

the customs of Troy, he selected twelve men to administer the law of the land. In this way he organized the laws as they had been in Troy, in the manner to which the Turks were accustomed.

Then he went north, continuing until he reached the ocean, which people believed surrounded all lands. There, in what is now called Norway, he placed his son in power. This son was named Saeming, and Norway's kings, as well as its jarls and other important men of the kingdom, trace their descent to him, as it is told in *Haleygjatal*.² Odin also had with him his son named Yngvi, who after him became a king in Sweden, and from whom those kinsmen called the Ynglings are descended.

The Æsir and some of their sons married women from the lands where they settled, and their families increased. They spread throughout Saxland and from there throughout all the northern regions so that their language – that of the men of Asia – became the native tongue in all these lands. People think, because the names of their ancestors are recorded in genealogies, they can show that these names were part of the language that the Æsir brought here to the northern world – to Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Saxland. In England, however, some names of ancient regions and places lead one to believe that the names originally came from another language.

GYLFAGINNING (THE DELUDING OF GYLFI)

I. KING GYLFI AND THE WOMAN GEFJUN

King Gylfi ruled over the lands now called Sweden. It is said that he offered a travelling woman, in return for the pleasure of her company, a piece of ploughland in his kingdom as large as four oxen could plough in a day and a night. But this woman, named Gefjun, was of the Æsir. She took four oxen from Jotunheim [Giant Land] in the north. They were her own sons by a giant, and she yoked them to the plough, which dug so hard and so deep that it cut the land loose. The oxen dragged this land westward out to sea, stopping finally at a certain channel. There Gefjun fastened the land and gave it the name Sjaelland.¹ The place where the land was removed has since become a body of water in Sweden now called Logrinn [the Lake],² and in this lake there are as many inlets as there are headlands in Sjaelland. So says the poet Bragi the Old:

Gefjun dragged from Gylfi
gladly the land beyond value,
Denmark's increase,
steam rising from the swift-footