ;
But Eir upon his bleeding front, while he before her kneel'd,
With a strong pressure laid her hand ; the wound that instant heal'd.

The glorious father of the fight then ask'd the warrior's name :
 " I am Starkodder." answer'd he, " a chief well known to fame :
 Food for the ravens I have given myriads of foes on earth ;
 But here I meet them all as friends, and recognize their worth."

Hærfader gravely then replied : " A Nidding once wert thou ;
 By gold seduced, thou didst commit a crime on earth below."
 " I sinn'd once in my youthful days," Starkodder humbly said ;
 " But even till my eightieth year atonement have I made. (1)

" From Helheim's prison-bars I saved King Oluf, it is true :"
 But lo ! King Oluf now appears : the old man well he knew :
 He straight embraced him, moved to tears, and said : " Well mayst
 Innumerable glorious acts to cancel one misdeed. [thou plead

" The giants tempted thee, but Thor soon to thy succour came ;
 Thrice happy he, who in his breast the dark-hued Alf can tame !"
 A rustling noise was heard, 'twas Thor shining in brazen arms ;
 He rush'd into the hall, and caught Starkodder in his arms :

He press'd him to his heart, and with emotion wept aloud :
 Now Roska brought a leopard's skin, and gave it to the god :
 Amongst th' Einherier clash of shields resounds with deaf'ning din,
 When on the veteran's shoulders broad Thor hung the leopard's skin.

A club made from Yggdrassil's wood he places in his hand ;
 Thus 'mongst the demi-gods enroll'd Starkodder takes his stand :
 Counsel he gives to those who once were guilty of a crime,
 P' th' holy wave of Balder's fount to wash off Nastrond's slime.

Now to the field of battle hie th' Einherier all with glee :
 How the vast plain with heroes swarms, like billows on the sea !
 The danger, that the greatest strength and bravery on earth
 Could scarce o'ercome, was pastime here ; merechildren's play and
 [mirth.

And now the phalanx in the shape of a boar's head they form ;
 The lances clash with rustling noise like branches, when a storm
 In autumn whistles through the grove, ere snow makes white the
 [green :
 Each glitt'ring blade like lightning strikes, that kills before 'tis seen.

Astounded at these wonders all, Starkodder silent stood :
 The buildings that inclose the space with ravishment he view'd.
 Vingolf and Gladheim on one side their lofty turrets rear ;
 Valaskialf in the centre ; left doth Freya's dome appear.

But over Valaskialf he mark'd the awful tower immense,
 The like of which was never seen o'er all the earth's expanse ;
 'Twas like the serpent Jormundgard in all his colours bright,
 When poised upon his tail he stands in perpendic'lar height.

Upon the buckler-cover'd roof two beasts Starkodder view'd ;
 A goat over the dome, a stag over the portal stood :
 Heidruna doth all other goats in value far excel.
 Since from her udder, 'stead of milk, flow streams of hydromel.

But from the antlers of the stag a rill with brilliant spray
 And pleasing murmur spouted forth ; it never ceased to play ;
 A silver basin, when it falls, receives the bounteous stream ;
 In various channels thence it flows to the world's bound extreme.

On a balcony take their stand to view the feats of arms
 The Disar all : what Scald hath power to sing their matchless charms ?
 Garlands of oak with their fair hands they wreath, and cast below
 As trophies in th' arena vast, to grace the victor's brow.

Starkodder mounted on the roof to view each wondrous sight,
 While Hermod friendly show'd the way by evening's rosy light.
 He mark'd Heidruna the green leaves from th' ash Yggdrassil crop,
 Which from the earth beyond the roof extends its branching top.

Not far from Valhall's lofty gate, where Heimdal sentry stood,
 Starkodder the vast bridge of heaven, the gorgeous Bifrost, view'd:
 In its construction precious stones of various hue it blends,
 And, rising in one single arch, o'er all the earth extends.

Over this bridge, when they descend to earth, the Asar ride
 To sit as judges in the grove, by th' ash Yggdrassil's side :
 This bridge is dangerous to pass, steep, narrow ; but, like bees
 Upon a wall, the gods contrive to hold on it with ease.

Southward appears a verdant grove, and there upon a height,
 Resting on azure columns, stands a palace fair and light :
 High beech-trees of the liveliest green encircle this domain :
 There, to Starkodder Heimdal said, doth lovely Freya reign !

Northward appears a forest black ; on a steep granite rock
 Stands a strong castle, with deep ditch, which any siege could mock ;
 Its roof was tiled with copper shields ; Trudvang the name it bore :
 There, Heimdal to Starkodder said, dwells the all-powerful Thor !

The sun now sank beneath the wave, and clear and round the moon
 On Valaskialf, on Folkvang bright, on massive Trudvang shone !
 Athwart the clouds Starkodder saw far off a dazzling light :
 “ How now ? ” to Hermod thus he said, “ have ye two moons at night ? ”

“ The light thou takest for a moon, ” thus answered Hermod mild,
 Is Breidablik ; that mansion’s roof with costly pearls is tiled :
 There Asa-Balder sits enthron’d the fleecy clouds among ;
 Hark ! how he chaunts with the white Alfs the dulcet vesper song !

“ And hark ! what thrilling melody the echoing clouds impart !
 Like the soft joys of innocence, it melts the coldest heart :
 But in the hall below resound laughter and boist’rous glee,
 And like the dove before the hawk, the pious tones give way. ”

To Vingolf now they both descend ; there joy tumultuous reigns :
 In honour of Valfader’s name his horn each warrior drains.
 There the good Scalds, who oft the north had gladden’d, touch the chord,
 They all like loving brothers sit at Odin’s oaken board.

A Drapa now, a splendid theme, together they rehearse ;
 With glorious choral harmony resounds th’ heroic verse :
 ’Twas like to many a bunch of grapes, each from a diff’rent vine
 Gather’d, and now together press’d to form a generous wine.

Here neither jealousy intrigues, nor envy gnaws the heart ;
 Each hears with deference sincere when others aught impart.
 And each rejoices like a child who lovely flowers beholds,
 When, what his own hath not conceived, another’s brain unfolds

“There, next to Thor,” thus Hermod said, “Starkodder, is thy seat.”
 At times throughout the vast saloon flashes a splendour great ;
 It flashes from the shields that hang in rows against the wall ;
 The silver hilts and the steel blades a dazzling ray let fall.

When now the mead was drank, and when each Scald had ceased his
 Enter'd the scoffer Asa-Lok the jovial guests among ; [song,
 His nature is well-known : now red with insolence he grew,
 And to the mock'ry of the gods exposed himself anew.

Though by the greater gods despised and hated by the less,
 Yet often they must needs admire his wit and liveliness ;
 At times his cunning was of use worse mischief to prevent,
 And when buffoonery prevail'd, there was his element.

But not innocuous were his jokes ; sharp, like the razor's edge,
 Both friend and foe alike they cut, yet 'twas his privilege.
 When circulates the brimming horn and seriousness gives way,
 We sometimes listen to a fool and tolerate his play.

With Fenris first he play'd, the wolf, whom he in a dark cave
 Of a foul witch begot ; but all the guests with aspect grave
 Beheld the sport ; it pleased them not, nor did his laughter help ;
 For all the Asar fear'd the wolf, though he was but a whelp.

His eyes glared fiercely ; every day his size and strength increas'd :
 Unwilling Odin in his hall suffer'd the hateful beast :
 To Skirnir, messenger of Frey, he turn'd aside his head,
 Whisp'ring a mandate in his ear ; Skirnir the hint obey'd. (2)

But now Lok could not fail to see that Fenris was by all
 Abhorr'd and fear'd ; without the gate he led him from the hall.
 Loud howl'd the wolf ; to earth he hied ; he there a robber found,
 And help'd to murder, while his teeth enlarged the victim's wound.

Now to the stable hasten'd Lok by special leave of Thor,
 And brought in one of the white goats that drew the hero's car :
 The bearded father of the flock was heard to sigh and groan ;
 It vex'd the reverend goat to play the part of a buffoon.

With Fulla's garter at one end Lok by the beard made fast
 The sturdy goat ; the other end he tied to his own waist :
 Now to the goat he turn'd his back, and struck him with a thorn ;
 The beast enraged ran at his foe full butt with levell'd horn.

To a short distance they retired ; now they again fell to ; (3)
 The gods in Valaskialf laugh'd loud the sport absurd to view.
 This amused Lok ; no shame he felt within his breast ; he thought
 That, while at him they laugh'd, they all were laughing at the goat.

But such buffoonery soon must fail amusement to impart ;
 Loud laugh'd the mighty gods, 'tis true, but 'twas not from the heart.
 Oft doth a scene absurd and strange the lungs to laughter move,
 E'en when the heart and sense such scenes must ever disapprove.

Gefion began to frown ; now Thor a sign to Bragur made :
 That silly play offended much the chaste high-minded maid.
 She rose to quit the hall, but Thor whisper'd to Bragur : " Pray
 Recite, to soothe the virgin's ears, some soul-inspiring lay ! "

Then Bragur tuned his harp and said : “ Now listen to my lays !
Behold ! I strike the golden harp in noble Gefion’s praise ! ”
At this the maid resumed her seat ; what female could eschew
To listen gracious to the song, that gives her honour due ?



CANTO XX.

BRAGUR'S SONG IN HONOUR OF GEFION.

WHEN the Asar's numerous band
From the East to Gauthiod's strand
Rode, on coursers arm'd in mail,
Sword in hand, o'er mountain, vale,
Forest, lake, their march pursuing,
The proud Jotun race subduing;
Gefion, as a bulrush strait,
Hied one summer evening late
To where Svea's fountain flows,
Where the Jetter's dwelling rose
Built of wood; where Gylffe's hand
Levied tribute from the land,
Far as the wave, whose stormy spray
Scoops through the hills a double bay.

There while the Scald's poetic fire
To strains harmonious waked the lyre,
The mighty chief sat in his hall,
Surrounded by his champions all.

All lauded the heroic lay,
 And Gefion, who pass'd that way,
 Lured by the harp's melodious sound,
 With sensibility profound
 Listening to each ecstatic note,
 Remain'd fast rooted to the spot.

The sons of Gylffe much incline
 To bend the knee at beauty's shrine :
 No sooner they the Disa view'd,
 As listening at the gate she stood,
 They sprang up from their bench ; with prayer
 They earnestly besieged the fair
 To enter in the festive hall,
 Where she took seat, admired by all.

Though melancholy was her mien,
 She shed new lustre on the scene :
 Her eyes' bewitching glance could melt
 Each warrior's heart beneath his belt,
 Hearts, which were slow to move before,
 Save when the clarion blew for war.

And now the Scald had ceased his lay ;
 The harp's last tone had died away :
 Gefion arose, her bosom swelling
 With conscious dignity, repelling
 All hope her favours to obtain :
 As when on silv'ry lake the swan

Doth proud its swelling neck deploy,
 The water feels a thrilling joy
 The bosom downy-white to lave,
 Which with indifference ploughs the wave.

Thus Gylffe's warriors Gefion bright
 Behold with wonder and delight,
 And striking on their shields, proclaim
 Loud homage to her spotless name ;
 But with a cold disdain the maid
 Their homage and their vows repaid.

“ Farewell, ye champions mountain-born !
 Lo ! to my lips I raise the horn,
 And with the pledge of hydromel
 I bid ye all a long farewell !
 Now to the grove to gather flowers,
 Late moisten'd by benignant showers,
 My course I bend, while through the vale
 Yet sounds the plaint of nightingale :
 And when to-morrow's moon shall roll
 In silv'ry track athwart the pole,
 The daughter of the East again
 Shall join her much-loved sisters' train.”

“ Nay ! Gefion ! stay with us ! oh stay !
 And when the summer's lengthen'd ray
 Tinges our hills, thine be the toil
 To plant fresh flowers on Svithiod's soil.

But if from hence, O goddess bright!
 Thou art resolv'd to wing thy flight,
 No more will joy or pleasure deign
 To smile on Svea's drear domain."

" Well then! your zeal for Gefion prove!
 And with her on it, drag this grove
 Into the Ocean! I the land
 Will deck with flowers; but it must stand
 An island green 'midst billows blue:
 If not—receive my last adieu!
 Gefion ye ne'er shall see again,
 O Jetter! in your proud domain."

" Let Gefion swear with us to stay,
 We'll all submit to Gefion's sway:
 Let graceful Gefion deign to smile,
 We'll straight her fondest wish fulfill.
 Choose the best portion of the land
 Thyself! forthwith the Jetter band,
 Harness'd like Ægir's coursers brave,
 Shall drag it forth into the wave:
 There as an island shall it stand,
 O goddess fair! at thy command!"

The Disa now her skill display'd:
 A plough with precious stones inlaid
 She took, and plough'd the grove around,
 With all its trees, a trench profound.

This done, she southward placed a rock
 The billows' utmost rage to mock :
 Through the deep trench in rush'd the main,
 And quicksands follow'd in its train.

With joy and pride her bosom swell'd,
 When she her fav'rite grove beheld
 Wash'd by the ocean's azure spray :
 Next towards the north she form'd a bay,
 Protection ample to afford
 To ships ; and call'd it Issefiord.

To Gefion's car the champions bright
 Yoked themselves, changed to oxen white :
 The grove far from the hills they drew,
 And fixed it midst the ocean blue.
 There as an island stands apart
 The continent's most fruitful part !
 And since the grove the billows lave,
 Sealund's (1) the name the Disa gave :
 And future ages all proclaim,
 The island well deserves the name ;
 Since there the finest grove they see
 Gracefully married to the sea.
 Thus Sealund stands ! thus took its birth
 The brightest ornament of earth !
 A south, with teeming verdure graced,
 P' th' bosom of the north enchased !

Now through the vacant space doth flow
 The wave, in which the heavenly bow

Reflects itself : now vessels sail,
Where once the car roll'd through the vale ;
And fishes swim, where once the trees
Responded to the evening breeze.

Then join your voice to Bragur's lays !
He strikes the harp in Gefion's praise !
Hail, Gefion ! glorious Disa, hail !
Ne'er shall the poet's ardour fail
To render thee all homage due ;
Thy power triumphant still we view ;
For Sealund with each vale and hill
By Oresund doth flourish still. (2)

CANTO XXI.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN SKIRNIR AND FREY.

BUT when the moon had fled the rock behind,
Follow'd by Maanegarm the winged fiend,
Who, constant in pursuit, to human eyes
Mostly invisible, but in the skies
Sometimes in form of wolf, when rain pours down,
Protrudes his head amidst the vapours brown :
From ocean's bed the sun majestic rose,
Like blushing Freya with her cheeks of rose,
When from the bath outstepping, she displays
(Alone, naught fearing indiscretion's gaze)
Her charms voluptuous to the morning chill,
While on the trees the birds are slumb'ring still.

Skirnir the gallant courier mounts his steed ;
Fulla had fill'd his flask with Suttung's mead ;
While fair Iduna, mindful of the brave,
To guard his life and health, an apple gave.
Lo ! thus prepared, he cleaves the liquid sky
Charged with a mission from Alfader high

For on that very night was Hermod flown
 (Odin's own courier) to a distant zone ;
 There to avenge by punishment sublime,
 O Freya ! thy perfidious consort's crime.

Charged with his errand now must Skirnir ride
 To Dovre's caverns, where the dwarfs reside ;
 Those smiths ingenious, who with wondrous art
 Can to all metals various forms impart :
 By Odin's order they were strict enjoin'd
 To forge a fetter, Fenris wolf to bind,
 Subtle and slight, but strong his force to quell,
 And proved and charm'd with many a mystic spell.
 For iron nought avail'd, nor copper chain
 The dangerous monster's fury to restrain ;
 For such, like singed threads, he burst in twain.

But as o'er Bifrost bridge he pass'd along,
 Thus Skirnir mused : " Methinks, it were not wrong,
 Before I leave the regions of the sky,
 To ascertain, if my own master Frey
 Hath not some mandate for his trusty swain ;
 For though to Odin, king of gods and men,
 We all must bow, and own his sovereign might,
 Yet our own master claims an equal right."
 Thus said, he spurr'd his courser toward the grove
 Of birch-trees, where the Asa loved to rove.
 There Frey, with chin reclining on his hand,
 Was wont to sit, and muse, while o'er the land

The seed is sown, and with fond hopes elate,
 The husbandmen th' approach of autumn wait.
 But when this time Skirnir his master found
 With pallid hue, immers'd in grief profound,
 He wonder'd much, and thus exclaim'd aloud :
 " How now ? my sovereign ! thus with sorrow bow'd,
 When all creation, deck'd in radiant vest,
 Indulges brightest hopes, which thy behest
 Alone can gratify ; for in thy hand
 The Fates have placed the fecundating wand,
 Which spreads abundant harvests o'er the land.

But little would the sower's pains avail,
 Didst thou not send unseen through mead and vale
 A swarm of Alfs, the labourer's way to clear,
 The thieving sparrows with their darts to scare,
 And root out all the noxious insect race,
 Which lie in ambush in each furrow's trace.
 But 'tis in autumn that we most admire
 Thy power, O Asa, when with looks of fire
 Thou gildest bright each waving field of corn :
 For when the reaper's scythe at dawn of morn
 Blithesome resounds, thy greatest triumph then
 Is hail'd with rapture by the sons of men.
 'Tis far more cheering to their hearts to hear
 The scythe's shrill sound, than clang of shield and spear,
 To do Thor homage in his proud career."

" Ah ! what avails my boasted power and pride,
 If it can naught effect (thus Frey replied)

Than causing trees to shoot and corn to grow?
 What boots my form divine and radiant brow,
 If I be not beloved? my power how vain!"

"And art thou not beloved?" rejoin'd the swain:
 "Doth not all nature at thy altar bend?
 Doth not the mighty Odin call thee friend?
 For thee each Disa feels an ardent flame,
 And all the gods thy love fraternal claim."

Now Frey began each circumstance to tell
 That him on Hlidskialf's lofty tower befel:
 How in the mountain cavern he beheld
 A form, which every other form excell'd,
 An image of the fairest and the best,
 That stamp'd itself for ever in his breast.

Then Skirnir: "Now doth my loved master prove,
 I well perceive, the mighty power of love:
 Whoe'er of love's keen arrows feels the smart,
 Freya with doubts and fears distracts his heart.
 With hand upon his breast, in wayward fits,
 Despairing of success, the lover sits:
 Yet could he once his soul to action strain,
 An easy triumph he, perhaps, might gain.
 Why thus despair? Is Gerda thy beloved?
 Cannot she, thinkst thou, by thy prayers be moved?
 Is she not young, and handsome, soft and mild,
 In the first spring of life a flow'ret wild?
 Thinkst thou a goblin bridegroom doom'd to prove
 The exquisite reward of Gerda's love?"

Shame were it for a ruler of the skies,
 Should Horse-leg, the rough clown, bear off the prize;
 Or should a damsel of such wondrous charms
 Languish and pine in Goat-beard's shaggy arms.
 Then Frey: "Could I the maid's consent obtain,
 Yet fear I Odin, king of gods and men;
 He would refuse his sanction." "Why suppose
 Said Skirnir, "Odin would thy views oppose?
 To bind the marriage knot consent he gave
 Whilom 'twixt Ægir, monarch of the wave,
 And the perfidious harsh ill-favour'd Ran,
 Who spreads her net to drown the race of man.
 And did he not his sanction too accord
 To bind fierce Skada with benignant Niord?
 How then could his impartial spirit blame
 A better suited match, a worthier flame
 'Twixt thee and Gerda, loveliest mountain dame?"

"Not always so austere and so sedate
 Trust me, is Odin, as when high in state
 He thrones amidst Valhalla's champions grave:
 He too hath sometimes been love's humblest slave;
 The lively Freya, with her cheeks of rose,
 Hath oft disturbed that prudent god's repose:
 Then weary of the banquet, and the sight
 Of arm'd Einherier in the mimic'd fight,
 Disguised to earth he oft descends, and there
 Clasps in his fond embrace some mortal fair.

" Hast thou forgot the time, when Odin, fired
 With love for Princess Rinda's charms, attired
 As a laborious smith, once found his way
 To Garderike, where her sire held sway?
 First prudently he strove to gain the fair
 By gifts of iron, gold, and silver rare :
 But she rejected all ; and with disdain
 She smote the cheek of the presumptuous swain.
 But nought rebuff'd, again he took the field,
 Like chieftain arm'd with brazen helm and shield ;
 He urged his suit, and met with no success ;
 A second blow chastised his eagerness.
 But since a blow from silken hand of dame
 With no dishonour soils a warrior's name,
 Like oil it served to increase the Asa's flame.

Once more he to the charge return'd, array'd
 This time in guise of lowly waiting-maid :
 He sold his liberty, with fondest care
 And earnest zeal to serve his mistress fair :
 He wash'd her feet on each revolving night,
 And in the humblest duties felt delight :
 This moved her tender heart : and that relief,
 Which to the hardy smith and plume-clad chief
 She had refused, she voluntary gave
 To the profound devotion of a slave.

" Still more of Odin's various loves, in spite
 Of Saga's prudence, can I bring to light,

Although she graves them on her sable shield
In mystic runes, from vulgar ken conceal'd.
When first was ratified the bond of peace
Between the Asar and the Vaner race,
Loud through the mountains of the eastern chain
Was heard of love and bliss the jocund strain.
The Vaner damsels with long streaming hair,
Their forms voluptuous to the girdle bare,
Join'd in the mazy dance and rais'd the song
To crash of cymbals and the sound of gong.
The vine's rich juice their cheeks had colour'd high
And gave fresh lustre to each flashing eye ;
Such thrilling accents from their pouting lips,
Such melting tones were heard, as might eclipse
The strain of nightingale, when to the grove
He lures his mate with blandishments of love.

“ Now to the deepest glen the nymphs withdrew ;
The Asar close th' alluring prey pursue.
Heimdall soon vanish'd ; Vidar, too, the grave,
Most taciturn of all the Asar brave,
Who ne'er his prowess boasts ; then Hermod flew
Into the copse, and, some say, Odin too.
Well, well ! the transports of that blissful night
The genial bard engender'd, Qvaser (2) hight ;
His mother was a damsel of sixteen,
Fair-hair'd, blue-eyed, of loveliest shape and mien ;
She brought him forth amidst the myrtle grove.
And gave him to the gods, a pledge of love.

" He grew to manhood fast, was wise and strong,
 And from his mother learn'd the art of song.
 With various talents blest and generous mind,
 He travell'd o'er the earth to serve mankind,
 And much he joy'd to place within their reach
 All that his wisdom or his skill could teach.
 But malice slumbers not ; at close of day
 It lies in ambush to destroy its prey.
 Qvaser oft wander'd o'er the mountain steep ;
 Two scowling dwarfs there kill'd him while asleep ;
 Into a golden vase they pour'd his blood,
 From which, with honey mix'd, a drink they brew'd
 This drink the Scalds' bright science could inspire, ;
 And fill man's bosom with poetic fire.
 The vengeance of Valhalla to prevent
 And screen their guilt, the dwarfs a tale invent ;
 They spread abroad that Qvaser they had found
 In the deep flood of his own wisdom drown'd.
 But to conceal their crime they strove in vain ;
 And ample vengeance for his brother slain
 On those malignant dwarfs brave Suttung took ;
 He seized them both and bound them to a rock ;
 That rock, by stormy billows lash'd, doth stand
 In the mid ocean, distant far from land.
 As a still further punishment, he left
 The traitors life, of all its joys bereft :
 There haunts them still the ghost of Qvaser slain,
 And hunger gnaws them with eternal pain."

Frey sigh'd, young Skirnir smiled, and still his tale
 Continued sprightly : " Suttung did not fail

To seize the vase fill'd with the precious juice,
For well he knew its value and its use ;
The vase he trusted to no dragon's care,
But to his prudent daughter, Gunliod fair.
Then Odin first conceived the project bold
Of gaining mast'ry of that vase of gold :
He mounted on his courser, Sleipner hight,
And swift descending from Valhalla's height,
Soon reach'd a field, where arm'd with scythes he view'd
Nine savage goblins of the Jotun brood,
Intent, by the broad streaming northern light,
To cut down all a peasant's corn that night ;
And Odin knew their master, Bauge, dwell'd
In a huge cave close bord'ring on the field.
No deference pay to justice or to right
The thievish giants ; their sole law is might :
They rove the world around and laugh to scorn
The Asar's golden rules ; the peasant's corn
They carry off, while he lies fast asleep,
And, what he sows, those ruthless robbers reap.
Night of their force and fraud conceals each trace,
For Night herself is of the giant race :
Her sire, the giant Narf ; an Asa bright,
Delling, became her husband ; then did Night
Give birth to honest Day : thus oft arise
Virtue and grace from ugliness and vice.
But Night when she o'er earth her ride extends,
Mounted on Hrimfax, whom she often lends
To Skada, acts in concert with the brood
Of giants, and conceals their deeds of blood.

But Moon, the graceful child with golden hair
 About her temples, boasts a courage rare,
 And far beyond her sex and age ; 'tis she
 Exposes oft the giants' villany ;
 And when from a dark cloud with radiant head
 Fair Moon emerges, to the rocks they speed
 To hide themselves ; but soon commence again,
 And to their mountain lair bear off amain
 The fruits and treasures of the luckless swain.
 Then when the husbandman walks o'er the field
 At dawn of day, and views his harvest fell'd
 And all laid waste, he thinks the nightly frost
 Hath caused the mischief and his labours cross'd.
 Then he complains to Frey, but vain his prayer ;"
 Frey sigh'd, and gaz'd around with vacant stare.
 Skirnir continued ; still he hoped, forsooth,
 With tales and jests his master's mind to sooth.
 " But not alone the giants mischief cause,
 The cunning dwarfs too oft infringe the laws ;
 They, when the summer breeze embalms the air,
 In shape of ants and cockchafers repair
 To th' field, and there devour the ears of corn,
 Laughing the wretched peasant's plaint to scorn.

When Odin now the thievish giants view'd,
 Pity and indignation fired his blood ;
 He took out from his pouch a polished stone, (3)
 Than which for sharp'ning scythes a better one
 Could not be found ; then call'd out loud and blythe :
 ' Which of ye needs a stone to wet his scythe ?'

He threw it high in air, but as it fell,
The greedy giants had with rancour fell,
Disputing for the stone, each other slain,
And streams of blood incarnadined the plain.

“ Then Odin towards the mountain hied him strait
And knock'd, with Bolverk's name, at Bauge's gate ;
He there took service, and with nine men's power
For the nine reapers household labours bore ;
But this condition fix'd, Bauge a road
Should find him to fair Gunliod's abode.
Now Bauge bored the rock, and Odin blew
Into the hole, but the dust backward flew
Into his eyes. The giant's trick was plain ;
The hole was not made straight ; but when again
Bauge his borer used, the god applied
Quickly his mouth and blew. To th' other side
Now flew the dust ; the aperture was free ;
And Odin, in a serpent's form, with glee
Glides through the rock ; the giant with his steel
Strikes after, but in vain he strives the snake to kill.
And Odin, when he reach'd the other side,
Resumed his proper form with conscious pride.
With snow-white arm beneath her cheek of rose,
There Gunliod slumb'ring lay in deep repose ;
While the lamp spread a flick'ring ray around,
Odin beheld the vase with garlands crown'd.
Odin presents himself, not fiercely now
Like a wild man, but with majestic brow

He stands ; then with a lover's ardour kneels
 Before the maid, and all his soul reveals. ·
 His eloquence, his manly beauty gain'd
 Her heart ; three nights with Gunliod he remain'd.
 And oft, while on his mistress' form he gaz'd,
 She to her lover's lips the mystic vessel rais'd.
 Right lustily he drank ; then with his prize
 Triumphant he regain'd his native skies."

Now Skirnir ceas'd his story, and awhile
 Gazed on his master with an artful smile ;
 Then Frey his silence broke : " So ! thus doth love
 An Asa ! sensual joys alone their passion move !
 The sweeter fruit of sentiment, I trow,
 The race of Bor and Bure do not know.
 O Skirnir ! did the Fates to Frey accord
 To dwell on Hlidskialf's tower, like Valhall's lord,
 How fortunate ! then every morn the sight
 Of Gerda would my ravish'd soul delight.
 This would repay me amply for my sighs
 And for my nightly tears : alas ! there lies
 A barrier insurmountable between
 My love and me : all I dare hope to glean
 Is her dear image, which can ne'er depart ;
 Here, here, it lies, deep buried in my heart.
 Of her bright charms the deep imprinted trace
 Nor time nor circumstance can e'er efface.
 What greater pleasure, Skirnir ! can we prove,
 Than to behold the darling maid we love ?

Oh yes! there is a pleasure far more sweet;
When looks reciprocal our glances meet,
And earnest give of future sympathy:
Oh! 'tis the most enchanting melody,
When the sweet voice of the beloved fair
Whispers "I love thee" in her lover's ear.
Yet e'en the tongue can ne'er its happiness,
With half the ardour, half the force express,
As doth an eye, whose silent eloquence
Reveals each thought, and beams with love intense.

"Now hie thee swift to the dark giant's land,
And execute Valfader's stern command!
Procure a fetter forged with mystic spell
Fenris the wolf to chain, that monster fell!
Not difficult the task will prove, methinks,
For the dwarf's science from no labour shrinks.
But neither mystic spell nor magic chain
Can to Valhalla bind my heart again:
To Gerda solely it belongs; it flies
With wings impetuous through the azure skies
Over Ginnungagap, abyss profound,
And hovers with delight the mountain fair around.
But shouldst thou find the dear enchanting maid,
Tell her what thou hast seen, what Frey hath said!
Doubtless already me with scorn she views;
The giant's hate the Asar still pursues.
As for the rest she is too wondrous fair,
Too graceful in her manners, shape and air,

Not to expect with sighs and homage meet
 A host of lovers kneeling at her feet.
 And if the swain, to whom she plights her vow,
 Is less esteem'd by the whole world below,
 Than is the god—should Gerda preference give
 To him—what then avails my proud prerogative?

“Farewell! Now hie thee hence, my Skirnir brave!
 To execute the order Odin gave.
 But on thy master's woes be silent still!
 E'en could I hope to bend her father's will,
 Could he, though giant-like to softness steel'd,
 From interested views be taught to yield,
 What then? but little comfort this would prove;
 The father's power I court not, but the love
 Of his fair daughter. O thou Gerda dear!
 Couldst thou but view thy ardent lover here
 Immersed in grief profound, thy generous heart
 Some words of comfort would, perhaps, impart:
 Would give asylum to affection's sighs,
 And learn a suitor thus sincere to prize.
 Thus doth the mountain's summit wrapt in snow
 Melt by degrees before the summer's glow,
 And to a plant gives birth, which scents the gale,
 More fragrant than the lily of the vale.”

Thus spoke the god, and sat him down beside
 The brook to weep; the waters onward glide,
 And, as they flow, receive the lover's tears,
 While mirror-like the stream his beauteous image bears.

But Skirnir, who in missions from the god
So oft had visited the dwarfs' abode,
Had learnt their various arts ; and now while Frey
Sat gazing on the stream with mournful eye,
Skirnir, I say, with sudden impulse took
A handful of the water from the brook,
Which the reflection of Frey's image gave ;
Into his horn he quickly pour'd the wave.
And stopp'd it with a cork ; then to his side
Made fast the horn, and gallop'd off with pride.

This artifice by Frey was noticed not ;
Gerda alone absorb'd his ev'ry thought.



CANTO XXX.

FREY'S PLAINT AT THE FOUNTAIN.

O SWAIN ! who sighest sad with cheek so pale,
And to the gentle Freya dost complain,
Because thy vows and ardour naught avail
The love of a proud maiden's heart to gain :
Because to thee no joys the vernal gale
Affords : Ah ! blame not Freya ! she thy pain
Beholds and shares ; forlorn, a pray to woe
Herself, her golden tears incessant flow. (1)

Naught surely can compete with love's delight;
But love resembles much a northern spring :
For one day's pure and genial solar light,
Nine days of sleet and cloud discomfort bring. .
Many the birds whose screams the ear affright,
But few there are, that can melodious sing :
While lapwings, sparrows, owlets never fail.
Seldom is heard the voice of nightingale.

A graceful maid is rarely to be found ;
But should the object of thy fond pursuit
Shine forth to view with matchless beauty crown'd,
She may be silly, harsh, or dissolute ;
But e'en if beauty, virtue, judgment sound,
All in thy choice unite, what doth it boot ?
She for another feels a sympathy,
And with indiff'rence turns her eyes from thee.

To guarantee the zest complete of love,
How many things must be on earth combined !
First, two hearts which a mutual passion prove :
Then grace and beauty, with a soul refined :
Then the moon shining through the beechen grove,
When the spring greets the earth with zephyrs kind :
Then meeting without danger or suspense :
Then the embrace ; and with that—innocence.

CANTO XXIII.

THE JOURNEY OF SKIRNIR.*

Now Skirnir, eager his zeal to prove,
Down Bifrost urges his course amain,
And, speeding through Hertha's gloomy grove,
Soon reaches the Giant's drear domain.
'Twas like the wind blowing o'er the road,
Which gate nor barrier hath power to stop :
'Twas like the blast raging o'er the flood,
Which lashes to foam the billow's top.

Now Skirnir thought : " Pitch dark is the night,
Brakes, briars, and brambles impede my course :
And the wind and the rain with all their might
'Gainst the bosom beat of my jaded horse.
But if no Giant in th' hour of need
To give me refuge as guest will deign,
Then Skirnir must on his panting steed
Return in haste to Valhalla again."

* Respecting the metre of this Canto, see the note.

To Elivagor he chose the road,
 He came to a fiord, (1) and fain would cross :
 And there at the brink a ferryman stood
 With wrinkled brow, and with aspect cross.
 " Who art thou, fellow, that standst so grave
 Upright in thy bark ?" thus Skirnir cried :
 " If thou wilt ferry me o'er the wave,
 I'll give thee oatcakes, and herrings beside.

" Upon my shoulder my wallet see !
 Therein of provisions a store I've put."
 Then answer'd the ferryman scornfully :
 " Fine horseman thou, with thy shoeless foot ! (2)
 A woollen kirtle is all thy treasure,
 Yet thou talkst like a lord of wealth and power.
 Ha ! thinkst thou slaves to thy will and pleasure
 Us Giants to find at the midnight hour ?"

SKIRNIR.

Steer hither thy bark ! thou grumbling wight !
 Thy name and thy lineage quick declare !
 Why stand there idle the livelong night,
 And lose every chance to earn a fare ?

HARBARD.

A Nidding is he who denies his name ;
 Yet were I base as the torrent's scum,

My birth to reveal I'd feel no shame :
'Tis not such as thou shalt make me dumb.

SKIRNIR.

I seek not to cross the fiord, I swear,
To teach thee manners and language meet :
But thou hast perchance a sister fair,
Who would more courteous a stranger greet :
Or thou art link'd to a beauteous bride,
Who would not disdain on a youth to smile :
Then ferry me quick to the other side !
I fain would commune with her awhile.

HARBARD.

Aye ! aye ! our females are smart and fair ;
That Odin himself must needs confess :
I only wish more renown'd they were
For constancy and for gentleness.
If in search of beauty thou makest thy trip,
Thou'lt meet with dames that will please thee well :
But beware lest a kiss from the wife's soft lip
Be repaid by a kiss from the husband's steel !

SKIRNIR.

Like dogs forsooth are your mountain brood,
Envious and snarling and quarrelsome ;

Who to other creatures refuse the food,
 Which they themselves can never consume.
 Incapable of true love are ye,
 Yet ye fain would exact return of love :
 Ye seek not to hide your inconstancy,
 Yet expect your matrons should constant prove.

HARBARD.

Thou hast talk'd enough : 'tis an envious theme :
 Now rest thee, and quench thy thirst, and eat !
 But ere I ferry thee o'er the stream,
 Thou must proof exhibit of talent meet :
 No fare from trav'lers I'm wont to take ;
 But if they cannot give answers good
 To every question I chuse to make,
 Down at once they sink in the dark blue flood.

And now the goblin began to ask
 Young Skirnir about the orbs of heaven :
 What various names ('twas no easy task)
 To the sun and moon and stars were given :
 To earth and water, to fire and air,
 To plants and trees, to the wind and rain :
 And what the terms expressive were,
 Which all their properties explain.

But Skirnir's answers never fail,
 And all his ready wit display :
 " The earth is call'd by the Asar, *vale* :
 By the Alfer, *green* : by the Vaner, *way* :
 The *cave of metals*, by Dwarfs 'tis named :
Fruit-bearer, by all the Giant brood."
 Then Harbard, raising his oar, exclaimed :
 " In truth, my hero ! thou answer'st good."

" Heaven," Skirnir quickly then rejoind,
 " Is term'd by the Asar the *ceiling blue* :
 The Vaner term it the *realm of wind* :
 And *drypsal* (4) 'tis call'd by the Dvergar crew :
Fairloft by the Alfs : by the Giants 'tis hight
Opheim. (5)" All these answers, 'twas plain to see,
 Were much approved by the ferrying wight,
 And Skirnir's cakes he devour'd with glee.

" To the moon by the Dwarfs, I know full well,
 Of *yellow-shiner* the name is given :
 By the Asar, *dreamer in the vale* :
 By Hela 'tis term'd the *wheel of heaven* :
 By the Alfs, *year-reckoner* : the Giants proud
 With the name *inconstant* soil the moon : "
 Then Harbard chuckled, and cried aloud :
 " Much knowledge, 'tis plain, thou hast, my son !"

"The sun is call'd the *darter of rays*
 In Valaskialf by the Asar all :
 But the Dwarfs, who cannot endure its blaze,
Sight-blinder the glorious orb miscall :
 'Tis named by the Alfs the *wreath of gold* :
Night-vanquisher by the Giant breed."
 These answers grave Harbard much extoll'd,
 And herrings he eat with his oaten bread.

"The cloud that flits the heavens along
 Is term'd by the Asar the *car of Thor* :
Rain-dropper in every Vaner's song :
 And *runaway* base in the Giant's lore :
 By the Alfs *shade-giver* : the Dwarfs, who thrive
 In their grots, and dislike the glare of day, (6)
 To the cloud the term *umbrella* give,
 Since it shields them well from the solar ray.

"The wind doth many a title claim
 From the denizens of air and earth :
 The *wide-embracer* is its name,
 The *blust'rer*, *railer*, and so forth.
 The *metal-melter*, the *smoky-veil'd*,
 Are appellations given to fire.
 And *hair of the earth* the trees are call'd,
 When their branches wave in their green attire."

Fresh questions the boatman grave proposed,
But the answers of Skirnir never fail.
Of day and of night the names he posed,
And those bestow'd on corn and ale.
Then Harbard said : " Ne'er met my eyes
A man with wisdom so profound :
Yet Gestur's riddles, I surmise,
Will far beyond thy reach be found."

Grim Harbard now unmoor'd his bark,
And briskly Skirnir stepp'd on board ;
For naught he valued the Giants dark,
And felt secure with his trusty sword.
And though the frightful boatman stared
As stiff as a corpse with his evil eye,
Yet not a whit was the hero scared,
For his witchcraft all he could well defy.

But Harbard soon lays down his oar,
For lo ! the skiff no guidance needs :
Steady it nears the mountain shore,
Urged by the stream, which upwards speeds.
Unlike all other streams this wave,
Which from the mountains take their source,
And toward the sea, their common grave,
Flow downward with unerring course.

Swift gliding on the wizard brook,
They reach a drear and barren spot,
Where dews in vain bathe the naked rock,
Nor plant nor blade of grass takes root.
No bird's soft carol here fills the sky,
All nature here seems a lifeless corse ;
Naught is heard but the owl, which flitting by
Assails the ear with warnings hoarse.

'Twas night : the earth in frost was bound :
Thick flakes of snow from heaven descend :
Rising on every side around,
Huge ice-bergs seem their course to fend :
The shaggy beard of Harbard froze,
And icicles his ringlets deck'd :
But naught could Skirnir discompose ;
On him the cold had no effect.

'Twas day : a torrent rustling through
A drear and sandy desert flow'd ;
The wind like breath from furnace blew ;
The sun was veil'd by sultry cloud ;
A thirsty buffalo its snout
Protruded from the tepid wave :
Yet scorching heats and vapours naught
Affect the nerves of Skirnir brave.

Quoth Harbard : “ Friend ! I must allow,
Thy nature can all climes withstand :
Thou heedest neither Greenland’s snow,
Nor scorching suns of Negroland.”
Then Skirnir answer’d smiling. “ Right !
Nor heat nor cold should travellers dread :
Were I a soft effeminate wight,
Think’st thou, I should so far have sped ? ”

The bark now with redoubled speed
Shot ’gainst a perpendic’lar rock ;
The bark had timbers proof at need,
Else were it split by such a shock :
But naught alarm’d was Skirnir bold,
When dash’d against the marble steep.
Now Harbard’s brows in wrinkles roll’d,
And many a curse he murmur’d deep.

“ Now we’re arrived upon the strand ;
Yon silver-hair’d blind veteran see !
If thou hast wit at thy command,
The cavern’s gate he’ll ope for thee.
If thou his riddles canst unravel,
The mountain’s treasures he’ll display :
But hast thou doubts, ’twere best to travel
Homeward, young friend, without delay.

" For Gestur none admits, before
 His (8) riddles they correct unfold :
 In chains of copper by his door
 Yon four ferocious dogs behold !
 His riddles shouldst thou fail to guess,
 On thee he'll loose his mastiffs strait ;
 Then will thy mangled limbs express
 In language clear the wand'rer's fate."

" I am prepared for all his guile ;
 Let him begin forthwith his task !
 And thou wilt find, that I have skill
 To solve each riddle he may ask."
 " Nay! nay! thou dost, advent'rous youth,
 Thy skill, perhaps, too highly prize :
 But now 'tis time from Gestur's mouth
 To hear them : Hark !" aloud he cries.

GESTUR.

What is it that union and mirth inspires,
 Yet oft is the cause of quarrel and strife?
 Which oft the tongue with eloquence fires,
 Yet oft deprives it of power and life?

SKIRNIR.

Not difficult is this question, I trow ;
Mead is the key to the riddle proposed :

Wit from the mead-horn doth often flow ;
By the mead-cup oft is the fool exposed.

GESTUR.

I pass'd on a road, where three roads met,
Yet these roads never touch'd each other.
Howe'er ingenious thy mother wit,
Here's a nut to crack, thy brains will bother.

SKIRNIR.

To a frost-bound river thou didst come,
And o'er the ice thou didst glide with speed,
While under thy feet the fishes swum,
And birds in the air flew o'er thy head.

GESTUR.

I yesterday drank, but water 'twas not,
Nor any pottage with liquid drench'd,
Nor wine, nor beer, nor mead was my lot,
Yet my burning thirst was easily quench'd.

SKIRNIR.

Beneath a tree thou didst lay thee down,
While the *deves* of night all creation drench'd ;
At morn thou didst lick the dew from the stone,
And thus thy thirst was easily quench'd.

GESTUR.

A two nosed bride groom I know full well,
 Who kisses his bride with such ardent zeal,
 That if thy finger were placed between,
 His nose would smash both bone and skin.

SKIRNIR.

The answer deft I can scarcely miss :
 Who would not shrink from the ardent kiss,
 That the *hammer* to the anvil gives,
 When his trade the smith laborious drives?

GESTUR.

Two creatures without lungs I know ;
 Yet such is the force with which they blow,
 That metals they melt, and snakes they breed,
 Which have power to hiss and to bite, when dead.

SKIRNIR.

Thy lungless wights are the smith's *vast bellows*,
 And *swords* for the warrior's use they form :
 How weak would prove e'en the bravest fellows
 Without their swords in the battle's storm !

GESTUR.

A wondrous weaver there is forsooth,
 Who sits on his woof, and weaves his cloth :

His eyes are four, and his legs are eight,
And his knees exceed his body in height.

SKIRNIR.

I would not as model of beauty cite
The *spider*, yet he's an industrious wight;
He's thrifty too; and from his own breast
He weaves his woof, and he builds his nest.

GESTUR.

'Twas black as a raven, and bright as a shield,
And sharp as a spit, as it lay on the field.
But lately it glow'd with an ardent flame,
But now like the grave it is cold and tame.

SKIRNIR.

'Thou sawst the *lava* from Hecla flow,
Which in the sun's beam so bright did glow;
But o'er snow-clad fields meandering down,
It ceased to flow, and it turn'd to stone.

GESTUR.

Of a white-hair'd female I've been told,
Who well knows how white balls to mould;
Yet hath this female never a hand:
This riddle, pray! dost thou understand?

SKIRNIR.

'Tis the long-neck'd *swan* with its colour white,
 Who loves to sail on the lake so bright :
 No hands hath she, but her yellow feet
 Can give to her eggs the figure meet.

GESTUR.

A corpse sat riding a corpse upon,
 And though without life the steed moved on ;
 Across the river it speeded fast,
 And stopp'd on the opposite bank at last.

SKIRNIR.

On the ice lay a *horse* deprived of breath,
 And on it an *eagle* frozen to death :
 On the drifting ice the courser sped
 Across the stream, although it was dead.

GESTUR.

Who is it in ashes sleeps like a slave,
 And seems neither life nor vigour to have?
 Yet when 'tis angry, and throws off its mask,
 O! then its mercy 'tis vain to ask.

SKIRNIR.

In the midst of ashes the glimmering *spark*
 No one ever deigns to notice or mark :

Yet should it escape, and flame abroad,
Then woe to each straw-roof'd dwelling of wood!

GESTUR.

Who is that wizard with cloak of grey
That speeds o'er forest and stream his way?
Who flies 'fore the wind, and not from the lance,
And darkens the sun's beneficent glance?

SKIRNIR.

Thy riddle is easy, O Gestur blind!
'Tis the *cloud* compels the sun to yield:
But Niord comes riding upon the wind,
And the cloud in turn must quit the field.

GESTUR.

What beast is that in yonder field
Whose house protects him like a shield?
Toad-like in form, his house of horn
May laugh the serpent's tooth to scorn.

SKIRNIR.

The *tortoise* thou must mean, I'm sure;
Beneath his shell he sits secure:
Happy the chief who takes the field,
Guarded by such a powerful shield!

GESTUR.

Who are those lively females, say !
 In summer clad in hue of clay,
 But when stern winter hovers in sight,
 They flaunt in bridal robes of white ?

SKIRNIR.

Thou speakst of *partridges*, I guess ;
 While winter lasts, white is their dress ;
 Like bears, their coats aside they fling,
 And brown, like clay, become in spring.

GESTUR.

What nymphs are those, who speed away,
 Unmarried, to their dying day ;
 While caps on their dark locks are worn,
 And flowing trains their backs adorn ?

SKIRNIR.

Thou meanest sure the *waves* of ocean,
 Which winds so easy put in motion,
 But to a speedy end they come ;
 Their joy is naught but froth and scum.

GESTUR.

Who plunges oft in the sea profound,
 And joys with tooth to seize the ground ?

Who saveth many a chieftain good
From dangers dire by wind or flood?

SKIRNIR.

This riddle doth, O wizard blind!
With thoughts sublime inspire my mind:
The *anchor* surely thou dost mean,
Emblem of Hope to mortal men.

GESTUR.

What guests are those, that in silence drain
A cup, which unemptied doth still remain?
Though the guests in silence their bellies fill,
The cup itself makes a clamour shrill.

SKIRNIR.

Each little *pig* abstains from noise,
When he his mother's milk enjoys:
But never the mother can silence keep,
She grunts for pastime loud and deep.

GESTUR.

Thy wits will fail thee, I surmise,
Shouldst thou perchance a monster meet,
Who boasts ten tongues and twenty eyes,
With twice five tails, and forty feet.

SKIRNIR.

Thy frightful beast, O Gestur blind!
Can with no terrors fill my mind;
The pregnant *sow* be pleased to slay
That stands by yonder trough, I pray!"

The sow was slain; such was her doom;
They counted the pigs in the mother's womb!
Skirnir, in troth, had guess'd aright,
For lo! nine farrow appear'd in sight.

The news threw Gestur into fits;
Too great for him was this mental shock:
Changed to a statue there he sits
For aye, upon that fatal rock!

Now wagg'd their tails, were mild and tame
The dogs, so fierce and wild before:
When Skirnir to the mountain came,
Wide open flew the cavern door:

And in went Skirnir, fearless swain,
His master's errand to fulfil:
Of peril reckless and of pain,
He felt he was an Asa still.

Through the rock's windings intricate
Without a torch he found the road;
He reach'd an open silver gate,
Near which a stream o'er diamonds flow'd.

CANTO FIFTH.

GERDA'S LOVE.

SKIRNIR the open silver portal view'd,
And through an archway straight his course pursued :
The passage, cut through coal, and polish'd bright,
Gave to the traveller sufficient light.
But soon, when he some paces onward sped,
Again the starry vault shone o'er his head.
To a court-yard he came ; and there his eyes
Met with a sight that fill'd him with surprize :
For there, instead of ducks and hens, a brood
Of snakes and lizards crawl'd about for food, (1)
Which from her apron's fold a maiden threw,
And call'd them to be fed in accents strange and new.
But all at once the maid, when she espied
The swain, rush'd back behind a porch, and cried
Stoutly for help : her speech brave Skirnir naught
Could comprehend ; 'twas Finnish, as he thought.
A numerous train of carles and maidens, scared
At the shrill sound, stept forth and round them stared.
Skirnir observ'd them close : their stature short
And squab ; their visage sallow ; coarse, lank, swart

Their hair ; small eyes that with no meaning glow ;
 Nostrils compress'd ; a forehead flat and low ;
 Their fingers, like dried carrots, long and lean ;
 Awkward their gait ; ignoble all their mien :
 Their looks betray, so lustreless, so tame,
 Their portion scant of the celestial flame :
 In Finnmark and in Greenland such a race
 May still be found, devoid of soul or grace.
 " Now help me, Thor !" quoth Skirnir, in despite :
 " Hath my good master lost his senses quite ?
 Is then his love a witch like one of these,
 Whose aspect bare the warmest blood would freeze ?
 Love's blind, they say, but madness 'twere, forsooth,
 For such a hero in the bloom of youth
 To pair off with a damsel so uncouth."

Thus musing towards the porch he cast a glance,
 And there beheld from 'midst her train advance
 The beauteous Gerda : wonder and delight
 Enchant his soul at such a vision bright !
 He stood entranced, and dumb : e'en so doth stand
 The humble swain, when at his lord's command
 He ploughs the earth, and turning up the mould,
 Discovers fill'd with coins a vase of gold.
 Now could he well conceive his master's flame,
 For ne'er his eyes beheld a lovelier dame :
 Not golden-hued her locks, like those which deck
 The brow of Freya ; down her ivory neck
 Part flow in ebon ringlets, part entwine
 With many a glossy wreath her front divine :

Not heavenly blue her eyes, like those which grace
 The lofty females of the Asar race ;
 But like two garnets dark they fervent beam,
 And fix the heart with soul-subduing gleam.
 In just proportion every' feature shone,
 And all combin'd to form a paragon.

Now Skirnir, when the power of speech again
 He felt, address'd the fair, and to explain
 His mission straight began ; but with disdain
 Hasty she answer'd : “ To thy lord return !
 And tell him, Frey for me may vainly burn.
 Ne'er let him hope to touch my heart, still less
 The mountain damsel in his arms to press :
 I hate him ; is he not of Asar race ?
 And can we e'er forget the dire disgrace
 Heap'd on us giants ? by their mystic spells
 Our Utgard-Lok in gloomiest caverns dwells.
 Yet is his prison vast ; we still can boast
 A world more glorious than the one we've lost.
 We hold more treasures in our grotts profound,
 Than on the surface of the earth are found.
 With ether's glitt'ring orbs let Odin toy ;
 In frothy billows Ægir seek his joy ;
 Frigga in fading flow'rets boast her choice ;
 The Alfs in unsubstantial air rejoice :
 But we possess fire, metals, precious stones,
 At our command the fierce volcano groans :
 We need but nod, as the prond courser shakes
 His mane, earth with a fev'rish motion quakes :

Walls, castles, towns are levell'd with the ground,
 And forests sink in wat'ry wastes profound.
 Though Odin in Valhalla boast his might,
 Lok hath an elder and superior right,
 And earth still owns him lord : but think ! O think !
 The time will come when all your power shall shrink :
 Your race expire ; Valhall in flames be hur'ld ;
 Though now ye vainly dream to rule the world."

Now to fair Gerda answer'd Skirnir mild :
 " Who taught thee such conceits ? thou lovely child !
 Not from thy own conception comes thy speech ;
 Too innocent thy heart such flights to reach :
 For Utgard-Lok thou knowst not, ne'er hast seen,
 With hair upright like quills and swarthy mien :
 This from thy father thou hast learnt, I ween.
 'Tis well ; that thy opinions are the same
 As his, who shall thy filial reverence blame ?
 Yet think again ! but distantly art thou
 Allied with Utgard-Lok, who reigns below :
 Naught with that chief in common dost thou share ;
 He, frightful to behold ; thou, wondrous fair.
 Like rose-bud thou, t'embalm the air design'd ;
 Like deadly nightshade he, to blast mankind.
 Yet oft the virtues of a child suffice
 To expiate her father's crimes and vice :
 From unlike sources various products spring ;
 Joy sometimes grief ; misfortune bliss doth bring.
 Between the sand runs not the muddy stream
 So long, till purified it shows a gleam

Like that of diamond ? in its surface bright
 The maidens then to view their forms delight.
 From mould impure sweet flowers their birth derive,
 Yet lift their heads in air, and fragrant thrive.
 Now let the rose of love thy front entwine,
 And with earth's brightest jewel heaven combine !”

Now Gerda thus replied in soften'd tone :
 “ Thy speech is courteous and discreet, I own :
 With zeal and eloquence dost thou fulfill
 The task imposed thee by thy sov'reign's will :
 So now depart ! but first, I pray thee, taste,
 Thy strength to renovate, our night's repast,
 Then quick returning to thy bright domain
 Inform thy anxious lord, his suit is vain.
 Tell him, however prudent, smooth and kind
 Thy words, they naught have influenc'd Gerda's mind.
 Stout champions, brave in war, our mountains yield,
 Chiefs, whom in power the Asar ne'er excell'd :
 Should such a chief one day his passion prove
 For me, and bend my heart to mutual love,
 Then will the mountain nymph with joy and pride
 Accept his hand, and hail the name of bride.
 Here in my native vales content I live ; (2)
 'Midst mountains high, and fountains clear I thrive.
 A princess too by birth, born to command,
 Among the giant race pre-eminent I stand. |
 And, trust me ! not so humble or so low
 Doth Gerda feel, as with submissive brow

T'intrude herself amongst the gods on high ;
 To meet contempt from every Disa's eye,
 Who hold my birth too mean, myself too base
 To form alliance with the Asar race."

" Therein thou dost the fair Asynior wrong ;
 (Thus Skirnir answer'd with persuasive tongue)
 Pride, arrogance prevail amongst mankind,
 But in a Disa's soul ne'er harbour find.
 The features grand that mark the gods on high
 Are virtue, wisdom, and simplicity,
 Not birth ; since 'tis well known the gods among,
 That Thor and Odin both from nothing sprung,
 Like insects, at Alfader's nod ; though now
 On Valhall's throne they sit with radiant brow."

To him replied the lively Gerda : " Love,
 For what we know not, we can never prove.
 I know my native vale, each rock, each field,
 But Frey or Valhall ne'er my eyes beheld.
 Me hath he never seen ; whence springs his flame
 At once so ardent for the mountain dame ?
 Methinks, to tell thee truth, my gentle swain !
 All goes not right in thy fond master's brain."

And now his master's actions and his fate
 Did Skirnir circumstantially relate :
 How he ascended Illidskialf's lofty tower,
 And what from thence he view'd in Gerda's bower :

How, when her charms she bared, love's potent dart
At once transfix'd his vacillating heart.

With downcast look and palpitating breast,
Deep blushing, Gerda listen'd to her guest.
But when young Skirnir talk'd about the moon,
She laughed, and quick resumed her jesting tone.
"If like the moon thy master be," she said,
"Let him ne'er hope to win a youthful maid!
For pale and sallow is the moon; such hue
All blooming damsels with repugnance view:
Such love is lukewarm."—"Nay!" the swain replied,
"Did Frey once press thee in his arms as bride,
Thou wouldst not of his lukewarm love complain;
But since my powers of argument are vain,
'Twere best I seek my couch; but first, I pray,
Let me the bower, where thou dost sleep, survey.
A present from my sov'reign lord I bear
For thee, which I would fain deposit there."
Laughing, she pointed out her chamber-door,
Then went herself his supper to procure;
For Gerda was by nature good and kind,
And Skirnir's jovial frankness pleased her mind.

Skirnir now stood alone; her couch he view'd,
Near which a vase of alabaster stood,
Wherein the maid, before she went to rest,
Was wont to lave her face, her arms, her breast:
'Twas fill'd with water: with his project pleas'd,
In haste his horn the gallant Skirnir seiz'd;

Within the vase all its contents he pour'd,
 And charged it with the image of his lord.
 This done, he left the bower of Gerda strait,
 And his own chamber sought with mind elate.

But now the mountain damsel, when her guest
 And all her menials had retired to rest,
 Flew to her chamber, curious to behold
 The gift from Valhall brought by Skirnir bold.
 Curling her lip, as maids are wont to do,
 She thus exclaim'd with laugh contemptuous: "Now
 I needs must view the wond'rous present given
 By the enamour'd denizen of heaven.
 What can it be? diamonds, or rubies bright,
 Silver, or gold are common in my sight:
 Such treasures in our spacious grotts abound,
 But in the skies, I trow, are seldom found."
 But when around she look'd, and naught could find,
 She laughed again, but anger vex'd her mind:
 "I thought as much; a miserable joke;
 Worthy of Asar;" jeering thus she spoke.
 "I must allow, the gods do far surpass
 In fraud and mockery our giant race."

And now the maid began to loose her zone,
 And from her shoulders doff the woollen gown:
 Bared to the middle by the diamond's light
 She stands; what glorious charms appear in sight!

In th' hollow of her hand she caught the wave
To cool her purple cheek, her front to lave ;
But when she view'd the image bright of Frey
Reflected in the wave, a piercing cry
She gave, and started back with fear assail'd ;
Then blushing, cross-ways o'er her bosom held
Her arms, and catching up her robe in haste,
Around her beauteous body wound it fast.
But soon to admiration changed her fear,
And to her mind the stratagem was clear.
Wrapp'd in her garment to the neck, she flew
Once more the image beautiful to view :
The form divine of the enchanting god
Melted the maiden's heart, and fired her blood :
What majesty displays his forehead high !
What tender mournful smiles beam from his eye
Of fire ! his bosom seems t' exhale a sigh :
'Twas meant for Gerda ; from his polish'd brow
Adown his ivory neck the golden tresses flow :
With hand placed on his heart he seems to say ;
“ Here Gerda reigns with undisputed sway !”
Pensive awhile she stood ; nor was aware
That down her damask cheek had roll'd a tear
Into her lover's mouth : an ardent flame,
O wonder ! from the gelid water came,
And enter'd deep her heart : now with a sigh,
O'er the vase leaning, she exclaim'd : “ O Frey !”
Then sudden started back once more, afraid,
Some prying witness might her bower invade :
But when secure that she alone was there,
She oft bow'd down to kiss the image fair.

It vanish'd now within the eddying wave,
 Which had the power thy purple mouth to lave,
 But not to cool thy lips, O virgin bright !
 But when the water clear again in sight
 Brought back the image of the god beloved,
 Reflection deep the heart of Gerda moved.
 Seldom with greater care explores the sage
 The vast conceptions that his mind engage,
 Than doth the deep-enamour'd maiden trace
 Each separate feature of her lover's face ;
 O'erlooking, while each beauty glads her heart,
 In favour of the whole, each faulty part.
 But here must Gerda search for faults in vain ;
 Perfect was Frey ; without one flaw or stain
 His form ; a god, a prince amongst the Asar train.
 Now vanish'd all her pride ; she now became
 Soft as a dove, and gentle as a lamb :
 Now slides her 'kerchief from her ivory neck ;
 The air was warm ; no fears her passion check.
 " This image, by the waves' reflection made,
 This image cannot see," she blushing said :
 " I cannot rest enjoy, until I lave
 My arms and bosom in the cooling wave."

Thus said, her tunic from her breast she threw,
 And stood with half her charms exposed to view :
 'Twas thus, as poets tell, fair Embla stood,
 When bursting from the tree her Askur first she view'd.
 Now on her couch she fain would court repose,
 But strove in vain to sleep ; full oft she rose

To look into the basin standing nigh,
And contemplate the much-lov'd form of Frey.

At length the gentle Siofna, who unseen
'Midst Gerda's train had enter'd, and the scene
Had witness'd, felt compassion for the maid,
And waved her poppy garland o'er her head :
She closed her eyelids with her magic art,
And sent delightful dreams to gladden Gerda's heart.



CANTO XV.

SKIRNIR FULFILS HIS ERRAND.*

WHEN Skirnir awoke at the morning light,
 (The sunbeams redden the sky) ;
With friendly mien, all with brass bedight,
 The Giant his couch stood by ;

Like a Guldbrand pine so tall, so strong ;
 (The birds on the trees sing sweet)
In his hand he bore an iron pole long,
 And Skirnir he came to greet.

His daughter stood near him with witching look ;
 (On the flow'rets the dew-drops shine)
As the ivy around the gnarled oak,
 Thus did Gerda her sire entwine.

A cup of drink for Skirnir he bore ;
 (The sunbeams redden the sky)
“ Before,” quoth he, “ thou leavest my door,
 Hear, and take with thee my reply !

* Respecting the metre of this Canto, see the note.

“ Young Frey loves dearly my daughter bright ;
 (The birds on the trees sing sweet)
 And if I have read in her soul aright,
 She thinks him a consort meet.

“ But thou knowest, without her father’s yea,
 (On the flow’rets the dew-drops shine)
 ’Tis all labour lost ; but, the truth to say,
 I to favour this match incline.

“ But goods must be given in change for goods ;
 (The sunbeams redden the sky)
 And heretofore ’twixt Giants and Gods
 Hath not flourish’d much amity.

“ Young Frey hath a sword, the best i’ the north,
 (The birds on the trees sing sweet)
 And Gerda, methinks, is that sword well worth ;
 So on just conditions I’ll treat.

“ When the heart onceloves with fervour and truth,
 (On the flow’rets the dew-drops shine)
 In war no longer delights the youth ;
 He sighs at his mistress’ shrine.

“ Let Frey then give me his mystic sword !
 (The sunbeams redden the sky)
 My daughter dear will I then accord
 As consort to him for aye.

“ But if he refuse to cede the glaive,
 (The birds on the trees sing sweet)
 The hardest rock that repels the wave
 He might just as well entreat.”

With this answer the swain rode homeward bound,
 (On the flow'rets the dew-drops shine)
 And returning, shorter the road he found
 Than in coming, ye may divine.

As he gallop'd once more o'er the flow'ry mead,
 (The sunbeams redden the sky)
 He thought, by the rustling his falchion made,
 Of Odin the lord so high.

The magic fetter came o'er his mind
 (The birds on the trees sing sweet)
 That was destin'd Fenris the wolf to bind :
 Then he jump'd from his courser fleet,

And began to climb up on Elver-hoy :
 (On the flow'rets the dew-drops shine)
 And there two dwarfs he perceiv'd with joy
 Fit to execute his design.

There they sit, and enjoy the morning breeze ;
 (The sunbeams redden the sky)
 They love to rest under branching trees,
 But from the sun's glare they fly.

And oft they dance on the humid grass,
 (The birds on the trees sing sweet)
 And joy the mystic circle to trace
 On the turf with their nimble feet.

When Skirnir met them, he bared his sword,
 (On the flow'rets the dew-drops shine)
 And thus address'd them with threat'ning word:
 "Hear me, little masters mine!

"By Odin's order I crave your aid
 (The sunbeams redden the sky)
 For Fenris wolf a fetter to braid;
 This instant your labours ply!

"If not, I will slay ye both, I swear."
 (The birds on the trees sing sweet)
 The little men, how they shook with fear!
 They scarce could stand on their feet.

They blink like mice with their little eyes.
 (On the flow'rets the dew-drops shine)
 "Nay! put up thy sword!" each Dwarf replies;
 "Behold! here's the magic twine!

"We heard of the order that Odin gave,
 (The sunbeams redden the sky)
 And the very best cord shall Odin have
 To bind his arch-enemy.

“ This fetter was forged, O Skirnir, hear !
 (The birds on the trees sing sweet)
 Of the beards of woman ; the nerves of bear ;
 Of the noise of a kitten’s feet ;

“ Of the breath of birds ; of fishes’ scum ;
 (On the flowrets the dew-drops shine)
 Of the roots of rocks ; with finger and thumb
 Have we full’d this wondrous line.”

Now from them the swain took the magic chain,
 (The sunbeams redden the sky)
 And the Dwarfs they fled to their grotts again,
 And Skirnir vaulted on high.

Now Bifrost appears with its brilliant sheen ;
 (The birds on the trees sing sweet :)
 Its tints enliven the sky serene
 The returning chief to greet.

Like a bird in spring brave Skirnir flew
 (On the flow’rets the dew-drops shine)
 And Valhall anew much he joy’d to view,
 And partake of Sâhrimner’s chine.

And now he relates to Odin and Frey
 How their mandates he fulfill’d ;
 Odin smiled on the swain with a grateful eye,
 Frey’s bosom with rapture thrill’d.

Praise and honours on Skirnir overflow ;
What pleasure in Valhall reigns !
For Frey shall now be freed from his woe,
And Fenris be bound in chains.



CANTO XXVII.

THE WOLF FENRIS AND TYR.

WHAT joys Valhalla's realm pervade !
In brilliant nuptial dress array'd,
A last farewell bids Gerda now
To forest, rock, and vale below.
Towards Bifrost bridge ascends the fair ;
Like shooting star she cleaves the air.
On heaven's exterior bulwark stand
In pride of place th' Asynior bland :
And when their scrutinizing eye
Survey'd the darling choice of Frey,
As full in Asgard's view she came,
Vanish'd at once each latent flame
Of envy, sullenness, and pride,
And all admired the graceful bride.
Her glossy ringlets ebon dark
A contrast not unpleasing mark
With the bright locks of golden hue,
Which down the Disar's shoulders flow.

They welcome her with tones of love,
 And lead her straight to Freya's grove :
 Gluing to Gerda's lips of rose
 Her own, what joy each Disa shows !
 And every Asa courts the bliss
 Her well-turned lily hand to kiss.
 Of Frey's content I need not speak,
 Therein must fail my harpings weak.
 He who hath courted, and hath known
 What 'tis to call his maid his own,
 He knows and feels it too ; while naught
 Can by the art of Scald be taught.
 But such sensation, youth ! if thou
 Yet knowest not, go learn it now !
 And when in thy fond maiden's arms,
 Thou gloatest on her radiant charms,
 And feelst 'twere primest ecstasy
 Or thus to live, or thus to die,
 Then wouldst thou know, and couldst reveal
 The joys that Frey and Gerda feel.

Here ends my song of love ; too soon
 My harp must sound with diff'rent tone :
 Oft from the lay sweet echoes spring,
 As from the little bird in spring,
 When, flutt'ring through the beechen grove,
 He fills the air with notes of love.
 Oft too its tones the ear assail
 With sound as harsh as that of whale,

When he, through ice-bergs struggling, blows
And snorts amain with giant throes.
Like foam, the words then hurried fly,
Which from his nostrils mounts the sky,
And forms a column gleaming bright
Amidst the lurid clouds of night.
The sweetest plant of joy beneath
Lurks oft, alas ! the germ of death !
Misfortune soon its power assumes ;
And 'midst the liveliest joys and fumes
Of pleasure on the marriage night
Intrudes with livid face, Affright !
True, shouts of joy Valhalla shook ;
But sudden, springing from a nook,
Fenris the wolf, with eye of flame,
Unwelcome guest, to the banquet came :
He paced around with fiendish grin,
Snapping at every Asa's chin :
And oft with unremitting spite
The Disar's legs he strove to bite.

But Odin, weary of this bane,
Possessing now the mystic chain
Wherewith to bind the hateful beast,
To Heimdall whisper'd his behest ;
And quick transferr'd the magic band
Into that faithful Asa's hand.
Heimdall, he knew, had skill and wit :
To cope with Fenris none more fit :

And next to Lok he boasts the pow'r
 In jesting to beguile the hour.
 The wit of Heimdall, void of hate
 Or malice, bloom'd like violet :
 But not innocuous Loptur's jest,
 Like thorn, it lacerates the breast.
 Heimdaller, holding now the band
 Slender as bowstring in his hand,
 Approach'd the wolf, and with a smile :
 "Let us," said he, "the time beguile,
 Since, banish'd to the realm of Hel,
 Sorrow and hate have bid farewell
 For ever to Valhalla's court,
 With some diverting manly sport!
 In honour of Frey's nuptial feast
 Let each some art that suits him best
 Exert to please the gods! and thou,
 My wolf! thy feats of strength mayst show :
 For deeds of strength they all admire ;
 And thou must, sure, the prize acquire."

"Yes!" grinn'd maliciously the wolf :
 "What thou hast said is true enough :
 The hammer, when by strength or skill
 Unexercised, is useless still.
 But first allow me to demand,
 What means that fetter in thy hand?
 Thou Asa with the golden tooth!
 Wouldst bind me like a dog, forsooth?"

" He, who hath power himself to free,
 Cannot be fetter'd easily :
 The slave is bound ; but in the hand
 Of strength an honourable band
 Becomes the fetter : " (thus replied
 Heimdaller.) " And since 'tis thy pride
 The strongest iron bars to gnaw
 In two, as if 'twere so much straw,
 Permit me, to afford delight
 To Odin and the Disar bright,
 To bind thee with this brittle chain,
 Which thou canst surely bite in twain."

And now the wolf began to look
 Around him for his father Lok ;
 But all in vain ; no Lok was there ;
 The hateful beast then scowl'd with fear,
 And sunk his tail, and show'd his tooth,
 And lol'd his tongue from his frothy mouth.
 Then howl'd he forth in tones of spite :
 " I will not thus be bound to-night :
 Go thy way, artful Heimdall ! go !
 Methinks, it is not needful now
 On such a cord my strength to use,
 Thor, Frey, and Odin to amuse.
 On bars of brass or iron they
 Have seen me oft my strength display.
 If forged by common art that cord,
 No pleasure would such feat afford :

But if by magic spell 'twere made,
Then foully were the wolf betray'd."

Heimdaller blush'd : but Asa-Tyr,
The youthful page devoid of fear,
When Heimdal's cheek so red he view'd,
In anger bit his lips to blood.
He griev'd to see an Asa droop,
Unable with the wolf to cope,
And from the contest forced to fly
In silence and humility.

To humble the malignant beast,
Himself now enter'd in the list,
And cried aloud : "Come, wolf! behold!
My hand as hostage thou shalt hold!
While round thy limbs the cord is laced,
Within thy mouth shall it be placed,
And lying at thy mercy there,
Nor trick nor fraud hast thou to fear."

On Tyr's presumption every god
Astonish'd look'd : he tranquil stood.
Now Thor thus whisper'd : "Youthful friend!
What rashness! what dost thou pretend?
Thy courage, certes, I admire,
But naught a hero can aspire
To do without his hand." "No fear
I feel, thou cautious one!" said Tyr.

“ Thy counsel sage I need not now ;
 Two hands, perhaps, requirest thou,
 But thou shalt see, and frankly own,
 That Tyr can do with one alone.”

Thus said, his dexter hand the youth
 Into the wolf's wide-gaping mouth
 Undaunted thrust : the wolf is bound
 With the dwarfs' cord his limbs around.
 And now to loose or burst the chain
 He struggles hard, but all in vain :
 Since naught his utmost powers avail,
 The Asar laugh to see him quail.
 All laugh'd, excepting Asa-Tyr ;
 The sport, alas ! hath cost him dear,
 For, bitten from the wrist, his hand
 In Fenris' bloody jaws remain'd !

But the youth, still undaunted, thrust
 The stump into a heap of dust,
 And stretching out his arm on high,
 He shouts with voice that rends the sky :
 “ Now first my strength innate I feel ;
 Hard was the trial, yet 'tis well.
 Now to Vaulunder's forge I'll go,
 And he will make for Tyr, I know,
 A hand of iron, fit to wield
 Or glaive or mace i' th' bloody field :
 What foes will dare the chief environ,
 Whose hand and glaive are both of iron ?”

Thus said, he left in haste the hall,
Much pitied by the Disar all.
They thought: "O what a valiant youth!
Thor's fame he will eclipse, forsooth."
But Gerda's thoughts alone on Frey
Were fix'd; both breath'd a tender sigh,
And hied them to the shady grove
To revel in the joys of love.

On Thor now Odin cast a look;
Thor silent stood; then Odin spoke:
"This is too much! is't then our doom
Brutal as giants to become?
O rueful act! what boots, my friend,
Courage by reason unrestrain'd?
Lost is thy hammer in the wave,
And Frey hath giv'n away his glaive,
That glaive which caused a mortal chill,
And whose bare look sufficed to kill;
Now in the mountain cave it lies,
And giants learn its worth to prize.
True, the wolf Fenris is trepann'd,
But Tyr hath lost his dexter hand;
Ran in the ocean rules her lord,
And Skada shares the power with Niord."

Thus said, As-Odin slowly rose;
His robe around his limbs he throws:

Vingolf he leaves with gloomy mind,
But Asa-Thor remains behind.
He sits with hand beneath his chin,
And eyes the wolf with looks of spleen,
But both keep silence : in the hall
The waiting-damsels enter all,
To quench the lights ; in darkness now
The god must sit with wrinkled brow :
Yet still he fix'd with looks of ire
The wolf, whose eyeballs vomit fire.

Now to a burst of laughter wild
The god gave vent, which Hlidskialf fill'd
With terror ; then the hall he left,
And bang'd the door, with fury chaf'd.
He doffs his helmet ; through the air
Shines, meteor-like, his streaming hair !
He mounts his car ; through heaven he rolls,
And awful thunders shake the poles.
Down on the earth all night he threw
His lightnings ; many a one he slew :
Here towns and villages became
A prey to th' all-devouring flame ;
A forest there of oak-trees fum'd,
Down to their very roots consum'd.
The children scream'd ; the mothers tore
Their hair ; Thor foam'd like angry boar :
And he, who whilom lov'd to save,
Prov'd unrelenting as the grave.
But when at length shone forth the day,
Towards Trudvang's gate he bent his way :

There Sif receiv'd him in her arms,
And strove to sooth his wild alarms.
The goddess well knew how t'assuage
With bland caress his utmost rage ;
She knew his wrath would soon be o'er,
And tenderness resume its power.
Then smiled the earth with tears of dew,
Such as an infant's face bedew,
Whose father too much wrath has shown
And struck too hard his little one.
Repentance now Thor's looks bespeak,
And tears roll down his manly cheek,
For he, when calm, was good and kind.
He then sent down on th' morning wind
Roska and Tialf to Gefion's (1) strand,
And every circumjacent land,
With gold and silver, to divide
'Mongst those whose dwellings were destroy'd.
The dead he to Valhalla brought,
And next the helpless infants sought
Who perish'd on that fatal night ;
And bearing them to Folkvang's height,
He bless'd them all in Freya's name,
And chang'd to Alfs they straight became.
Now wings upon their shoulders grew,
And 'midst delights so strange and new,
Meeting again, assembled there
In Freya's grove, their parents dear,
They sport and play the trees beneath,
Unconscious they had suffer'd death.

CANTO XXVII.

THE BANQUET OF ÆGIR.

HLESEY's an island of renown ;
But now 'tis small, for time and tide,
Batt'ring its base on every side,
Into the sea have plough'd it down ;
But great in times of old its worth ;
Then Hlesey could the rage abate
Of the fierce Dragon of the north,
Yecept by nations Kattegat.

There, built o' finest muscle-shell,
Amidst vast beds of sea-weed bright,
The vaulted hall appears in sight,
Where Ægir ever lov'd to dwell.
While raging Ran o'er ocean flew,
By his pearl-jug was Ægir seen ;
And now he drank, and now he blew
For pastime in his conque marine.

Cruel was Ran ; frightful her frown ;
Like the fell goddess Hela, she
Delighting to destroy, with glee
Spreads out her nets mankind to drown :
But, like th' unruffled sea, the smile
Of Ægir all creation charms ;
And oft doth he the hours beguile,
Soft dallying in a mermaid's arms.

While Ran afar is storming, he
Basks in the sun at home ; his soul
It joys with diamond-pointed pole
To trace runes on the placid sea.
The surf each time reveal'd his joy,
When he behind the rushes prest
(Far from his scolding wife's annoy)
A billow to his ardent breast.

On Frey and Gerda oft he smiled :
Much did his heart the vision charm
Of the fair couple arm in arm
Indulging in love's transports wild.
For much the Gods did Ægir prize,
And by the Gods was lov'd full well.
Heaven thus to bathe in Ocean joys,
Who loves its genial ray to feel.

And now he bade them to his feast :
When Rana wander'd far from home,
To banquet in his friendly dome
His friends with eagerness he prest.
In vats of flint and ice profound
His ale and beer the monarch stow'd ;
Fish, lobsters, crabs in store were found,
And cook'd in many a different mode.

No help he needs to deck his board,
For every time he guests invites,
The active Finnafeng delights
To serve as cook his much-lov'd lord.
But little fuel he requires ;
The rivers for their monarch toil :
And, warm'd by subterranean fires,
Lo! of itself each spring doth boil.

Where Malstrom whirls with frightful sound
Into its gulf the eddying wave,
That gulf, from which 'tis vain to save,
Whiten'd with foam for leagues around :
There Eldir's club to atoms breaks
Whatever falls to Ocean's share ;
There Ægir's mill for ever clacks ;
He grinds his wheat and barley there.

To Gerda's father Asa-Frey
 As present gave, we know full well,
 The best among the blades of steel,
 With which no other arm could vie :
 He granted, not to die forlorn
 Of love himself, the giant's prayer ;
 Gave him his sword, and in return
 Receiv'd a nymph of beauty rare.

Much Gerda lov'd her consort Frey ;
 Apart they never more could dwell :
 His portrait Frey did far excel ;
 He won the greatest victory :
 And Gerda then, her love to mark,
 Enraptur'd with his graceful mien,
 Gave to her friend a wondrous bark, (1)
 The like of which was never seen.

Well might the Scald in times of yore
 Of Hringhorn, (2) Balder's vessel, say,
 It flew unscathed o'er marsh and sea,
 Nor quicksand fear'd, nor rocky shore.
 There safely could the Disar fair
 Sit by the gods in pomp array'd ;
 But not the battle's shock to bear
 Was pious Balder's vessel made.

In time of peace this bark behold
 Glide swiftly from its haven gay,
 And towards the mart pursue its way
 With a rich cargo in its hold!
 Of horn is built its lofty prow
 With sable shining crooked rings;
 And when it flies, each swelling bow
 Aside in foam the billow flings.

There is another bark of fame,
 'Tis by the giants own'd, we know;
 'Tis built of dead-men's nails, and so
 Of Naglfar it boasts the name. (3)
 In the morass this vessel lies,
 As yet a huge unfinish'd hulk;
 Year after year its builder tries
 Unwearied to increase its bulk.

All those who from the dead neglect
 To cut the nails off foot and hand,
 Bring ill-luck to the Asar band,
 And mischief cause to rule uncheck'd.
 From this the giants an immense
 Advantage o'er the gods derive:
 By idlesse and improvidence
 Thus mischief never fails to thrive.

But for the bark, which Gerda kind
 As present to the Asar gave,
 It can the wildest storm enslave,
 And stiffly sail against the wind :
 In armour all the gods can stand
 Upon its deck with sword and helm,
 And sail from bright Valhalla's land
 To plough the waves in Ægir's realm.

And when the gods to brave the gale
 No longer chuse for pleasure's sake,
 Then Gerda can this vessel take
 And fold it up like silken veil.
 Then lies it, free from tempest's shocks,
 In Gerda's bosom (blissful coast !)
 And gently 'tween two surges rocks,
 Such as the Ocean cannot boast.

The Asar's voyage to Ægir's isle
 Think now how glorious 'twas to view !
 The morning sun rejoicing too
 Deign'd warmly on their course to smile.
 See silent Vidar by the mast !
 And Odin by the rudder stand !
 And see, like flowers in vase incased,
 In all their charms th' Asynior bland !

How gently sail'd the bark along,
 As on a river; ne'er it lurch'd
 Nor plunged: upon the boom was perch'd
 Heimdaller; Bragur tuned his song;
 Niord waves the standard high in air;
 Like subtlest dust ascends the spray:
 An awning, framed by Frigga's care
 Of oak leaves, veil'd the solar ray.

Their temples wreaths of flowers adorn;
 Nor did there lack amusement good,
 For by the gangway naked stood
 Young Tyr, as when he first was born:
 In his left hand he grasp'd his sword;
 A shark enormous hove in sight!
 The hero brave jump'd overboard,
 With the fell shark to prove his might.

Now must each Disa shake with fear;
 The monster bravely fought, in truth;
 It open'd wide its frightful mouth,
 And snapp'd with fury after Tyr.
 But soon doth cease the Disar's pain,
 And gaily now they laugh aloud;
 The hero sprung on board again;
 Down sank the dying shark in blood.

Ye all do know, the spiteful Ran
 Delights with monsters fierce to live :
 She to that shark did mandate give
 To execute her envious plan :
 By her 'twas sent to plague with fear
 The guests who sped to Ægir's hall ;
 But when the shark was slain by Tyr,
 She then dispatch'd a monstrous whale.

Foaming it roll'd impetuous by,
 So vast, it seem'd an isle broke loose !
 It snorted loud, while from its nose
 A wat'ry column spouted high.
 But Heimdal lo! for sport in haste
 Athwart the wat'ry column flew ;
 Then brilliant shone, as through he past,
 A band of seven-colour'd hue !

Now Vidar standing at the poop
 Fix'd with his fearful eye the whale :
 At once its powers of mischief fail ;
 To Vidar's eye all creatures stoop.
 Aloud read Odin many a rune ;
 The whale must to the bottom go ;
 For Vidar's look, like a harpoon,
 Had pierced the monster through and through.

'Twas eve : the land begins to loom ;
 Now Hlesey full in sight appears :
 And much it joys Valhalla's peers
 To greet Hler Ægir's friendly dome.
 Like clouds which shooting through the sky
 Rush eager towards the wave's embrace,
 Thus lightly did Skidbladner fly,
 Its name well suits its worth to trace.

The anchor's tooth now bit the ground :
 The sun its parting radiance shed.
 A troop of Mermaids towards them sped,
 And sportive swam the bark around :
 There three by three those nymphs were seen.
 Their arms around each other's neck,
 With flowing hair as rushes green,
 And limbs like snow without a speck.

Each with a silver-tissued veil,
 And brows with garlands white attired,
 Sporting and dancing, never tired,
 With songs of joy their guests they hail.
 And now the Alfer they invite
 To join their train with accents bland :
 The bark the thoughtless Alfer quit,
 And with their partners haste to land. (4)

They sat by pairs upon the rock :
 Each Alf a gallant warrior proved ;
 The Mermaids like true females loved,
 Unshrinking from the amorous shock :
 There was no lack of pinching, flouncing,
 Of kisses, and embraces warm :
 The sound was that of sea-birds pouncing
 Amidst a silv'ry herring-swarm.

Hler Ægir sits upon his throne,
 With sceptre emblem of his might :
 His silver helmet, gleaming bright
 With crest in form of Dragon shoue.
 Yet from this helm so fair to view
 Oft came a soul-appalling sound ;
 'Twas like the tempest howling through
 The hollow of a rock profound.

P th' middle of the festive hall,
 For night had now obscured the earth,
 A lump of gold placed on the hearth
 Gave ample light and warmth to all.
 The monarch here his friends regales
 With what his realm produces best ;
 And every guest exulting hails
 The generous founder of the feast.

But while the gods enjoy'd their feast,
 As far as Finnmark's farthest dale,
 Midst fogs, and snow, and sleet, and hail
 Flew Asa-Lok like one possest.
 Wildly his cheek of corpse-like hue
 Contrasted with each ebon lock
 Wide streaming through the ether blue,
 Like vapours dark at Ragnarok.

Vexation great the caitiff feels,
 That Fenris wolf in chains should pine :
 But forming quick a bold design,
 Bats' wings he fastened to his heels :
 Then to his shoulders wings of owl
 With art ingenious making fast,
 He seem'd a huge ill-omen'd fowl.
 As o'er the rocks and plains he past.

“ So ! I have not invited been,
 Among the rest, to Ægir's isle :
 And, though a god, am held too vile
 To figure in that brilliant scene ;
 But Thor is absent, so 'tis said ;
 He wanders warring in the east :
 Now I'll mix gravel in their bread,
 And spoil the glories of their feast.

" Since I cannot their pleasures share,
 Others' enjoyment I'll prevent :
 While Lok 's a prey to discontent.
 No guest the smiles of joy shall wear.
 Ha ! they shall soon be made to feel,
 No rose is pluck'd without a thorn ;
 And drops of wormwood I'll distil
 Into each Asa's drinking-horn.

" Great powers I have not ; yet in need
 The weakest worm hath force to wound :
 My tongue the Disar shall confound,
 And floods of tears I'll make them shed.
 Since they're averse to Asa-Lok,
 To make them fear him be my aim :
 My gibes obscene their ears shall shock ;
 My calumnies destroy their fame.

" Who on the power of truth relies
 'Gainst slander, will repent full soon ;
 Since there is but one truth alone
 Against a hundred thousand lies.
 How easy is it to deceive
 Mankind, if we but have the will !
 The mass all, that they hear, believe,
 And Lok in fraud is master still."

Such was the restless caitiff's song,
As sharp he grazed the mountain's side :
On his best weapon he relied,
His merciless, unwearied tongue.
But, passing by some dwarfs, he paused,
And in his service press'd them all ;
Chusing sharp adder's stings, he caused
His tongue to be belay'd withal.

With garland strange he deck'd his head,
His hair he twisted into horns ;
Thereto he added sharpest thorns,
With dark-blue hemlock flowers bespread.
To Hlesey now his course he bent,
And there bold Finnafeng he slew,
Who strove his entrance to prevent
Among the jovial Ægir's crew.

Sprinkled with Finnafenger's blood,
He sat him down by Ægir's gate,
Preparing for the stern debate
With shameless front and accent rude.
Spite of his visage blood-besmeared,
He rose and enter'd the saloon ;
Around him insolent he stared,
And thus he spoke in jeering tone.

" Now hail to ye, ye Disar all !
 Hail to ye, gods ! Valhalla's powers !
 Without the blast inclement roars,
 But here 'tis snug in Ægir's hall.
 Indulging in your evening feast
 Fill'd with bright ale each drains his horn :
 Despised is the unbidden guest,
 But your contempt he laughs to scorn.

" With haughty glances towards the ground,
 To answer Lok ye all disdain.
 The slave of Ægir I have slain,
 His cook for science so renown'd :
 To Ægir's hall he barr'd my way,
 But I chastised his insolence :
 The slave must, true, his lord obey,
 But expiate oft his lord's offence.

ODIN.

How darest thou, wretch ! without a blush
 Invade the Asar's brilliant sphere ?
 Thou ne'er shalt be invited here !
 Thou screeching owl behind the bush !
 Avaunt ! thou kill-joy ! quick retreat,
 Nor here thy odious form intrude !
 My lance, I swear, when next we meet,
 Shall pierce thy heart, and drink thy blood.

LOK.

More kind and decent was thy tone,
 When, dress'd as lowly waiting-maid,
 Thou turn'dst the silly Rinda's head,
 Heiress of Garderike's throne :
 Clothed in the garment of a slave,
 Was conduct that for Odin fit?
 Ha! though thou art more wise than brave,
 Thy prudence far exceeds thy wit.

BRAGIR.

How darest thou thus presume to vent
 On Valhall's king thy envious spite,
 With hair like hedgehog's quills upright,
 And sland'rous tongue on mischief bent?
 Valhalla's rays thy eye-balls sear ;
 Down then ! to realms of darkness hie !
 And since the sun thou canst not bear,
 For ever from its splendour fly !

LOK.

'Tis not thy menace makes me shrink ;
 Thy sword rests ever in the sheath ;
 Useless ! except to waste thy breath
 In empty boasts, to doze and drink !
 Cautious of shedding blood art thou,
 To bite less proper than to bay :
 When call'd upon to wield the bow,
 The valiant Bragur slinks away.

IDUNA.

How dares thy spiteful tongue assail
 The god, whose lyre enchants the earth,
 Whose lofty song throughout the north
 Cheers, like the moon, life's gloomy vale ?
 Who raises merit to the skies,
 Who points the genuine road to fame ;
 From evil causes good to rise,
 And stamps the Nidding's act with shame.

LOK.

Why prudish now 'gainst vice protest ?
 Slow wert thou 'gainst the mountain fiend
 Thy precious virtue to defend,
 When he thy juicy apples prest :
 Fear taught thee to be soft and tame,
 Thiase could tell us *how* and *when* ; (5)
 Of Bragur's honour, dainty dame !
 Thou wert not quite so mindful then.

GEFION.

A dame, more pure and innocent
 Than Ydun, nowhere can be found :
 'Tis time thy sland'rous tongue were bound,
 Yet 'tis to me indifferent.
 Foul sower of all calumny !
 What wretched harvests must thou reap !
 Pursue thy trade ! add lie to lie !
 I hold thy utmost malice cheap.

LOK.

To men thou'rt scornful, cold, and glum,
 But that is while the day shines bright :
 'Tis well no power of speech hath night,
 And that each forest tree is dumb.
 Whene'er behind the bush, proud maid !
 Thy limbs thou bathest in the flood ;
 Thou dost not then disdain, 'tis said,
 To cool the water-demon's blood.

ODIN.

This is too much. I'd have thee know,
 The moon's bright disk thou canst not stain ;
 That lily fair 'tis labour vain
 To soil ; 'tis casting coals on snow.
 Fly, caitiff, to thy rocks remote !
 Cease to disturb the social hour !
 Bark, an it give thee joy, without,
 Like mastiff chain'd at Ægir's door !

LOK.

Hold thy tongue, Odin ! blind, in troth,
 Are thy awards i' th' tented field.
 The bold must oft to witchcraft yield,
 When Odin boils the magic broth.
 'Tis thy delight the brave to lower,
 And crown with palms the base and mean ;
 Oft dost thou borrow Mimer's power.
 But seldom his discernment keen.

FRIGGA.

Ha. Lok ! dost thou presume to call
 The chief, whom all the gods revere,
 Alfader's self, unjust, severe,
 And partial, in this sacred hall?
 He will not now disturb the peace
 Of Ægir's hospitable board,
 But grief he'll force thee to express
 To-morrow for each sland'rous word.

LOK.

Hold thy tongue, Frigga! Asgard's queen !
 From scratching, pain oft follows strait ;
 Like the queen bee, with many a mate,
 But with no king is Frigga seen.
 Not sparing of thy charms art thou,
 By zephyrs pleas'd to be carest ;
 In Spring thy looks too plainly show
 The longing that pervades thy breast.

FREYA.

O Lok ! since wrath hath no effect
 The venom of thy tongue to tame,
 Let females some exception claim :
 Treat them at least with some respect.
 Behold, the tears of Freya flow !
 Would they could melt thy stubborn hate !
 Ah me ! what pleasure feelest thou
 The gods' fair fame to lacerate ?

LOK.

What causes Freya's grief? I pray:
 Is it from longing I behold
 Her cheek bedew'd with tears of gold?
 What dost thou long for? Freya, say!
 Thy husband fair has fled, 'tis true,
 But 'tis not, sure, a hopeless case;
 Thou canst find lovers not a few,
 Eager and fit to take his place.

But why did Odur break his chain?
 Ha, Freya! did he find thy kiss
 Too warm, too prodigal of bliss?
 Or was it that he felt disdain
 For charms which had so oft been bared
 And closely scann'd in Valaskialf,
 And felt no zest in favours shared
 With every Ase and every Alf?

FREY.

Be silent with thy hissing, snake!
 With fire-red eye, where malice glows,
 Why thus delight to prick the rose,
 When thistles grow on every brake?
 Why thus calumniate the good?
 Why cause a gracious female pain?
 Go! hie thee hence to Angurbod,
 With locks as coarse as horse's mane!

LOK.

With cynic lust thine eye still shines ;
 'Tis thou hast Valaskialf betray'd,
 O Frey! since with thy sword hath fled
 All vigour from thy jaded loins.
 Fair Gerda with her luscious kiss
 Sucks out, like leech, thy warmest blood ;
 Each time thou tastest Freya's bliss,
 Much joy it gives to Angurbod.

HEIMDAL.

With the dark wizard 'neath yon rock,
 Upon my life, thou must have drank,
 And here thou com'st, with liquor rank,
 Our ears with ribald taunts to shock.
 Thy sparks of wit proceed, I trow,
 But from the fumes of mead and ale ;
 Its emptiness we all do know :
 Thy sarcasms here must ever fail.

LOK.

Ha! Lok must now succumb, 'tis plain,
 Since pompous Heimdal threatens too ;
 Think'st thou I fear thy famous bow,
 Made of mere vapour, sleet, and rain ?
 And what is Heimdal's self, I ask,
 When of his gaudy colours shorn ?
 What is he then behind his mask ?
 A simple watchman with his horn !

BALDER.

Behind thy ribaldry so coarse,
 I can discern a vein of wit,
 And genius too for all things fit,
 Did virtue lend her sterling force.
 Like *Will o' Wisp* with spurious light,
 Thou friskest the deep marsh about ;
 While others thou wouldst fain benight,
 Thy own fantastic flame goes out.

LOK.

The lamb doth scarce compassion meet ;
 Coward, he lets himself be slain :
 Lok ne'er before his foes will deign,
 Lamb-like, in piteous strains to bleat.
 Vain, Balder, is that rule of thine,
 Patience and piety to use ;
 He only bows at virtue's shrine,
 Whose arm is weak and wit obtuse."

Vidar spoke not, but earnest stared
 Full in the face of Asa-Lok ;
 The caitiff instant felt the shock,
 With quiv'ring lip and visage scared.
 The water-spout with gloomy frown,
 Thus column-like from heaven doth come,
 With thick shoes stamps old Ocean down,
 And scatters far the billow's scum.

Now black the vault of heaven became ;
 Athwart the vapours thick and close,
 While Loptur's blood with terror froze,
 Glitter'd afar a lurid flame !
 Of thunder now tremendous peals
 Shake earth and make the billows roar,
 And every one instinctive feels
 With awe th' approach of Asa-Thor !

Lok sigh'd and sweated now with fear,
 Yet still his terror he conceal'd ;
 At length the lightning's glare reveal'd
 The white-hair'd goats and golden car.
 But when Thor full in view appear'd,
 Lok's colour fled, his spirits fail'd ;
 At sight of the majestic beard
 Of ebon hue, the traitor quail'd.

THOR.

Be silent, thou of sland'ers worst,
 Who striv'st the Asar's fame to soil !
 Ne'er doth thy Nidding's brain recoil
 From hatching some vile scheme accurst.
 But come, I'll put an end full soon
 To all thy schemes of treach'ry fell ;
 To Útgard's shades I'll cast thee down,
 And bind thee fast with chains of Hel.

LOK.

I tremble not ; I turn not pale ;
 Thou hast not got thy Mjolner now ;
 Thy genuine hammer lies, we know,
 Buried beneath the serpent's scale.
 Aye! spite of all thy godlike vigour,
 Oft didst thou, Thor, my pity move ;
 I laugh'd to see the silly figure
 Thou mad'st in Skrymur's sweaty glove. (6)

THOR.


Be silent, thou pestiferous cloud,
 That striv'st to damp celestial fire !
 Thou'lt find, no hammer I require
 To punish thee and all thy brood.
 Behold that pine on yon high rock !
 Thereon I'll hang thy odious form ;
 All creatures shall thy suff'rings mock,
 Traitor ! when dangling in the storm.

LOK.

Methinks it is no longer fit
 That Lok should throw away his jests ;
 My songs were meant for jovial guests,
 For those who value mirth and wit.
 The other gods with temper hear
 My gibes, and like my humour well ;
 But Thor a joke could never bear :
 'Tis time I bid ye all farewell.

Thus said, he plunges in the sea ;
Swift as an eel he scuds along :
But after him, by anger stung,
Thor hur'd a lightning's forked ray.
But Lok intent his limbs to save,
Deep under water bow'd his head ;
Innocuous 'midst the boiling wave
The thund'rer's flaming arrow sped.

Thus as, when vanish clouds and rain,
The air breathes more serene and mild,
Each lovely Disa gracious smil'd ;
Joy colour'd high their cheeks again.
Freed from the wretch, their torment dire,
They pass the night in dance and song ;
And strains from Ægir's golden lyre
Re-echo loud the rocks among.



CANTO XXVIII.

LOK'S TREACHERY. *

In serpent's form Lok fled away into the ocean blue ;
All the fell monsters of the deep now met him full in view.
In order to avoid them, how dexterously he toils !
Now in a line deploys him, now rolls himself in coils !
The peasant standing on a cliff follow'd with curious eye
The course of Lok, as like the wind he swiftly glided by :
Fearing pursuers, up he swam as far as Lindernæs,
On Norway's coast ; and hid him there 'midst sea-weed, sand, and
At length his shape resuming, upon a reef of rock [grass.
He seats himself, like goatherd who watches o'er his flock.
"What have I done ? Ah ! woe is me ! from Valaskialf's abode
Thus exiled, what is Loptur now ? a giant, or a god ?
Am I thus amongst monsters condemn'd my time to pass ?"
Where's now my fav'rite pastime, the zest of life ? alas !
Must I 'midst stupid giants dwell in the realms of night,
Who dose like sleepy dragons o'er gold and silver bright ?
For them no sunshine blazes, no spring brings with it joy,
The art the blockheads know not existence to enjoy :

* The reader is requested, before he begins this Canto, to read the note

They know not love's soft blandishment, they prize not music's tone,
 Their only pastime is to hear the cascade rushing down.
 Heavily slumbering like bears in gelid caverns drear,
 What doth avail heroic strength, if th' hero be a bear ?
 Shall I ne'er listen to again the sound of Bragur's harp ?
 At times on the good bard, I own, I used my wit too sharp.
 In Fensal shall my eyes no more the fair Asynior woo ?
 My impudence no longer tinge with red their skin of snow ?
 No longer now shall Odin sage be overreach'd by me ?
 'Twas my chief sport to disconcert his stiff formality.
 Shall my sarcasms no longer put to blush Asa-Thor ?
 Thor is indeed a hero, and had he half the store
 Of wit, that falls to Loptur's share, to all Valhalla's power
 He could defiance bid, and force each god his crest to lower.
 He suits me well ; with patience my raillery he bears ;
 With him I love to travel ; and when his car he steers
 Athwart the spacious regions of heav'n with pond'rous wheels,
 And thunders shake Heimkringlas with soul-appalling peals,
 I share Ilorrida's glory : each time earth trembling shook,
 I thought myself his equal, and frown'd with swagg'ring look.
 Each Disa smiled enchanting, when courteous I address'd her ;
 With blushes Fulla trembled, when in my arms I press'd her.
 She is in love with Lok, I know, poor little innocent thing !
 And many other Disar in my net I hoped to bring.
 My impudence doth in their cheek the blush of shame recall,
 But soon, becoming used to it, they'll cease to blush at all.
 Sweet to my taste Sährimner was, and sweeter still the mead ;
 And when the proud Einherier pranced about the flow'ry mead
 With shield and lance, I was content : all things to hear and see,
 And mock at all the gods by turns, was charming sport to me.

I was the clev'rest of them all, and with the gods I play'd,
 Just as a cat does with a mouse, which he has just waylaid.
 First doth he his poor captive with feign'd caresses quail ;
 His eyes with malice sparkle ; he frisks about his tail :
 At length when weary of the sport his food Grimalkin needs,
 His teeth inflict the mortal crunch, and then poor mousie bleeds !
 But now Puss on the house-roof sits, nor deems himself secure
 E'en there ; he licks his beard and paws ; his master from the door
 Hath chased him in his anger, because i' th' cupboard he
 With his dame's hams and bacon had chosen to make free.

But if their loss I feel, will not they feel my loss much more ?
 Odin, I'm sure, when no one laughs, will feel vexation sore.
 Long days of constant seriousness the Asar soon will rue ;
 They'll find that to the zest of life mirth must contribute too.
 Heavy and dull are they become already ; there they sit,
 And yawn, and in their mead-horn gaze, when they have emptied it.
 Let but the Disar once the bread without the leaven taste,
 Insipid will it prove, I trow, without friend Loptur's yeast :
 Without the poignancy of change pleasure itself must pall,
 And light, unchequer'd e'er by shade, be insupportable.
 No difference of opinion now excites ye ; true, ye breathe,
 But spiritless and dull your life ; 'tis the repose of death."

In such reflections Loptur from sorrow sought relief,
 And often gazed he wistful upon Yggdrassil's leaf.
 " Could I," thought he, " of Asa-Thor the pardon once obtain,
 The favour of the other gods 'twere easy to regain.
 Thus Lok amidst the grove of pines pensive and restless stray'd ;
 His silence deep at length he broke : " I have it now, " he said ;

For Thor his hammer I'll procure ; I think, upon my life,
To get his hammer back again he'd give áway his wife."

Now over hill and dale he flew, quite joyous at the thought,
And passing through the hard-wood grove, soon reach'd the mountain
There at the entrance of a cave sat Thrymur, giant-king, [grot :
Around a bunch of arrows sharp twining a golden string :
Red ribbands in his courser's mane then did he interlace,
While the full moon pour'd streams of light adown his dusky face.
Into the field the giant look'd, and seeing Lok, cried out :
" Ha ! welcome here ! thou smallest toe in mighty Odin's foot !
To visit us poor folks below doth Loptur condescend ?
What pleasure can an Asa find in our dark goblin-land ?
Have the gods turn'd thee out of doors ? hast thou been indiscreet ?
Shame were it such a chief of worth so scornfully to treat ;
To start them game the gods, perhaps, thee falcon-like have sent :
Speak out then, thou accomplish'd rogue ! say ! what is thy intent ?"

Now sitting down by Thrymur's side with mien composed he said :
" With insults deep and injury the gods have Lok repaid ;
Did I not hope one day your cause to aid, ye giants good !
I ne'er would set my foot again in Valhall's curst abode.
You do require a spy, methinks, to find out and detect
All that the fraudulent Asar brood against your realm project :
Some clever and ingenions wight ; and where on earth's vast round
More proper for this task than Lok can any one be found ?
Besides, unknown to ye no doubt, I've often proved your friend,
And to some gratitude from ye I may with right pretend :
But howsoe'er with pitying eye my sufferings ye regard,
In my own conscience, in my heart I find my best reward."

Then Thrymur answer'd, laughing loud : "What means this canting
[speech ?

With pious look and honied words thinkst thou to overreach
Us giant champions, as ye catch the larks with berries red
Behind a net of horse-hair fix'd, and 'bout the meadow spread ?
Tears canst thou shed, like Dragon foul, when, eager for his food,
He seeketh trav'lers to entrap within the marshy flood ;
But out with it ! thy errand quick, O turncoat vile, relate !
Be frank for once, or in thy face, by Hel, I'll shut my gate."

"Ah ! thou hast reason to be proud and haughty," answer'd Lok :
"Now may'st thou with contempt on Thor, and all Valhalla look :
Hast thou not found his hammer 'twixt the scales of Jormundgard ?
A glorious booty 'tis, forsooth : 'twill all your pains reward :
For though that hammer's use thyself thou dost not understand,
Immense advantage 'twill afford ; thou may'st with right demand,
In ransom for that weapon, all the wealth thou canst conceive ;
Whate'er thou chusest to exact, the god will freely give."

"What ransom?" cried the giant harsh and rough : "doth Thor
[possess

Gold, silver, copper, as I do within my deep recess ?
Such gifts small value have for me ; for riches naught I care ;
But much of Freya have I heard, and of her beauty rare :
They say, she doth in form and grace all other dames eclipse ;
Ivory her limbs, of gold her hair, of coral are her lips :
Her voice sweet music ; plump well-rounded arms ; a laughing mien ;
A mouth that is for kissing made, and loves it too, I ween.
I burn with ardour to embrace a nymph of colour white ;
No more the dames of swarthy hue my passion can excite.

If therefore Freya fair, as bride, Odin to me will give,
 Thor in exchange his hammer bright that instant shall receive.
 Did not Frey wed a Jotun nymph? If so, with equal right
 May Jotun Thrymur claim as spouse his sister Freya bright.
 Such my proposal is, which thou to Asagard mayst bear;
 Why should we plague each other's lives with endless hate and war,
 Let friendship durable ensue upon this marriage tie!
 But mark me! Miölner eight miles deep doth in the ocean lie:
 Never again shall Thor, I swear, his much-prized arm behold,
 Unless I clasp in my embrace Freya with hair of gold."

Thus spake the giant-king: a dwarf, as page, came to the gate,
 And oped it; in his master went; the dwarf then closed it strait.
 Lok stood without at th' midnight hour abandon'd and forlorn,
 To Asar and to giants both the object of their scorn.

He laugh'd out loudly in the dark: so fearful was the sound,
 The owls perch'd on the forest trees fell down upon the ground.
 To learn the cause, the scolding Ran rose from the depths of ocean,
 And scars on warriors' limbs now bled afresh at th' wild commotion:
 Fell Jormundgardur shook himself; for miles and miles around
 Men, fields, and dwellings were submerged in ocean's waves profound.
 Each Nidding starting from his couch by stings of conscience vex'd
 Arose; a cold sweat on his brow announced a soul perplex'd:
 Fenris loud howling through the sky the vast creation scared;
 Lok's laughter and the wolfish howl the long long night were heard.

"Giants and gods alike I hate," said Lok: "soon shall they prove,
 How terrible that power can be, which but itself doth love.

Would I could make them perish all together ! ha ! what bliss,
 Could I the vast Heimkringlas sink i' th' bottomless abyss !
 Ye've exiled me from Valaskialf ; asylum ye refuse ;
 But means of vengeance still I hold, and such I mean to use.
 Like tree rubbing 'gainst tree in fell collision shall ye come,
 Until a flame arise, and all your hated brood consume :
 Then shall ye when too late, I trow, do honour to my skill :"
 Thus did the traitor Lok the air with groans and curses fill.

" With force unmanageable works the purblind mountain race ;
 The Asar boast their virtue pure, combined with strength and grace :
 If to an act of treachery I once could Thor incline,
 Then cunning overreaches strength ; the triumph then were mine ;
 Thor a mere giant then becomes : when at the midnight hour
 Odin of witches dire invokes the soul-appalling power,
 Yggdrassil trembles ; then grows dry the fount in Urda's vale :
 Then shines the frightful Jormungard with doubly brilliant scale :
 Hel's colour from a livid blue changes from joy to white,
 And Heimdal's horn excites the world to sempiternal fight."

But since his last expulsion Lok to mount to Valhall's dome
 Without safe conduct ventured not, and houseless still must roam :
 Towards evening he reach'd the grove of beech on Sealand's isle,
 As homeward with his plough return'd the peasant from his toil.
 There is a spot within that grove, whence fountains with delight
 Spring from benignant Hertha's breast, and through the sand stream
 bright :

'Twas on the spot where Leire stood, and afterwards king Hro (1)
 With many a stone and plank and joist constructed Kongebo. (2)
 At morning and at evening's blush there loved the Alfs to rove,
 And scatter Freya's tears like dew throughout the beechen grove :

And when she prick'd her finger with her needle, up they took
 The drops of blood, and pour'd them on the green plants by the brook :
 Lo! by the next revolving sun those plants with flowers were crown'd,
 Which spread delightful odours through the grove for miles around.
 They took the yellow sparrows grey, who o'er earth's surface rove,
 And kiss'd their beaks and taught them how to pour forth notes of love.
 Nightingales they became at once, whose tones so sweetly sound,
 And fill each youthful heart with dreams of tenderness profound.
 Now ev'ry morning they anoint the locks of Freya fair
 With precious unguent, which embalms with fragrancy the air.
 Once from the Disa in a shell they stole some drops of oil,
 And pour'd them on a weed; a Julian flower repaid their toil :
 But far too strong that odour proved; its strength prevails e'en now.
 Some drops were left; with water mix'd upon the turf they throw
 Those drops, and lo! upon green stems blue violets fragrant grow!

Thus in that grove the little Alfs amuse themselves secure ;
 They teach the peasant's cock to crow loud at his master's door,
 To rouse him from his slumber, and make him hie with speed
 To earn with plough and harrow for wife and children bread.
 At night they show the lover, who through the forest roves,
 The way that he should wander, to find the maid he loves :
 And when he meets her, when her hand he presses tenderly,
 The Alfs their hands together bind with links of flowers, which she,
 Now kind become, ne'er seeks to loose.

But while the blithesome crew
 Of Alfs were dancing on the grass yet glitt'ring bright with dew,
 Lo! from an ash-tree's hollow trunk Lok started forth to view!
 The Erl-king in the full-moon's glare he much resembled now,
 With crown of blackberry, thick beard, and tail like that of ew.

At first the Alfs were terrified ; away they fain would fly ;
 They fear'd it was their enemies the black Alfs hov'ring nigh :
 But when they Loptur recognized, they hail'd him with a shout
 Of laughter, and delighted frisk'd their new-come guest about :
 He pleased them ; in their frolics oft he took an active part ;
 He was an Asa, well they knew, but knew not his bad heart.

“ How now ? friend Lok ! what dost thou here i th' forest ? art thou
 [sprung

From th' branches of the tree, to dance our mirthful choir among ? ”
 “ Yes ! my dear little creatures ! Lok, ye know, doth love ye all ;
 Eager to teach ye novel sports, he comes to join your ball. ”
 He join'd the dance ; a circle now the Alfs around him trace,
 But Lok's tail made a rustling noise, like serpent in the grass :
 Sudden the fountain ceased to flow ; the once transparent brook
 Troubled and dark became, while toads in stagnant marshes croak ;
 A swarm of crickets hover round a corpse with deaf'ning cry :
 But how could innocent white Alfs suspect Lok's treachery ?

Thus on the grass in Autumn late two lovers often sit ;
 They gaze upon each other's face with rapture and delight ;
 They feel not that the fev'rish air announces : “ One shall die ! ”
 Grasping their flow'ry garland in their hands, their ecstasy
 Makes them incautious ; they inhale the pestilential breath
 Of the foul Lok, who lurks behind the bushes on the heath.
 The placid moon, which cheer'd so oft their love with radiance meek,
 But which had not the power to cool the deep blush on their cheek,
 A few weeks later on the bier a lifeless corpse doth view
 Crown'd with white flowers : from Lok's black art such bitter fruits

"Ye friendly little Alfs!" said Lok in soft cajoling strain,
 "D'ye wish to know the reason why I join your sportive train?
 Ye' re call'd Valhalla's children; the Asar hold ye dear;
 Poor Lok needs your assistance, and therefore comes he here.
 I have been sadly indiscreet; too free hath been my tongue;
 But Ægir's banquet is to blame; his liquor was too strong,
 My head too weak: I've mock'd the gods; my crime I frankly own:
 But if great Odin will once more admit me near his throne,
 If Thor for what I've said or sung will grant his pardon too,
 I promise in return (my word is truth itself, ye know)
 To fetch him Mjölner back again, which deep in earth now lies;
 So that again he may strike home, and win each glorious prize,
 Nor fear that a short hammer-shaft his strength might neutralize."

The friendly Alfer promised all for Lok to intercede:
 Like doves so white to Valhall's dome they flew his cause to plead:
 With folded hands in lengthen'd file entering, they knelt before
 The Asar, for the culprit Lok forgiveness to implore.
 All hearts were moved; first Freya smiled; then Frey: ah! who can say
 "No," to a prayer for mercy, when such lovely children pray?
 Now they led forth the criminal, who soft behind them crept,
 He flatter'd, play'd the hypocrite, fell on his knees, and wept;
 He tried to kiss Thor's garment: at this demeanour base
 The hero blush'd with anger, and struck him on the face.
 "Avaunt! thou miserable wretch!" said Thor, with fearful cry;
 "Thy abjectness more wrath excites, than did thy treachery."

"Dear shalt thou pay for this," thought Lok, "thy pride one day be
 [cool'd;
 The bowstring's pulled so frequently, it snaps at length: but hold,

I must refrain from menace, be meek and hurable here,
 And all my schemes of vengeance till fitter time defer.”
 So now in haste up springing, he loudly shouted ! “ Peace ;
 Good tidings now I bring ye : all strife and hate shall cease :
 Giants and gods no longer eternal war shall wage ;
 The bosom melts with kindness, that once throbb’d high with rage.
 The heart of Thrymur beats with love ; the object of his flame
 Is Freya ; to the rocks and woods he sighs out Freya’s name.
 And when athwart the birch-trees he views her glorious fane,
 And marks her spindle sparkling with many a yellow skein,
 The female, thinks the giant, who such a quantity
 Of flax can spin, must truly a clever housewife be.
 She’s just the dame for Thrymur’s taste ; soft, delicate, and thin
 Must be the fingers, that can draw the silken thread so fine.
 Her skin the lily’s hue presents, her cheek the peach’s bloom,
 Her lips are red as blood, I’m told ; the rest all white as foam :
 With brightest gold in colour her silken tresses vie,
 And three times can she wind them around her forehead high.
 They say she’s in affliction, her husband she has lost ;
 Good sense this doth not argue to be so deeply crost :
 But it denotes fidelity ; and that, one may surmise,
 Supposes that she too upon fidelity relies :
 For ah ! where would the guerdon be of virtue, if one doubted
 Incessantly ? for Freya too, whose beauty is undoubted.
 The thistle no attention meets, e’en from the butterfly ;
 But the rose ne’er can rest in peace for th’ homage of the bee.

“ Thy sermon on fidelity, I pray thee, spare us now ! ”
 Said Freya, laughing : “ emblem of fidelity, we know,
 Is Loptur’s heart : but quickly Thrymur’s demand prefer,
 And thy remarks on virtue another time we’ll hear.”

"They are not mine, fair lady!" quoth Lok: "I only come,
 As messenger from Thrymur, to Valhall's azure dome.
 Freya the Disa fair he loves with manhood's fervent fire;
 His love for her all Jotunheim with softness doth inspire.
 His father, Lok of Utgard stern, so wrapp'd up in his son,
 Hath for the ardent lover's vows a tender pity shown.
 Brother-in-law of Odin thus should Utgard-Lok become,
 A mighty change will then forthwith o'er all Heimkringlas come:
 Henceforth twixt good and evil no difference will appear;
 All contrasts blend harmonious, when the dark owl shall pair
 With the white dove: sunshine shall mix with the volcano's gleam
 And in Valhalla's fragrant grove unsavoury vapours steam:
 Smooth-skin'd and beardless man become; woman a beard shall wear;
 Twilight will all the fashion be; day and night disappear:
 Sweet violets on carrion bloom; a blade of straw a knife,
 A spit a lily straight become: the warrior and his wife
 Will change professions; she the javelin, he the distaff hold:
 Such transformations wonderful our eyes will then behold.
 But Thrymur is a serious wight, this must not be forgot,
 He's somewhat jealous too, and jokes he understandeth not:
 And Freya must, if she consent to share the giant's reign,
 As Thrymur's spouse, in subterranean gloom for aye remain.
 True, love will vanish from the earth; but where, I pray, the loss,
 Since hate no longer will exist our hearts to plague and cross?
 Heimdaller's Bifrost then will lose its variegated hue,
 No more display its gorgeous rays, red, yellow, green, and blue:
 Those colours will together blend, and form a dingy grey;
 And toads within their moss-grown pools will sing like thrushes gay."
 At this proposal Freya's breast with indignation swell'd,
 And thus with words of bitter scorn Lok's project she repell'd:

“ Were Freya to the giant’s land disposed to go with thee,
Must Freya terribly, forsooth, in want of husband be.

But now the Asar, when the sun its earliest rays display’d,
Assemble all to hold the Ting beneath Yggdrassil’s shade.
There, to avoid temptation, they did not Lok invite :
But Lok to visit Heimdall went towards the rainbow bright :
Soft in his ear he whisper’d, gave counsel, swore that zeal
For Valhall had induced him that mission to fulfil :
“ The gods,” said he, “ I know, ’gainst me a strong aversion have,
But the whole thing, as thou perceiv’st, is of importance grave.
Thee judgment lacks not ; my advice thou’st heard me frankly state ;
Follow it, if it seem thee good : if not, reject it strait !
But whatsoever be resolv’d, let it be quickly done,
For execution the design should follow hard upon.
Heimdaller who had heard what past ’tween Lok and Thrymur grim
At th’ entrance of the grot, and knew, Lok did not lie this time,
Approved of the proposal, and took the counsel well :
The worm thus often pierceth the nut with hardest shell.”

Then Asa-Heimdall at the Ting thus spake aloud : “ ’Tis time
The giants’ pride to tame, methinks, and vanquish Jotunheim.
To raise them to the rank of gods, that oft we’ve done ; thereby
Our strength we lost not : doth not Niord fierce Skada mollify ?
And Ægir with his potent arm cheek Rana’s perfidy ?
Young Gerda dotes upon her spouse ; she’s full of charm and grace ;
She gave Skidbladner to the gods ; she’s of a better race :
Women with coal-black hair from her descend, within whose blood
The flame of love more ardent glows. Say I were not Lok a god,

What mischief might he not effect in regions void of light ?
 And hath not oft the moon bestow'd the power of day on night ?
 But should light's ray, deserting heaven, descend into th' abyss,
 Would not for ever disappear our glory, strength, and bliss ?
 Shall we then Freya cede ? ah no ! by the great gods, I swear,
 Valhall a joyless waste would prove, if Freya were not there.
 Iduna's fruit of health and youth accords, 'tis true, the power,
 But Freya 'tis who sows the seed of love's delightful flower :
 We all admire her ; when the gods she folds in her embrace,
 The ecstasy that fills their soul what tongue hath power to trace ?
 And shall that lovely Disa depart from us for aye ?
 Shall mist for ever darken Folkvangur's vivid ray ?
 And must that bosom soft and fair against the hairy breast
 Of the rough giant throb, and by his rugged hand be prest ?
 Shall lips, which utter tones so mild, and soul unite with soul,
 Be soil'd by the disgusting kiss of such a goblin foul ?
 Shall eyes, whose soul-subduing rays a power resistless prove,
 Be doom'd to contemplate a form impossible to love ?
 No ! rather let Yggdrassil's top in Nastrond's marsh corrode,
 Or Bifrost sink dissolv'd in dew to Ægir's deep abode !
 Myself, who on the brink of heaven must watchful stand in arms,
 I can but catch a fleeting glimpse of Freya's matchless charms :
 But when, each morning, crown'd with flowers she o'er my bridge
[doth pass,
 With fecundating smile the realm of mother Earth to grace,
 With tenfold zeal inspired, in hand my Gialler-horn I take ;
 Its joyous tones to love of life and strength mankind awake :
 Quitting his nest, then soars the lark towards the celestial height ;
 At housand carols to the world proclaim with loud delight,
 That Freya's soul-enchanting smile hath bless'd Heimdaller's sight."

Heimdaller's words find no dissent : the Asars' hearts they move ;
 And Freya's eyes rewarded him with such sweet looks of love,
 He blush'd like morn, when through night's veil the day begins to
 [break :
 Tears glisten'd in his radiant eyes, and roll'd adown his cheek.

Heimdaller then Lok's plan explain'd, and spoke : " Ye Asar high !
 His hammer Thor will ne'er regain, unless we mystify
 The amorous giant : as ye know, he seeks a bride more fair
 Than those he 's been accustomed to, in his dark mountain lair.
 Unused to females, who possess grace, beauty, symmetry,
 To dupe the giant's senses coarse no arduous task would be.
 If Thor will but consent to dress in feminine attire,
 There is a bride at once most fit to cool the giant's fire !
 Let Thor like Freya be array'd : to further the deceit
 She'll not refuse, I trow, to lend the robes and jewels meet.
 Odin a lotion too can give of faculty divine
 To wash off all callosity and roughness from the skin.
 Thor then, with face as white as meal, and cheek as red as blood,
 Will lose his shaggy beard, 'tis true, but not his hardihood.
 Let the famed necklace Brising about his neck be wound ;
 There in exchange for Miölner a bride at once is found !
 Before his bosom two round stones we'll fix within his vest,
 And there, in outward form at least, appears a woman's breast !
 And these when wrapp'd in scarlet cloth, at the bare sight will fill
 With sulphur all the giant's veins, and cause his blood to thrill.
 A bonnet with a long white veil to grace his brows were meet ;
 And bunch of keys, tied to his waist, the bridal dress complete.
 Lok too, as waiting-maid attired, with Thor shall bend his way
 To Utgard's realm : he'll not refuse, I guess, this part to play

Then, when Thor sits upon the couch in the dark giant's dome,
 When bearing Miölner in their arms the black dwarfs forward come,
 When Thrymur, drunk with love, shall place the hammer on Thor's
 [breast,

What then Thor has to do, methinks, I need not here suggest.
 In Heimdal 'twere presumption great, by words or argument,
 To teach great Asa-Thor the use of his own instrument."

With joy the Disar clapp'd their hands, and with each other vied,
 Delighted with the stratagem, to dress up Thor as bride.
 The gods indulge in hearty laugh; Yggdrassil flouts the sky;
 Its branches green wave o'er the roof of Valhall gloriously.
 Balder, Forsete, Mimer were absent from the Ting,
 And mightily this favour'd Lok's project. Drupner ring
 On Odin's finger dropp'd, indeed, on the grass others nine,
 And fain, to its construction true, would warn its lord divine:
 But the Asynior's laughter gay banish'd from Odin's breast
 All scruples; so that Loptur's guile he deem'd a harmless jest.
 Thor did indeed remonstrate: "How? as female, Thor appear?
 Unheard of! ne'er can I consent the female garb to wear."
 But Freya with her lily hand patted his cheek, and lo!
 All scruples vanished from his breast, all wrinkles from his brow.
 "'Tis true," said Freya, "mortal man composed of wretched dust
 Must by his nature ever be a victim to mistrust;
 Must ever guard himself against the influence of hate,
 Which ne'er the most illustrious deeds fails to calumniate;
 But Thor in Trudvang rules; who dare his acts divine arraign?
 Surely to aid a humorous freak his godhead cannot stain."

Young Fulla, bearing Freya's robes, now enter'd in the hall;
 But Odin's hand must widen them; for Thor they were too small:

But to give him a slender waist their utmost efforts fail,
 For he was stout, and would not move without his coat of mail.
 Now on his breast the two round stones twas Hermod's task to place ;
 At this the fair Valkyrior blush'd, and laugh'd, and hid their face.
 Now they suspend about his neck the necklace, Brising hight,
 With many a ruby rich adorn'd, and many a diamond bright.
 Now to the face and neck of Thor Odin applied his hand ;
 All roughness vanish'd at the touch : white, delicate and bland
 Became his skin ; no hue remain'd, which Thor could designate.
 Now round his brazen helm a cap with long white veil they plait ;
 He don'd his gloves, and Meginard around his girdle laced,
 To act with force, when in his hand his Miölner should be placed.

Now red they take to paint his cheek ; they cut his nails ; when drest,
 A sprig of whitethorn in full bloom they fasten to his breast.
 Now round the god travestied thus th' Asynior young and gay,
 Like children at a fav'rite game, delighted frisk and play :
 " O Thrymur ! gallant Thrymur ! " in chorus loud they chime,
 " Hast thou ne'er been love's vassal, thou'lt not escape this time."

To harness now and yoke the goats was Tialf's peculiar care :
 Then Thor and Lok in female garb ascend the golden car.
 Thus down o'er Bilfrost's dizzy height, in Freya's robes array'd,
 Drove Asa-Thor ; a tinge of rose the vault of heav'n o'erspread.
 As the car pass'd, Heimdaller blew his horn in glorious style,
 The virgins nine salute the god with fascinating smile.
 Seen from the earth, like meteor bright the golden car appear'd ;
 This time no thunder shook the poles ; no forked lightnings glared :
 The car athwart the azure sky swift glided like a swan ;
 Therein sat Tialfe, Asa-Lok, and Thor, the giants' bane. (3)

CANTO XXIX.

THE HAMMER OF THOR RECOVERED.

Seated in his golden car,
Gliding swift as shooting star,
Thor, with Loptur by his side,
Towards the giant's dwelling hied.
Lok on treason ever bent,
Pleased his foes to circumvent,
At the triumph of his guile
Chuckled with malignant smile.

Now tremble the rocks! they proceed on their way :
The mountains a wide yawning entrance display!
But only half open the portal was found ;
And a flame often flash'd through the darkness profound.

Black as jet, but streak'd with flame,
 Thrymur to the portal came :
 There the giant proud and strong
 Tower'd amidst his vassal throng!
 On his brows a diadem
 Deck'd with many a brilliant gem.
 Now he greets, with conscious pride,
 Graciously his beauteous bride.

At the porch as his life-guards six monarchs behold!
 One glitt'ring in Silver; one flaming in Gold;
 One in Iron dark blue; one in Copper bright red;
 White in Tin was this chieftain; that, sable in Lead.

From the car the gods descend :
 Thrymur see! his hand extend
 To conduct his fancied spouse :
 High his blood with passion glows.
 Many a gloomy corridor
 Must the Asar pass, before
 They can reach the giant's throne,
 Shining in the vast saloon.

Each gem, like a princess so fine and so fair,
 Graced the hall : sprightly Ruby, gay Emerald was there ;
 Mild Sapphire, and Diamond so regal in mien :
 Their splendid tiaras enliven the scene.

Through the humid caverns, where
 Sunbeam ne'er hath cheer'd the air,
 Thor moves onward, free from dread,
 By his giant consort led.
 Little dwarfs, the way to show,
 Foremost march the gall'ries through,
 Holding each a sulphur brand
 Blazing in his rugged hand.

Half conceal'd in a corner, and far from the light,
 There stand the shield-bearers, all ready for fight :
 There was sour-featur'd Vitriol, and Arsenic fell,
 Whose look would the stoutest assailant repel.

Like a little child in mien,
 Pale and cross was Cobalt seen :
 Oft it stared with ghastly frown,
 Sitting on the gelid stone.
 Through the hall its fetid breath
 Spread around a scent of death :
 Legs it had not, but a pad
 Crown'd its venom-swelter'd head.

In the midst of the hall blazed a coal-cover'd pyre,
 And the giants assembled in troops round the fire :
 Cuirasses they wore on their hair-cover'd breasts,
 And defiance they breath'd with their high-waving crests.

Echoing now the rocks among
 Loud they chaunt a magic song :
 Like the dismal yell its sound
 Of the agonizing hound,
 When its belly drips with gore
 Torn by tusk of angry boar,
 While his bowels o'er the plain,
 Gasping short, he trails with pain.

Dame Hela two chieftains illustrious had sent
 From her palace ; they both were of regal descent :
 Consumption, in gorgeous apparel array'd ;
 Plague, with spots on his robe, and all conquering blade.

Sole of all the giant race
 Lok of Utgard did not grace
 Thrymur's hall that marriage night :
 Visions dire his mind affright.
 Treason doth he apprehend ;
 Carrion scents his nose offend.
 In a corner now was spread
 Deck'd with skins the nuptial bed.

While all the old giants and infants were stow'd,
 Wrapt in sleep, in the sov'reign of Utgard's abode,
 Each grown male and female, each maiden and swain
 To assist at the marriage of Thrymur remain.

Thor in silken robe array'd
 Counterfeits the bashful maid :
 Now his eyes he glanced around ;
 Now he fix'd them on the ground :
 Now the two round stones inspire
 Thrymur's breast with amorous fire.
 Then the goblet-bearing swain
 Enter'd midst the festive train.

Now with hydromel sparkling each goblet he fill'd ;
 Now into the hall rush'd the giants so wild :
 With flames now the cheeks of each other they smutt'd,
 And, like rams, with the horns on their temples they butt'd.

Eager now to join the feast
 Towards the board each giant prest :
 Much they stared the bride to see
 Eat and drink so lustily :
 Though he many a goblet drain'd,
 Thor unsated still remain'd :
 Still he for more liquor cries :
 What a sight for Thrymur's eyes !

Scarce fill'd was Thor's goblet, he emptied it strait,
 Though fill'd to the brim ; a whole ox he ate,
 Eight salmon to boot ; and with marvellous speed
 The husband of Sif swallow'd three tons of mead.

Then said Thrymur : “ So much meat,
 “ So much fish doth Freya eat ?
 So much beer ? so much mead
 Can she swallow ? strange, indeed !
 Who would not astonish'd be
 Such a dainty dame to see
 Drain each oft replenish'd bowl,
 As 'twere but a thimble-full ?”

But Lok, who as waiting-maid stood by the side
 Of Thor, in excuse whisper'd Thrymur. “ Thy bride
 Eight nights without eating or drinking hath past,
 And deep longing for thee was the cause of her fast.”

Thrymur now at what he heard
 Chuckled joyful in his beard :
 See him with enamour'd mien
 Towards his consort's bosom lean !
 But Thor's flashing eyes subdued
 Soon the lover's hardihood ;
 Quick the giant must retire
 Aw'd by Aukthor's look of fire.

Then said Lok, from the giant all fears to remove :
 “ Her thoughts ever dwelling on Thrymur and love,
 Poor Freya eight nights without sleeping hath past,
 Hence her eyes are so red, and her brow overcast.”

Then a female black as coal,
 With short frizzled hair like wool,
 Enter'd in the festive hall;
 Young was she, smooth skinn'd, and tall :
 On her brows a crown she wore,
 Emblem of her regal power :
 While around her waist a zone
 Deck'd with many a jewel shone.

“ Come, sister ! 'tis time (so a truce to your blushes)
 To couch with your bridegroom on bed of dry rushes :
 As consort of Thrymur I'll hail thee at morn ;
 And many a gem shall thy temples adorn. ”

Now to fetch the shaft divine,
 Giant Thrymur made a sign.
 “ In the bosom of my bride
 Be it placed ! ” the giant cried.
 “ 'Tis the hour of midnight ; now
 Must be sworn the marriage vow : (1)
 Now by Miölnér's iron bright
 Mutual faith and troth we'll plight. ”

Scarce was utter'd the order, when in came a troop
 Of dwarfs bearing Miölnér ; and oft must they stoop :
 Scarce sufficient were they, though their number was great,
 And they gasp and they groan under Miölnér's vast weight.

When the Asa held at last
 In his hands the hammer fast,
 Pleas'd was he its nib to view
 Shining with reflection blue :
 Then he raised his stature up
 To the very cavern's top :
 Roll'd his eye-balls flashing flame !
 Red, blood-red his cheek became !

The head-dress and veil from his helmet drop down ;
 Indignant he tore from his body the gown :
 With the beard on his chin, and the scars on his breast,
 The broad-shoulder'd champion as Thor stood confest !

Berserk fury in his eye,
 Now he swung his arm on high !
 While he dealt his deadly blows,
 Higher still his courage rose.
 Who shall now the carnage trace
 Of the wretched Jotun race ?
 Ha ! what bloody torrents roll
 From each giant's cloven skull !

When Thrymur was kill'd, arm'd with club and with spear,
 Darting forth from their caverns fresh giants appear :
 But Thor hammer'd round him as brisk as Vanlunder,
 When he beats on his anvil the iron asunder.

Hrugner now, a man of stone, (2)
 Onward moved with haughty frown,
 While his eyes with ghastly glow
 Hurl'd defiance on the foe:
 'Stead of heart, within his breast
 Was a granite fragment placed ;
 'Twas three-corner'd ; there it stood
 Void of feeling, void of blood.

And lo ! for the giants a figure of clay
 Of aspect ferocious now join'd in the fray !
 His bosom was fill'd with the heart of a horse ;
 Strong and mighty it made him, and swift at the course.

Now 'gainst Hrugner naught alarm'd
 Thor advanced with Miölner arm'd.
 On the club of Hrugner, lo !
 Thor inflicts a deadly blow !
 With such energy 'twas given,
 Hrugner's mace was piecemeal riven,
 While its scatter'd fragments fall,
 Frightful clatt'ring round the hall.

But the clay-fashion'd chieftain was Mokkurcalf hight :
 He struck on his shield, and presumed on his might ;
 But, pierced by the sword of young Tialf in the fray,
 The horse-fiend fell down with a horrible neigh.

Now was heard the dying moan,
 Many a shriek and many a groan !
 Thor was dreadful in his ire ;
 Naught could tame his warlike fire.
 Thousand giants round him lay,
 Victims of the bloody fray.
 Down like tool of pavour fell
 Miölnar with a pond'rous peal.

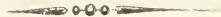
Now, reeking with blood, sprang the treacherous Lok
 'Mongst the wounded, like Nidding, their miseries to mock ;
 When he met with a giant all drench'd in his gore
 And dying, he laugh'd, and he stabb'd him once more.

Now there reign'd a silence deep,
 As when winds and billows sleep
 On the coast : with gloomy mien
 Thor beheld the frightful scene.
 From the giants' dark abode,
 Fill'd with mangled limbs and blood,
 Every vital spark had fled :
 All was silent ! all was dead !

In vain all their courage the giants display ;
 With eyes closed in death, like mow'd rushes they lay :
 Naught remain'd of their strength or their valour behind ;
 From their bodies hath fled the invincible mind.

As the lion, when his might
Hath victorious proved in fight,
Viewing now his vanquish'd prey
Breathless, bleeding, fore him lie,
With revenge no longer burns,
All his rage to pity turns,
And the beasts' high-minded chief
Ruminates in silent grief ;

Thus Thor, when his fury was o'er, look'd and sigh'd
Deep in silence and pensive, his victims beside :
But Lok, like the lynx, from his lips licking gore,
Grinn'd with cruel delight, and still thirsted for more.



CANTO XXX.

THE VALA'S PROPHECY.

As Thor sat silent, and the fight was o'er,
Slow from the giants' blood a smoke arose,
And white and thick the vapour spread itself!
Trembling with guilt and fear Lok veil'd his face.
At length the smoke, dissolving by degrees,
Develop'd a gigantic female form:
Silent she stood; her eyelids were half-closed;
Her visage pale as death: through all the caves
Glimmer'd a lurid flame. Upon the brow
Of Lok glared visibly the stamp of crime.

The mountain dame long contemplated Thor
With look serene, though stern: the god remain'd
Mournful and mute. At length a sigh exhaled
Of deep compassion from her lab'ring breast:
Grave was her aspect; in each feature reign'd
The calm of peace: peculiar tenderness,
Mix'd with severity, restrain'd her wrath.

"Sad tidings have I to announce to thee,
 O Thor!" thus she began; "for thou hast soil'd
 Thy honour: Lok hath taught thee how to sin.
 But for a short time longer shalt thou bear
 Thy Mjölner: sore it grieves me to announce
 Thy fall, O Thor! for thou art good and brave,
 And dear to me for aye will be thy name.
 But the whole Ocean cannot wash away
 The rust that stains thy shield; then listen now
 Calmly to what I shall unfold, and learn
 From me thy future fate! Though all creation
 To ashes burn, yet that which is eternal
 No flame consumes; 'tis only the foul mask
 That bursts, and falls to dast.

I sing to thee

A song of heavy import, "the World's End."
 Into Valhalla's realm shall find its way
 Corruption leagued with pain: with splendour false
 Dazzled your eyes become, like those of man:
 This deeply moves the pious Balder's heart;
 He warns, but warns in vain; unheeded still
 Remains his counsel sage: the heavenly Frigga
 Now to a mere terrestrial Hertha sinks:
 In Freya's look voluptuousness alone
 Predominates and burns: ferocious Thor
 Becomes, and Odin weak: then Lok shall weave
 His woof of treach'ry and deceit: all things
 Forebode the fall of the degen'rate world:
 Frivolity with vice reigns close allied;
 Then bursts thy roof of pearl, O Breidablik!

Lok in the dark the fatal arrow guides ;
Drown'd in fraternal blood affection lies :
The corpse of Balder decks the pyre : the race
Of Alfer disappear from Valaskialf :
Peace is compell'd to abdicate her reign,
While war and pestilence rage uncontroll'd.
Now every day still more and more corrupt
Becomes the race of Askur ; no respect
Is paid to oaths : i' th' hand of brutal force
The glaive tyrannic crushes and dethrones
Truth, piety, and justice : idols grim
Of stone, or wood, or brass, alone are worshipp'd,
Where whilom burnt a pure and holy flame.
Now men are sacrificed at Odin's shrine
Like cattle : many a gentle maiden drown'd
In Hertha's honour in the mystic grove.
Where then shall innocence protection find ?
The probity so famed of th' olden time
Hath vanish'd from the earth : but Lok ! thy joy
Shall be of short duration ; thou shalt fall
A victim to thy own insidious arts ;
Thou first didst cruelty to th' Asar teach,
And cruel shall thy expiation be.
In a deep subterranean cave shalt thou
Be captive held, and rage and foam in vain :
The Asar in their wrath shall seize and fasten
Thy body to a rock : one peak shall bear
Thy shoulder, one thy loins, and one thy knees.
No one for thee the smallest pity feels :
Thy sons each other shall, like wolves, devour,

And their intestines bind their guilty sire.
Yet true and faithful shall remain thy spouse,
And she alone; and though the serpents huge
Hang venom-breathing o'er thee, pair by pair,
Dropping their foam on thee but half alive,
Yet Sigyn's gentle nature shall not fail;
Assiduous she will stretch a vessel forth
To shelter from the dropping venom him,
Who once was dearly lov'd: the vase, when fill'd,
She carries out; then on thy fester'd wounds
And lips the poison falls; writhing with pain
Thou tremblest; at the shock earth trembles too.
Then Odin hurls his javelin wide around,
Slaying the wretched denizens of earth
To gorge himself with plunder: blood doth cleave
E'en to the robe of peace: where then repose
Can find the weary wand'rer? lo! Guldveige
Advances, goddess like! her shrine of gold
Is worshipp'd fervently o'er hill and vale.
She can the wildest wolf with fetters bind,
Yet she capricious to the worst of men
Accords her favours, and is prodigal
Of treasure to the vile and base alone.

Then is good counsel in Valhalla scarce,
For Mimer hath long since the sacred grove
Abandon'd in despair, and in a well
Dwells like a reptile. Odin, true, his eye
Has given in pledge to him, that he may see

More clear athwart the murkiness, but vain
The gift; more dim doth Mimer's sight become.
The vaults wide gaping of the rocks present
The aspect of a coffin! Nastrond's gulf
Opes its tremendous jaws, where serpents foul
Hiss and exhale their poison all around,
Mix'd with the flame of sulphur burning blue!
Into that gulf fall headlong down the men
Who never felt repentance; round their limbs
The speckled serpents coil, intent to bite:
Huge as an ox, with formidable spring
Conscience, the giant scorpion, tears the heart
Of th' vicious with its fangs: deep in their flesh
Fell Nidhög revels with insatiate tooth:
Flames crackle loud in the abyss profound,
And Bragur's harp divine is heard no more.
Down in Hvergelmer Elivagor roars;
On every coast by shipwreck lives are lost:
The ancient firs and oaks with branches bare
Uprooted lie: the moon is swallow'd up
By Maanegarm: the sun, like out-burnt coal,
Grows dark, while loud the giants' laugh resounds
To mock the Asar with insulting gibe.
Deep in the bosom of the mountain now
Shall Utgard-Lok his progeny excite
With eloquence indignant to avenge
The death of their forefathers. Fialar now,
The blood-red cock, is heard to crow! the dog
Yells loud and oft before the cave of Gnypa!
Then Hela opes her gates with frightful clang!

With golden helms, and yellow tresses bright
Wide streaming through the air, to battle ride
The proud Valkyrior : the decrees of fate
The Nornor now no longer can conceal.
Then days of tempest, war, and pestilence
And foul revolt arise : his brother's life
The brother spareth not : no mercy shows
Man, flush'd with battle, to his fellow man.
Shakes with affright Yggdrassil's top, and straight
Becomes the prey of flames ! the Asar tremble,
And terror reigns upon their brows divine.
Sighs from the rack and groans re-echo loud
The miseries of the earth : upon the bridge
Heimdaller perch'd blows fearfully his horn
To rouse all nature to th' eternal strife ;
While Jormungardur lifts his head and hisses.
With vapours dark the rainbow, once so bright,
Becomes obscured : down ride the Asar : Bifrost
Breaks down with frightful crash : the sky sucks up
The vapour like a swamp : the heavens thus lose
Their brightest ornament ; while Naglefare,
With giants fill'd, through noisome weed-choked marsh
Forces its way ; the black flag at the mast
Triumphant waves ; Lok, prince of Utgard, stands
Himself exulting at the prow, and calls
Aloud for battle ! All the giant band
With clash of shields re-echo loud the cry !
Now Fenris breaks his chain ; he howls aloud,
And hails the giants with applauding yell.
His foam covers the ocean ; with affright

The stars fall headlong down from heav'n, and sink
 With hissing noise, extinguish'd, in the sea.
 Upon the waters all the fish lie dead :
 Now slowly rising from the south advances
 A column thick of vapour ! joy pervades
 The giants' hearts, when they behold the flame
 Athwart the sultry vapour burning blue.
 'Tis Surtur, whom the vast abyss sends forth,
 Of the most frightful darkness puissant chief,
 Grasping in both black hands his steel-blue glaive.
 Now towards Valhalla's realm he seems to move ;
 Now towards the earth : he rolls along the sky,
 And vapours foul, and howlings horrible
 Conglomerate around his dusky brow.
 But who 'gainst Surtur rushes to the fight ?
 'Tis Frey ; but he turns pale, for now his sword
 He hath not : hark ! a trampling loud is heard
 Of horses' hoofs : 'tis Odin ; see ! he hastes
 To join the combat, boldly piercing through
 The thickest of the fight : upon his front
 The scars of Geirsodd bleed afresh : his steed
 Is white ; a golden crest gleams on his helm :
 With Gagner (1) arm'd he rushes on the wolf !
 Alas ! by Fenris' jaws Valhalla's lord
 Is seiz'd and swallow'd up ! — a morning ray
 Of purple shines afar with glimm'ring light —
 'Tis Odin's blood. — Now Frigga in the sky
 Is seen wringing her hands, with aspect pale :
 She strives grave Vidar's courage to excite :
 Like whirlwind in the midst of vapour forth

She sends her son. Vidar no longer now
Keeps silence ; fearfully he groans and sighs :
His eyes flash fire, but with extended jaws
Fenris, the wolf, rushes to meet his foe,
Gnashing his frightful teeth : but Vidar soon
O'ercomes the wolf, as were he but a whelp :
He throws him on his back, tears out his tongue,
And tramples him to death beneath his feet.
At length arrives a great important hour,
For now to vapour by the power of fire
The waters all dissolve, and the white sand
Of ocean's depth extreme is bared to view.
Now Jormundgardur feels the burning heat,
And writhes impatient with sensation strange,
Unused on land to fold himself in coils.
See with uplifted hammer Thor approach !
So fierce a combat ne'er was seen before :
The snake with cunning strives around the limbs
Of Thor, in brazen armour cased, to wind
His dark blue rings, while on the monster's scales
The hero's hammer deals repeated blows.
Long and uncertain lasts the awful fight ;
At length is heard a hideous scream ; for now
Victorious Thor hath given the mortal blow,
And tramples with his heel the monster's head.
But in the agonies of death around
The hero's feet the serpent winds his folds
Still closer, and with venom-spreading foam
Bedews the conqueror's front, and groans and dies.
Thor stands victorious ; but too soon grows pale ;

He staggers ; now he rallies ; now again
 Staggers nine paces ; and sinks down in death !
 So heart-appalling is thy dying look,
 O Thor ! th' Asynior all expire of grief :
 They feel it like a dagger in their heart.
 Garm destroys Tyr ; but Tyr in dying pierces
 The monster's heart : now from his lurking-place,
 Like cat, springs Lok, and brandishes on high
 A sulfurous torch from Nastrond ; on his brow
 Glitters a brazen helm : Heimdaller moves
 'Gainst him with sword uplifted, one blow strikes,
 And down to Nastrond sinks th' eternal foe.
 Then vanishes like colours in the night
 Heimdaller's self : the dwarfs are heard to sigh
 Deep in the rocks ; they die of fright ; yet shines
 Awhile the golden car of Thor ; but soon
 It disappears : the two white goats expire.
 But lately gleam'd a feeble light, but now
 'Tis utterly extinguish'd : all creation
 Sinks overwhelm'd in one vast shower of blood.
 Alfader reigns once more sole lord of all.

With mind reluctant hitherto have I
 A strain interpreted of presage dire,
 The world's destruction, and the Asar's fall.
 But listen now to a more pleasing theme,
 The hope and consolation that ensue !
 From ocean's depth a new-form'd earth shall spring !
 The azure wave reflect the new-spun grass !
 Again adown the rock the cataract fall,

O'er which clouds fleeting pass, and eagles soar !
On Ida's plain the Asar all assembled
Again awake to new-framed life and joy !
All recollection of the ancient strife
Is banish'd from their minds; a new-born child,
A graceful daughter hath the sun produced,
Who shall upon her mother's well-known path
All glorious move, but far more beautiful
Than her, by all so dearly loved and prized.
The human race shall likewise be restored
To life from their long slumber : now awake
Lif and Liftrasir, by the morning dew
Refresh'd and nourish'd : then shall every grief
Seem but remembrance of a painful dream.
The Asar all shall to the grove repair,
Where amidst flowers the crystal fountain streams :
In all his glory will Alfader then
Reveal himself to man ; his buckler hold
On high, glitt'ring with runes, whose sense sublime
Shall shield his children from all future harm.
Tablets of gold, with golden counters deck'd,
Shall in the grass be found, where violets
Give fragrant odour : on each counter shines
Each thought and action of a human life.
The facts of old shall mere illusion prove,
And med'cine, what was whilom poison held.
The corn shall not the sower's toil require,
But spring spontaneous from the womb of earth :
No serpent lurk beneath the flower ; all evil
Shall vanish : order, justice, truth and love

Eternally triumphant now shall reign.
 Then high above Valhalla's roof extends
 The dwelling of the blest, the glorious Gimle,
 Pavilion of the Good ; an edifice
 Which naught can shake, naught injure or destroy.
 There shall the tender heart of Balder find
 True consolation ; there shall he again
 Embrace his brother Hædur : Bragur too
 Shall press Iduna to his breast once more :
 Freya again her long lost Odur meet :
 Frey fold his faithful Gerda in his arms :
 Thor Sif embrace. All hearts shall cease to bleed.
 But Miölner is not to be found in Gimle :
 Behold ! with smile of love ineffable
 Alfader gives to Thor a glaive, whose hilt
 Shines forth in form of cross with lilies graced.
 Now," said the Vala, "have my lips reveal'd
 All that time yet conceals : my solemn words
 Ponder, O Thor ! for I must now depart,
 Recall'd by him, at whose behest I came."

Thus said, she sank into the yawning ground !
 A fearful gust of wind howl'd through the rocks.
 And in the cave Thor found himself alone :
 His hammer in his bosom lay ; at once
 He recognized the fatal weapon. Tialfe
 Lay slumb'ring by his side : in heaps around
 The giants' bodies strew'd, all drench'd with gore,
 Bore witness to the prowess he display'd.

Thor now again ascends to Valaskialf :
The Vala's revelation he imparts
To Odin : Odin and the Asar all
Silent remain, immers'd in thought profound !
Here ends my song about the Gods on high.



NOTES AND ELUCIDATIONS.

NOTES TO THE FIRST CANTO.

Specimen of the metre in the original.

Et Sagn fuld vaerd at høve
Med gamle Runer sjaer;
Laaner mig Ederø Dere!
Mens jeg Guldharpn sjaer.
Hvad i de mørke Skrifter
Er sat med sindrig Hu
Om Afernes Bedrifter,
Det vil jeg tolke nu.

The eight first Cantos, in the original, are written in the same metre. In my translation, as will be seen, I have indulged in greater variety.

(1) In the heathen time there was a magnificent temple at Upsala. The poet here probably alludes to some earthquake, or convulsion of nature, which damaged or destroyed it, and which was therefore supposed to be occasioned by Utgard-Lok, the chief of the giants.

(2) This Ash is the ash-tree Yggdrassil. See the Catalogue of proper names.

(3) The Valkyrior.

(4) By the *seven virgins* are no doubt personified the *seven colours* of the rainbow.

(5) By the mythe of the death and resuscitation of Thor's goats, is meant probably the death of nature in winter, and her resuscitation in spring. By the marrow eaten by Tialfe, and the lameness of the goat occasioned thereby, it is meant, that if the seed or germ of reproduction in animals or plants be damaged or destroyed, the reproduction becomes imperfect, or impossible.

(6) The pact between Niord and Ægir means, that when the sea is frozen by the north wind, the weather is perfectly calm, and the sea itself passable as dry land.

(7) What this hut turns out to be, is explained in the second Canto.

NOTES TO THE SECOND CANTO.

Specimen of the metre in the original.

Som Løv med vaagent Drev
 Du trøstig sad i Nag,
 Da fik han snart at høre
 Et svart og vældigt Brag, etc.

(1) *Goblin-land*: in the original *Troldkæmpeland*, from *trold* (goblin) *kæmpe* (warrior) and *land* (land). The giants are often called *Troldkæmper*. Who *Skrymur* turns out to be, is explained in the sixth Canto.

(2) Respecting this glove, the following is Finn Magnussen's idea of the mythe. *Skrymur* is the frost-giant, personification of winter. Thor reposing in the glove denotes the beginning of winter, when the thunder or thunderer may be said to rest therein, allegorically (there being no thunder in winter). This hieroglyph is very ancient, inasmuch as the Ice-

landic word *vötr* (glove) proceeds probably from *vetr* (winter); the glove being the part of dress particularly appropriate to and only used in winter in those times, as the muff is still, in northern Europe.

(3) Respecting Skrymur's wallet, which Thor is unable to untie or open, Finn Magnussen says: "I think this mythe is enigmatical, and alludes to winter (the frost-giant), which may be said to prevent man from getting his food from the earth, by envelopping it in ice." In the prosaic Edda, Utgard-Lok says, in explaining to Thor his magic spells, "The wallet I gave to you, was made fast with an iron girdle;" now there is a close analogy between the words denoting *ice* and *iron* in many of the Gothic languages. Ex: in Icelandic, *is* (ice) *isarn* (iron); in German, *eis* (ice) *eisen* (iron); in Dutch, *ijs* (ice) *ijzer* (iron); in Anglo-Saxon, *is* (ice) *isen* (iron).

(4) The ancient northmen, who oriented themselves with the help of the mountains, figured to themselves the north as lying towards our east or north-east. This will serve to explain the phrase, "mountains vast which towards the north appear." The mountains lie really towards the east. Towards the north, on the contrary, the land becomes less and less elevated, as you draw near the pole.

NOTES TO THE THIRD CANTO.

Specimen of the metre in the original.

En Eaga fast urvölg
 Jeg nu fundgiöre maa;
 Med Utgards fierne Völg
 Vilde de kæmper gaae.

(1) The name of this giantess is Angurbod: see the Catalogue of proper Names.

(2) *Midgard's snake* is the serpent Jormundgard, type of the ocean, which surrounds the earth (Midgard). According to Ling, a Swedish poet, the mythe of Lok and his three offspring, Fenris, Hela and Jormundgard, may be thus explained. Fenris denotes what is destructive or prejudicial in *Fire*: Hela denotes the deleterious qualities of the *Earth*, in decomposing substances and causing rottenness: Jormundgard denotes the destructive qualities of *Water*: all these are caused by the action of *Air* (Lok or Loptur) mixing with *Angurbod* (impurity). The amour of Asa-Lok and Angurbod has some resemblance to the amour of the giant Typhon with Echidna, which produced the Chimera, Cerberus and Hydra of the Greek mythology.

(3) The Hell of the christians is always represented by theologians as a place of *eternal fire*; yet in the country where the religion of Odin prevailed, the inhabitants, from ancient custom, could not refrain from considering it sometimes as a place of *eternal cold*. At least, the idea sometimes breaks out in the ballads composed long after the introduction of christianity. In a Scottish ballad, for instance, inserted by Walter Scott in his "Minstrelsey of the Scottish Border," there is the following stanza:

O whaten a mountain is yon, she said,
 All so dreary wi' frost and snow?
 O yon is the mountain of Hell, he cried,
 Where you and I must go.

NOTES TO THE FOURTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Da laa vet for hans, Deje
 Den stove Utgardslad;
 Det kunde vel fornøje,
 Han blev i Hu saa alad.

For this Canto, I have adopted a metre something similar to that used in Bürger's *Leonora*.

(1) This vast and empty space is *Ginnungagap*.

(2) The giantess *Betsla*. The Author, in his cosmogony, has adhered closely to the *Edda*.

NOTES TO THE FIFTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Da ved de brede Borde
 De Kæmper rundt nu sad,
 Tog Løse snilt til Orde,
 Den muntre Åsa glad, etc.

(1) Who this Goblin turns out to be, is explained in the next Canto.

(2) Little Thumb; so I translate *Tommeliden*, the name of *Utgard-Lok's* racer; who he, the drinking-horn presented to Thor, the cat, and the old woman turn out be, all this is explained in the next Canto.

(3) I do not find in the *Edda* any mention of this feat; it is probably the poet's own invention, and meant as a pendant to the episode of Mars and Venus.

(4) Let no one be astonished, that the car of the goddess of love should be drawn by cats. Cats are the most ardent and persevering of lovers. The celebrated Spanish poet Lope de Vega has said of them,

Los gatos en efeto
 Son del amor el indice perfeto.

and in another place,

Que cosa puede haber con que se iguale
 ¡ La paciencia de un gato enamorado?

(5) This combat between Thor and the giantesses on the rocky isle is alluded to in the elder or poetic Edda, in the chapter called “ Harbard’s song.” Harbard makes Thor the following reproach, when the latter tells him that he had beaten and put to flight the giantesses on the isle of Hlesey :

“ Shamefully didst thou act, O Thor!
When thou didst beat women.

Thor answers :

They were not women ;
They were she-wolves ;
They attacked me with iron clubs.

The meaning of this, according to Finn Magnussen, is, that the noxious vapours and tempest on Hlesey were dispersed by a thunderstorm ; and the *iron clubs* denote *hailstones*.

(6) The apple of Iduna. See the Catalogue.

NOTES TO THE SIXTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Da nu den Helt hîn svare
Midt udi Marken stod,
Uit under Himlen flave,
Med Blomster ved sin God, etc.

(1) The circumstance of the dwarf’s face being veiled, means, that the *thought* of Utgard-Lok could not be divined by Thor.

(2) It was a saying in the pagan time, when the ebb began, “ Thor drinks.”

The Author has adhered closely to the prosaic Edda in his narration of Thor's adventure in Utgard.

With respect to the two Loks, and the difference between them, it is not a little curious to find that in the gospel of Nicodemus (one of those rejected by the council of Nice, chap. xx, verses 2 and following), Satan and the prince of hell are described as two distinct persons; and when Satan informs the latter, that he has achieved for him a great conquest, by bringing captive to his realm no less a personage than Jesus Christ, the prince of hell, instead of thanking Satan for that service, loads him with reproaches for his unpardonable thoughtlessness, in bringing into his dominions a person by whom he (the prince of hell) had sustained a serious detriment, in the loss of sundry souls, whom Jesus Christ, in escaping from hell, had carried off with him, and who, but for that visit, would still have remained there.

It is singular that this comparison should have escaped the notice, not only of Finn Magnussen, but that of all the other commentators of the Edda, when discussing the subject of the two Loks. I stumbled by mere chance three years ago on a copy of the apocryphal New Testament in German, and on reading the chapter above quoted, the idea of this analogy immediately and forcibly struck me.

NOTES TO THE SEVENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Thor monne sja omgjerde,

Dg fasted vidt sit Blit :

De riag, fede Hjerde

Saa stadiat rundt ham af

(1) In amplifying this stanza, I could not avoid borrowing something from Mason, in that beautiful chorus of Elfrida, beginning,

“Say! will no white-robed son of light,”

and the words

“ Whose cheek but emulates the peach’s bloom,

“ Whose breath the hyacinth’s perfume, ”

occurring to my memory, I made no scruple of adopting them, and I am sure my readers will view with an indulgent eye this plagiarism.

(2) The classical reader will be reminded in this passage of the speech of Jupiter to Venus, when she is wounded by Diomed:

Ου τοι, τεκνον εμον, δεδοται πολεμια εργα, etc.

NOTES TO THE EIGHTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Gud Lhor, den Understaerke,
 Var tit i Hu saa gram;
 Han lod sig intet maerke,
 Dog tyktes det ham Ofam,
 At Zetter ham turde giaeffe, etc.

By way of variety, I have adopted a trochaic metre for my translation of this Canto.

(1) The serpent Jormundgard, type of humidity and its dangerous effects; it is a happy idea of the poet to imagine all the serpent kind engendered by him.

In every mythology the serpent seems to be the emblem of humidity and its noxious qualities. The fable of Jormundgard has evidently given rise to the supposed existence of the kraken, or monstrous sea-serpent.

(2) According to the Scandinavian belief, the half of those who fell in battle fell to the share of Odin, and the other half to Freya. Finn Magnussen thinks this to be a mistake, and that by Freya is meant Frigga, the wife of Odin. The allegory then becomes more clear: Odin typifies the heavens, Frigga the earth; the spirits of the slain ascend to Odin, their bodies remain with Frigga.

Another very ingenious allegory lies in the nature of the nourishment used by Odin at the banquet of Valhalla. In the younger or prosaic Edda it is written, "The food that comes to his (Odin's) share, he gives to his two wolves, Gere and Freke. He himself requires no solid food, for wine is to him both meat and drink." In the elder or poetic Edda it is thus written in the chapter called *Grimnismal*:

The warlike highly honoured
Father of heroes gives his food
To Gere and to Freke;
For by wine alone
Is the glorious Odin nourish'd."

By this is meant, that in battle the spirits of the slain mount to heaven (Odin), while their bodies remain a prey to wolves, and other beasts of prey. Spirits are typified by wine, the most spirituous of all fermented liquors.

The above quotations from the two Eddas afford, perhaps, the best illustration of the difference of their respective styles.

NOTES TO THE NINTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Drenen laa yaa salten Bund i Haver,
Etraengt i Dybers Saengiel avet,
Bag Steenslantevne begravet.

Dver ham flød fri og driffig Hvaten,
 Men i mørke Bølggedafen
 Seed han stugen sig i Hafen, etc.

and so on in tercets. I have preferred the heroic couplet for my translation.

(1) By Loptur's daughter is no doubt meant the queen of death, Hela.

This adventure of Thor with the serpent and giant Hymir is recounted in the prosaic Edda.

The story of Thor losing his hammer Mjölner in the scales of the body of the serpent Jormundgard has a resemblance to the story of Jupiter losing his thunderbolts, and their falling into the hands of the giant Typhon, often represented as a dragon. Typhon, in Greek, means either the giant of that name, or a whirlpool: now Jormundgard typifies the ocean, and Mjölner, the thunderbolt. The Grecian mythe is to be found in the first and second Cantos of the Dionysiacs, or triumphs of Bacchus, in the celebrated Greek poem of Nonnus. These two mythes have a still closer resemblance in their denouement, as will be seen by a reference to the Notes of the 29th Canto of this work.

NOTES TO THE TENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

3 Bataskialf sad Løse faenge,
 Han fieded sig, lod Hovdet haenge,
 Ei Wafhals Ghaeder meer ham smage.

Man seer ham selv Saehrimner vrage;
 Han bittert seer og spottes Guder;

and so on in tercets and couplets. I have adopted a free but rhymed metre for my translation.

NOTES TO THE ELEVENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Tilgiv tvungne
 Trael af Elskov!
 At han dig atter
 Afstjael finder:
 Vil du ej vende
 Viltiens Trister,
 Bringe du Brand i
 Blodet atdrig.

I have given two translations of this Canto, one of which is an attempt to imitate the metre of the original, in which Œhlenschläger has successfully imitated the alliterative metre of the Icelandic poetry.

(1) Lassic; the liberty of using a Scottish word may well be allowed in a translation from the Danish, since there is so much affinity between the Danish and the Lowland Scotch languages.

NOTES TO THE TWELFTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Han sad i Hallen og taenkte derpaa,
 Hans Hævn ham glædte saa saare:
 Naar Eif sig nu freiter i blanken Na,
 Da faelder hun modige Taare.

(1) *By leck and by crout*: a common method of swearing among the Scandinavians to this day.

(2) *Bauta-sten* means a tombstone, or funeral monument.

(3) Odin's eye, i.e. the sun.

(4) By this description, the poet has probably meant to designate the fossile formations of the earth.

(5) The new hair made for Sif may possibly represent a meteor, comet, or shooting star, or perhaps *lightning*, as connected with thunder (Thor). Finn Magnussen thinks that, in this mythe, *Sif* typifies the *earth*, and her hair the *corn*, which is cut down by Lok (time), and reproduced and gilded by him at the instigation of Thor ; i.e. the electrical heat of summer ripening the corn.

I have adopted a similar metre to the original in my translation of this Canto, but with greater prodigality of rhyme, the middle rhymes being only used by the author in the nine last stanzas.

NOTES TO THE THIRTEENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Ud: Ddin ud med Hæmir drog,
 Og med Lofe, den Svend i Dyhav stærk ;
 De Mennefskiffelser dem paatog.
 (Vil du kende din Mand, prøv selv hans Værk.)
 Af at sidde paa Stol i Hidsfialfs Slot
 Var Ddin traet, den opmærksomme Drot ;
 Som Wandringsmand, i Skjggernes Løv
 Han aander, og føler selv sig Støv, etc.

In my translation of this Canto, I have adopted as a metre a stanza of eight lines, generally of ten syllables each, but admitting occasionally lines of eight or twelve syllables ; the arrangement of the rhymes is varied. It is in fact exactly the same metre as that adopted by Schiller, in his translation of the second and fourth Books of the *Æneis*, and by Wieland, in his poem of *Idris and Zenide*.

(1) Jarl: a title of nobility in Norway, corresponding to that of count; the English title, earl, is derived therefrom.

(2) This eagle is the giant Thiasse, who took that form, in order to get Asa-Lok into his power, and compel him to carry off Iduna, the guardian of the apples of immortality, from Asagard.

(3) *Alla lumaca*; so the Italians term that style of wreathing the hair.

NOTES TO THE FOURTEENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Som Vinden blaeser hen den lette Ek, .
 Saa svinder hver Bedrift i Evigheden; :
 Een Bølge sank, een reiser sig paa ny, .
 Og Kampen leger sefende med Freden;
 Snart blinke Svaerd, snart rusie de i Skeden.
 Hvad er det alt? Et fngtigt Gidgsemöde, :
 En Sommerfugl, som parred sig — og döde.

I much wished to adopt, as a metre for the translation of this Canto, the Spenserian stanza, but I found it too difficult. I therefore adopted a metre of my own invention, viz., a stanza of nine lines, eight of which have ten syllables, and the ninth, which rhymes with the sixth and eighth, has twelve. The arrangement of the rhyme is regular throughout, and it appears to me that this metre has something of the march and harmony of the Spenserian stanza.

(1) In this stanza the poet means probably to convey the idea, that whoever wishes to succeed in his profession, whatever it be, must aim at excellence and immortality.

(2) *Kattegat* means *Passage of the Cat*, so called from its danger, arising from the frequency of tempests. The poet begins here to trace the calamities and deterioration caused to the world by the absence of *Iduna*.

(3) *Yggdrassil*; see this name in the Alphabetical Catalogue. *Yggdrassil*, the mythological ash-tree, is called by the Scalds "the *tree of life*." There is a Christmas ceremony at this day in Germany, wherein an artificial tree, generally made of fir, bears on its branches various little presents for children, for which they draw lots. May not this tree trace its origin from *Yggdrassil*, the tree of life, which distributes to the human race their different lots?

The human race has often been compared by poets to a tree, and the generations of mankind to its leaves. Homer has,

Ὅμη τῶν φυλλῶν γενεή τοιγδ'εἰ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.

(4) Odin's ravens; their names are *Hugin* (thought), and *Munin* (memory). Finn Magnussen thus explains the mythe of the rape of *Iduna* by the giant *Thiasse*:

Iduna represents the mild air of spring, which gives renovated life and animation to all nature. *Thiasse* represents winter, and the carrying off of *Iduna* typifies the disappearance of all genial warmth at the approach of winter; her deliverance from the prison of *Thiasse* denotes the return of spring; *Thiasse* being burnt to death in the hale-fire of *Breidablik*, denotes the melting and disappearance of ice by the heat of the sun at the approach of summer. The rape and the deliverance of *Iduna* are both effectuated through the agency of *Asa-Lok*, who typifies time and its vacillating nature, now impelled to good, and now to evil.

NOTES TO THE FIFTEENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the original.

Da de høje Bathafs Guder
Blomfred end i Vestens Land,

Giernt i Aften paa Bierget,
 Naer det skionne Ginnistan;
 Sor de hid til Norden draeg,
 Mod den kolde Skippeblot,
 Hvor de stoge
 Zetter's Haer og Dvaergets Stof.

The metre I have adopted for my translation of this Canto is of my own invention; it may be thought fantastic, but in its trochaic form it has something of the march of the original. I leave the first, third, and fifth line unrhymed, with a double close.

(1) Vaner: see the article Vaner and Vanaheim in the Alphabetical Catalogue.

(2) Ginnistan; by Ginnistan is probably meant Persia or Armenia. My friend Dr. Constancio suggests to me, that the word may be derived from Zend, the actual name of a tribe of Curds, and signifying in Persian *life, living*, and figuratively *vigorous*. The word Zend, with the addition of *stan* (country, in Persian), comes very near the word Ginnistan.

(3) The circumstance of Niord being given as a hostage to the Asar pleads in favour of the hypothesis I have already given, namely, that Niord and his children Frey and Freya were Assyrian or Persian divinities, adopted by the Asar, and incorporated in their religion. Frey, the son of Niord, typifies the sun at the winter solstice, and the festivities of the new year in the pagan time were instituted to do him honour. His father Niord presides over the winds and waves; but Balder also typifies the sun (at its highest elevation), and Ægir is the god of the sea. The fact is, that in the Scandinavian mythology there are *two* sun-gods and *two* gods of the sea. The explanation of this seeming incongruity is not difficult. Among the Asar, Balder was the sun-god, and Ægir the god of the sea; but among the Vaner, Niord was the god of the winds and waves, Frey typified the sun, and his sister Freya the moon. When the political alliance took place between the Asar and the Vaner, the former adopted some of the divinities of the latter, and in consequence of this amalgama-

tion, Niord, Frey and Freya received suitable posts in the Gothic pantheon. It is remarkable, that among the ancient Egyptians the sun was called Phre. Among the Greeks, Bacchus often typified the sun, and by the Romans he was called Liber, which has exactly the same meaning as the word Frey, viz. *free*.

(4) By Niord's drying up marshes and dispelling vapours may be meant the salubrious effects of the north wind.

(5) Odur ; this description will remind the classical reader of Bacchus.

It seems to me that the appellation Goth was not known in Scandinavia previous to the invasion of the Asar, and that these last assumed the name of Goths (good and brave men), when they introduced their religion into that country. This idea leads me also to surmise, that as long as the Asar remained in Asia, the name Hrimthusser (frost-giant), and not Jetter or Jotun, was applied to the evil spirits of their mythology ; and that it was not until after their grand immigration into Scandinavia, under the command of the historical Odin, that the term Jetter or Jotun (which was the national appellation of the aborigenes of Scandinavia) was, in consequence of the long and bitter wars between the Asar and Jetter, and of the national hatred arising therefrom, applied by the Asar to those malevolent spirits, who, as they supposed, assisted their enemies, the Jetter. The self-love of all nations leads them to assume, that they are the favourites of the good gods, and that the evil spirits are the abettors, instigators, and coadjutors of their enemies ; and even in our time, as has been wittily remarked by Washington Irving, a number of the *good sort of people* in England, during the war against revolutionary France, thought that *somehow or other* God Almighty was on the side of the English government. As a further confirmation of my conjecture that the word Goth was unknown to the Scandinavian peninsula, until introduced there by the Asar, I cite the following passage from a Saga, written in the Icelandic or ancient Scandinavian tongue :

En dha voru dhessi lönd er Asia menn bygdu köllud Godlönd, en fólkid Godjod. Odin ok hans synir voru stórum vitrir ok fjölkunnigir, fagrir at

álitum, og sterkir át afli. Margir adrir i dheirra ætt voru miklir alburd-harmenn, með ymisligum algerleik, og nokkura af dheim tóku menn til at blóta og trúá á, ok kölludhu godh sin.

Translated thus :

Then this land, which Asia's people took possession of, was called God-land, and the people Godjod. Odin and his sons were very wise and skilled in many things, fair in aspect, and strong limbed. Many of their race were men of great strength and of divers perfections, and the people began to worship some of them, and call them their gods.

NOTES TO THE SIXTEENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the metre.

Mens Ydun var í Faengsel, sið Valhal som en Grav,
 En frugtbar Dee var øyflugt af bælmørken Hav,
 I Borgens øde Haller hver Gud sad i sin Braa,
 Og som en Marmelstøtte stivt hen for sig saae.

The metre I have adopted for the translation of this Canto is somewhat more regular than that of the original: mine is in lines of thirteen syllables each: a slight pause after the seventh syllable will give the rythm required.

(1) This Canto begins with a description of the fatal consequences of the absence of Iduna: all the pleasures of Valhalla are suspended. According to Finn Magnussen, the mythe of Skada's entry into Valhalla may be thus interpreted: Skada here typifies the violent winds and capricious temperature of the commencement of spring, which proceeds from winter, as Skada does from her father, the frost-giant Thiase. Though she enters

Valhalla with violent designs, she becomes pacified at the sight of Balder (the sun at the summer solstice). Thus doth spring, commencing with tempests, become appeased and calm, from the increasing heat of the sun at the beginning of summer. The English reader will be here reminded of the old English proverb: "Spring comes in like a lion, and goes out like a lamb."

(2) Hildur's favourite sport; i. e. war. See this name in the Catalogue.

(3) The story of the game of blind man's buff, called by the Northmen *blind cow*, in which Skada catches Niord, and is united to him in marriage, is borrowed from the prosaic Edda. I can find no satisfactory solution of this mythe; it may mean, however, that the spring weather, after much shuffling and shifting about, settles down at last into a mild serenity and constancy (during summer). But the matrimonial bliss of Niord and his consort will not be of long duration. Towards the autumnal equinox, Skada's capricious temper will break out, she will begin her mischievous pranks again, and set winds and waves by the ears as usual. Skada's catching Niord by the leg in the game of blind man's buff, may mean the force of a tempest, which sometimes lifts men off their legs.

NOTES TO THE SEVENTEENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the metre.

Dybt udi Fjeldhallen et Kammer blev han vaer ;
 En deilig Mød han vined paa Volstvene, klar :
 I føden Søvn hun slumred med stille Pigefind,
 Da Morgenrøden blomstred paa hendes Liliefind.

In my translation of this and of the two next Cantos, I have adopted, as a metre, the line of fourteen syllables.

(1) Of all the giant race, the Hrimthusser were reckoned the most ferocious, rough, and uncouth. The names of Horseleg and Goatbeard are humourously given by the poet to two of them, whom he represents as testifying their admiration of Gerda in a clownish and indelicate manner.

(2) That the Jotuns should appear to the Asar to be giants in size, and as having the heads of wolves, bears, etc., has been accounted for in my preface to this work, which I hope the reader will consult and bear in mind.

(3) This change was the consequence of the return of Iduna to Valhalla.

(4) In the original, *Blaamandsland* (blue man's land) : so Africa was called by the Scandinavians.

NOTES TO THE EIGHTEENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the metre.

Da itte dem imöde Freiers gode Efsvend,
 Vel Skirnir man ham nævner. Nu er hun her igjen,
 Til Guderne han raabte, da han dem kunde see,
 Nu Idun er i Valhal : endt er nu Ufernes Dæ!

The nature and attributes of all the gods and goddesses seated at the banquet of Valhalla, are so fully detailed in the text, that notes to this Canto are almost superfluous.

(1) Alludes to Skirnir's name, derived from *skirna* (to clear up, to brighten).

(2) Frey is sometimes called Freyr.

(3) By this the poet means, no doubt, that the pearl and coral divers,

from their being accustomed to remain for a long time under water, are less liable to be drowned than other people.

(4) By Ervin's minster is meant the steeple of the cathedral of Strasburgh, built by Ervin of Steinbach.

(5) The nature of the message given by Odin to Hermod has been already related in the 15th Canto.

NOTES TO THE NINETEENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the metre.

Fra Balastfialf gif Ddin nu i den næfste Hat ;
 Der vented ham Einheriar, de stod i tusindtal :
 Snn, den gode Vogterfse, vidt aabned Portens Støj,
 Da traadte mellem Kæmper Ddin den Herre saa høi.

(1) Starkodder was the greatest warrior of his time, and was deified after his death. His name was ever in the greatest veneration among the Scandinavians. Though he killed Oluf, he repented it ever afterwards, and in this poem the poet puts into Oluf's mouth the generous sentiment, that Starkodder, in killing him and making him die in blood, had perhaps saved him from dying by old age or sickness ; in which case, instead of being in Valhalla, he would have risked falling into the hands of Hela. According to the author of this work, Œhlenschläger (who has made Starkodder the subject of a most interesting tragedy), Oluf's death was revenged by his son Frode Frækne, who clove Starkodder's scull in single combat. In the above tragedy Frode, after killing Starkodder, renders ample justice to his military talent and exploits, and anticipates, in the following manner, his reception among the heroes of Valhalla :

“ Now he's a god ! at the command of Thor
 Five hundred forty massive gates of Trudvang,
 Each broad and long, and made of bronze, ope wide
 With fearful clang ; in brilliant armour clad
 Five hundred forty heroes from each gate
 Rush forth to meet him, and with loud applause
 Thus do they greet the chief : All hail ! Starkodder !
 Thou greatest after Tyr and Asa-Thor ! ”

(2) The purport of this message is explained in the twenty-first Canto. It was to obtain from the dwarfs a magic chain, wherewith to bind Fenris.

(3) This butting match between Asa-Lok and one of Thor's goats was no doubt suggested to the poet (for there is no account of it in either Edda) by the painting or mosaic found in Herculeum, I believe, or in Pompeii, and which has been made the subject of many a bas-relief, medallion, or cameo : viz. a satyr butting against a goat. To Æhlenschlæger may well be applied the line of Haley respecting Ariosto :

“ The bard of pathos now, and now of mirth ! ”

NOTES TO THE TWENTIETH CANTO.

Specimen of the metre.

Da Haffotte
 3 taette Stoffe
 Sva Dester rede,
 Med Svaerd af Egede, etc.

I have chosen the octosyllabic couplet for my translation. 7

The mythologic formation of the island of Sealand (of which Copenhagen is the present capital), and which forms the subject of this Canto, is thus given in the poetic Edda :

“ Gladly drew Gefion
 From the powerful Gyllfe
 Denmark’s annexation,
 So that it smoked after the springing oxen.
 Four heads and eight eyes
 Had the oxen, who drew
 The piece of earth after them,
 To form the favourite island.”

(1) The etymology of Sealand, called formerly and more properly *Œ-*
lund, is from the Danish words *sæ* (sea) and *lund* (grove).

(2) *Œresund* is the appellation for what other nations call the *Sound* par
 excellence ; for *sund* means a channel or strait.

NOTES TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CANTO.

In the original, this Canto is written in the classic hexameter, which
 seems to suit wonderfully well the Danish and Swedish languages.

Specimen of the metre.

Men da Naane bag Fjeld var flygtet, hæftig forfulgt af
 Naanegarm, den bevingede Trolde, som fiedse den ængstet,
 Meest usynlig for Menneskers Blif, dog stundum i Regnskyn
 Synlig som Ulv, naar i Dunsterne brun han viser sit Hoved.

I have given my translation in the ten syllabled heroic couplet.

(1) Horseleg and Goatbeard; names of the two giants mentioned in the 17th Canto as having behaved rudely to Gerda.

(2) Quaser in the Icelandic language signifies *breath or inspiration*. The story of Quaser is probably an oriental one of some poet, who was murdered by those who were jealous of his talents, and were *dwarfs in genius* compared to him.

(3) The story of the stone, which Odin casts among the giants to incite them to discord, resembles much a circumstance mentioned in the poem of Apollonius of Rhodes, called "The Argonauts" in the 3d Canto. "But the giants, springing from the furrows which he had traced, covered with their arms the field he had ploughed. Jason, returning, rushes toward them, and throws amongst them an enormous stone; many are crushed by it; others, disputing for its possession, slay one another." In fact, the amour of Odin with Gunliod has some sort of resemblance in the beginning to that of Jason and Medea.

NOTES TO THE TWENTY-SECOND CANTO.

Specimen of the metre.

Du Ungersvend, som suffer taus med blegen Kind,
 Fordi ei Freya signer dit Bryst,
 Fordi du ei kan böje stoffen Nages Eind, etc.

In stanzas of eight lines.

In my translation I have adopted the *ottava rima*.

(1) Freya's grief for the loss of Odur is related in the 15th Canto. Freya is often termed by the Scalds the "goddess of the golden tear."

NOTES TO THE TWENTY-THIRD CANTO.

Specimen of the metre.

Hu iſte Skirnir, hvad hau funde,
 Hled ad den ſkjønne Regnbuerand,
 Hen over Jordens dunkle Lunde,
 Da kom han til Troldſkaempeland.
 Det var ſom Vinden, Vejen over;
 Den ſigen Bom kan hyde Stov;
 Det var ſom Blæſt paa Havets Bover,
 Der'kruser Bølgeſ forte Tov.

In the metre I have adopted for this Canto, I have introduced occasionally anapests, for the sake of greater variety.

In this Canto the poet has diverged considerably from either Edda, and has boldly and felicitously sketched a plan of his own, into which, however, he has interwoven ideas taken from three different Cantos of the poetic Edda: viz *Harbard's song*; *Alvismal* (discourse of Alvis); *Skirnirſfor* (journey of Skirnir). In the first, Harbard's song, it is Thor, and not Skirnir, who enters into a dialogue with Harbard, whom he meets at the fiord. In the second, *Alvismal*, the subject of the Canto is a dialogue between Thor and the dwarf Alvis (all-wise), wherein the latter makes a pompous display of his learning, by giving definitions and synonimes of *earth*, *heaven*, *wind*, *fire*, nearly in the same manner that Skirnir does in this Canto. In the third, *Skirnir's journey*, wherein Skirnir is sent by Frey to propose marriage to Gerda, are mentioned the ferocious dogs which guard the dwelling of giant Gymer, the father of Gerda.

(1) Fiord means a creek or arm of the sea running inland; on the coast of Norway the fiords run for a very considerable distance inland; and thus flowing from the sea at the high tide form a contrast with the course of the rivers.

(2) The word *shoeless foot*, in the original *nægne Fot*, seems borrowed from the speech of Harbard to Thor, in Harbard's song in the poetic Edda, wherein he says,

Thou dost not look, as if thou
 Three domains possess'd ;
 * Bare-legged thou standest
 In beggar's apparel.

(3) The remarks on the females of the Jotun race seem likewise borrowed from the same chapter in the poetic Edda :

We had sprightly women,
 Were they but gentle ;
 We had clever women,
 Were they but fond of us.

(4) *Drypsal* means *Drippinghall*.

(5) *Opheim* means *abode above*.

(6) The original has *Svalhjetm* (cool helmet), and means a covering to protect the head against the rays of the sun ; I have therefore chosen the word *umbrella* as the most appropriate expression.

(7) Alludes to the difference between a fiord and a river.

(8) With respect to Gestur and his riddles, they are not to be found in the Edda ; but the poet has borrowed the idea from the Hervara Saga, wherein king Heidrek, who had a great talent for divining riddles and enigmas, had a great many proposed to him by Odin, under the disguise of the blind Gestur.

* Probably because Thor had taken off his shoes, in order to ford the stream.

Extract from the *Hervara Saga* in the original Icelandic, with a literal translation.

Heiman ek fór,	From home I went,
Heiman ek ferdadist ;	From home I travelled,
Sá ek á veg vega :	Saw I on way ways :
Vegr var undir ;	The way was under,
Vegr var yfir,	The way was over,
Ok ver gá alla :	And the way over all ;
Heidrekr kongr !	Heidrek king !
Hyggtu at gatú ?	Guessesst thou the riddle ?

Gód er gáta dhin,	Good is riddle thine,
Gestr blindi !	Gestur blind !
Gétit er dheirrar :	Guessed is it :
Fugl dhar yfir fló ;	Bird there over flew ;
Fiskr dhar undir svam	Fish there under swan
Fórtu á brú.	Thyself went on bridge

NOTES TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH CANTO.

* This Canto in the original is written in the classic hexameter.

Specimen.

Da nu Æfirnjé blev vaer den oyladtjólverne Laage,
 Hvor med kuffort Glands ham en Broes glatdamede Steenkul
 Weien viste ; da gif han derind ; og brat han befandt sig
 Atter i fri Luft. Himlen var blaa med utallige Stiernev, etc.

I have chosen for my translation our heroic couplet.

(1) The poet, in this line, alludes no doubt to the unclean food often used by the inhabitants of Finmark.

(2) This part of Gerda's speech reminds me of the discourse of the beautiful Marcela, in the XIV chapter, 2d book, part 1st of Don Quixote.

In this Canto the poet has diverged considerably from the chapter in the poetic Edda, called the Skirnistor, which treats of the same subject. In (Ehlenschläger's poem, as has been seen, Skirnir makes use of the most gentle and insinuating means of persuasion to induce Gerda to give ear to his proposal; and the stratagem of Frey's likeness conveyed from the brook into Gerda's basin is entirely the poet's own *conceit*, and it is, I think, a very ingenious one: whereas, in the Edda, Skirnir makes use of the most terrible threats and sinister predictions, in order to force Gerda to accede to his master's wishes; and at length he succeeds in terrifying her into submission: among other threats, which are not of the most decent nature, he tells her that she shall either be wedded to a frightful three-headed Goblin of the Hrimthussar race, or pine a maid, tormented with the most violent desires, which cannot be gratified.

NOTE TO THE TWENTY-FIFTH CANTO.

In the original, the metre of this Canto is written in imitation of one much used in the ancient Danish ballads, which, admitting a *refrain* that seems to have little or no connection with the substance of the ballad, continue it in every stanza throughout the piece. Here are *three different refrains* used in succession throughout the whole Canto, except in the two last stanzas.

Specimen.

Da Skirnir vaagned i næfite Gyn,

(Eolstraalen i Eftun þia bader)

Da stod med Bentfighed ved hans Ly
Biergtrolden i Vandserplader.

Som Gulbrandsdølen saa stærk og lang
(De Tugle quiddre paa Grene)

I Haanden bar han en sortbraendt Stang,
Dog stod han der ei allene.

Han fulgte trofelig den Datter huld ;
(Dugbraaben glindser paa Blommen)
Som Ranken omslynger den runkne Bul,
Hun var med Saderen kommen.

Et Baeger hun ind før Guden bar,
(Solstraalen i Ekken sig bader), etc.

I have followed exactly the same plan in my translation.

NOTE TO THE TWENTY-SIXTH CANTO.

This Canto in the original is written in the octosyllabic couplet. I have adopted the same metre for the translation.

Specimen of the metre.

Du blev der Fryd i Balhals Gaard
I sine Badmel, bløde Maar,
Den skønne Biergets Pige foer
Fra Sieldet og fra grønne Jord.
Ad Vifrost drog den unge Brud,
I Luften liig et Stjernefud.

(1) Gelion's strand is the island of Sealand.

NOTES TO THE TWENTY-SEVENTH CANTO.

Specimen of the metre in the original.

I Havel stander Deen :
 Nu Hæsen kun er tiden,
 Thi Bølgerne med Tiden
 Har pløiet den i Eiden ;
 Men stor i Oldtids Dage
 Den knejfed høi og brat,
 Og trodsed Nordens Drage,
 Det sorte Sættegat.

The subject of this Canto is taken from the celebrated chapter in the poetic Edda, called “Ægir’s feast” or “Lok’s scurrility,” to account for the origin, object and meaning of which, has puzzled all the commentators of the Edda. The most simple *éclaircissement* thereof seems to be that of Finn Magnussen, who thinks that the author of it may have been a sort of Scandinavian Lucian, who wished to throw a sly ridicule on the gods of his country. Ehlenschläger has varied, augmented, and embellished the subject with imagery and embroidery of his own, and has omitted certain parts of somewhat too obscene a nature.

(1) Skidbladner, name of the bark given by Gerda to Frey. The following is probably the explanation of this mythe. Frey signifies the sun ; Gerda, the earth. Skidbladner signifies the clouds or vapours extracted from the earth by the rays of the sun. See Skidbladner in the Alphabetical Catalogue.

(2) Hringhorn ; name of Balder’s bark. The language of the ancient Scandinavians was highly poetical and metaphorical. A ship was often compared to an animal, and its masts to the horns of the said animal ; the masts were made fast with iron rings round their circumference, and this I take to be the surest etymology of the word Hringhorn or Ringhorn. The ships of the Vikings were long and deep, and had usually but one mast.

(3) *Naglefare* : See the Catalogue.

(4) It seems to me as if the author has taken this idea from the account given in Cook's voyages of the women of Otaheite swimming off from the shore to the ship, to look out for lovers among the sailors.

(5) I here acknowledge a plagiarism from Dryden, in his quaint translation of the *Novimus et qui te* in the Third Bucolic of Virgil.

(6) Alludes to Thor and his companions' adventure related in the Second Canto.

NOTES TO THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CANTO.

The metre in the original is in couplets as follows :

Hen Lofe fidd i Havet, som Drom, flimmet blaa,
 Alle de faele Syner han klart paa Dybet saae.
 Han strakte sig med Angesi, han bugted sig med Til.
 Paa Kyften fulgte Bonden med Dejet ham en Mill.

The metre I have adopted for the translation of this Canto is the couplet of lines of fourteen syllables occasionally interspersed with couplets of thirteen syllables. In reading the latter, a pause should be made after the seventh syllable. This metre resembles that of the original, and has much of its prosaic and familiar march. This Canto and the next are based on the chapter of the poetic Edda, called *Thrymsqvida*.

(1) King Hro founded the town of Roeskild, situate where Leire once stood. Roeskild is about twenty-five English miles distant W. from Copenhagen, and has a magnificent cathedral, which is the cemetery of the Danish kings.

- (2) *Kongebo*, means royal residence or palace.
- (3) *Giants' bane*, in Icelandic *Jötun báni*, name given by the Scalds to Thor, on account of his constant enmity towards the giants.

NOTES TO THE TWENTY-NINTH CANTO.

Specimen of the metre in the original.

Ku Uafhor
 Med Lofe foer
 Paa Gyldenfarm
 Til Sielbers Steen;
 Dg Lofe sad
 I Hierlet glad
 Ved Gudens Harm,
 Til Jellers Meen.

Saa reiste de frem medens Kløppen skialv,
 Med en gabende Kløft Steenbierget sprak,
 Dg den Hule saa sort kun aabned sig halv,
 Dg en Lue med Guñi giennem Mulmet traf.

I have adopted for the translation of this Canto a metre, alternatively trochaic and anapestic.

(1) It was the custom, at the marriage ceremony of the ancient Scandinavians in the pagan time, for the betrothed to swear fidelity to each other, in touching the hammer of Thor. May not this account for the ceremony of marriage at Gretna-green being always performed by a blacksmith? The lowland Scots are of Scandinavian origin, and they have preserved many a custom and many a superstition of their ancestors.

(2) Respecting Hrugner and Mokkurcalf, please to consult the Alphabetical Catalogue.

The following explanation of the foregoing mythe is given by the Swedish poet Ling :

The loss of Thor's hammer, and its remaining *eight miles* under ground in the hands of Thrymur the frost giant, denotes the impotence or inactivity of the *electrical fluid* during the eight months' winter of the northern regions. The invitation of Thrymur to Freya typifies the struggle of nature at the approach of spring, to renew its vitality.

Stuhr's opinion of this mythe is much the same as that of Ling. He thinks it to be a hymn in honour of spring, typified by Freya. Thor borrows Freya's attire, i. e. in spring the electrical heat resumes its force. Thor travels with Loptur (the air) to Thrymur. They are furnished with a copious repast; i. e. at the approach of and by the influence of spring, the unfruitfulness of the earth ceases. When Asa-Lok speaks of the *eight nights* of longing passed by the pretended Freya, it means the progressive changes undergone by the polar atmosphere during the eight winter months, before the heat finally obtains the mastery. The immense appetite and quantity of mead drunk by Thor denote the absorption of the earth's vapours by the electrical fire of summer, and the death of Thrymur denotes the total disappearance of winter. It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader, that Miölner, the hammer of Thor, typifies, almost everywhere, thunder, or the electrical fire and its effects.

In the Greek poem of Nonnus, called the *Dionysiaca*, or *Actions of Bacchus*, we find a mythe having no doubt the same signification as that of the *Thrymsqvída*. Jupiter at the approach of winter loses his thunderbolts, which fall into the hands of the giant Typhon. He recovers them in spring, by means of a stratagem of Cadmus, and soon after makes use of them to discomfit and slay the giant Typhon.

NOTE TO THE THIRTIETH CANTO.

In the original this Canto is written in *terza rima* as follows.

Da Thor nu stille sad, og endt var Kampen,
 Da steg en langsom Røg af Jetteblodet,
 Og hvid og tyk opløftede sig Dampen.

Da skjælvend Løse brat og tabte Nødet, etc.

Besides the difficulty of the *terza rima*, it is a metre not very well suited to the genius of the English language. I have, therefore, given my translation of this Canto in blank verse, following the example of Carey in his version of Dante.

The subject of this Canto seems taken partly from some strophes in the *Voluspá*, and partly from the *Vaftrudnismál*, which are the names of two of the most important chapters of the poetic Edda.

(1) *Gugner*, name of Odin's lance.

This Canto does not require notes, but as it may amuse the reader to compare the history of the destruction and reproduction of the world with the account thereof given in the Edda, I here subjoin some extracts from the two chapters above mentioned, following Finn Magnussen's translation. I think the reader will remark some resemblance between certain parts of this Canto and certain parts of the Apocalypse. The battle between Thor and the Serpent *Jormungard* is not unlike the combat between the Archangel Michael and the great dragon; and the palace of *Gimle*, the future abode of the blessed, presents an image of the new Jerusalem.

EXTRACTS FROM THE VAFTRUDNISMAL

(DISCOURSE OF VAFTRUDNER).

The wolf (Fenris) shall swallow up
 The father of time (Odin);
 But Vidar shall avenge him,
 And tear the monster's jaws asunder.

A daughter shall be born
 Of the old sun,*
 Before Fenris swallows her up :
 After the fall of the gods
 The daughter shall travel
 On the same course as her mother did.

Lif and Liftrasir
 Remain conceal'd in the wood (Hoddmimer);
 They are nourished by the morning dew,
 And from them the new race shall spring.

When the fire (of Surtur) shall be extinguish'd,
 Vidar shall construct anew
 The dwellings of the gods.

Then finally shall peace
 Succeed to the long strife.

* The sun is feminine in the Gothic languages.

EXTRACTS FROM THE VOLUSPA

(VALA'S PROPHECY).

Loud howls the monster (the dog Garm)
 At the cavern of Gnypa ;
 The wolf (Fenris) shall break his chain.

Brother shall fight with brother
 And slay each other :
 The bonds of affection and parentage
 Shall be rent asunder :
 Evil reigns in the world ;
 Libldinous excess triumphs ;
 The sword, the axe
 Shall be in constant employ :
 Shields shall be cloven ;
 Times of tempest, of wolfish ferocity,
 Before the world finally ends ;
 No man shall spare his neighbour.

Naglefar moves forward
 With keel gliding from the East ;
 Lok steers it.

Surtur compelling flames
 Advances from the south !

The earth sinks into the deep !
 The stars disappear from heaven !

Volumes of fire and smoke
 Consume the all-nourishing tree (Yggdrassil) !
 Flames mounting on high
 Consume heaven itself.

And behold arises a second time
 The earth from the sea !

The Asar shall meet again
 On the plains of Ida ;
 There shall again
 Wonderful tablets of gold
 Be found in the grass.

Fields unsown
 Shall produce corn ;
 All evil vanish ;
 Balder return ;
 He and Hœdur shall dwell
 In Odin's holy abode.

A palace is seen
 Brighter than the sun
 Roof'd with gold
 Standing on Gimle !
 Therein shall dwell
 Virtuous people,
 And enjoy happiness
 For ever and ever !

ETYMOLOGIES OMITTED IN THE CATALOGUE.

Lok from *loeka* (to tempt).

Hofvarpur, name of the steed of Gna, from *hof* (hoof), *hvarpa* (to throw out).

CONTENTS.

Canto.	Page.
1 Thor sets out on an adventure with Lok.	1
2 Spells upon the heath.	16
3 Thor arrives in Helheim.	35
4 Thor arrives in Utgard	45
5 Magic spells in Utgard.	57
6 The spells unravelled.	81
7 The return home	92
8 Thor visits the giant Hymir.	102
9 Thor's fishing adventure.	117
10 Lok becomes enamoured of Sif.	122
11 Conversation between Lok and Sif	128
12 Lok procures things of value from the dwarfs	138
13 The rape of Iduna	147
14 The deliverance of Iduna.	166
15 The Vaner	180
16 The nuptials of Skada.	190
17 The amour of Frey	196
18 Joy in Valhalla	204
19 The Einherier.	213
20 Bragur's song in honour of Gefion.	221
21 Conversation between Skirnir and Frey.	227
22 Frey's plaint at the fountain.	242
23 The journey of Skirnir	241
24 Gerda's love.	262
25 Skirnir fulfills his errand.	273
26 The wolf Fenris and Tyr.	279
27 The banquet of Ægir	289
28 Lok's treachery	313
29 The hammer of Thor recovered	330
30 The Vala's prophecy	341

The reader, before he begins the work, is respectfully requested to correct the following

ERRATA.

Page.	Line.	
XXXVIII	4	<i>from bottom, for he read the.</i>
XLVI	12	<i>from top, for threwherself read threw herself.</i>
LXIII	12	<i>from top, for incolour read in colour.</i>
25	4	<i>from top, for hem read them.</i>
36	5	<i>from top, for toads read toads.</i>
110	2	<i>from top, for ofthe read of the.</i>
129	4	<i>from bottom, for careerpursues read career pursues.</i>
142	11	<i>from top, for owesubmission read owe submission.</i>
194	5	<i>from bottom, for ts read Its.</i>
206	6	<i>from bottom, after bloom inscrt all.</i>
259	11	<i>from top, for while read white.</i>
326	2	<i>from bottom, for At housaud read A thousand.</i>







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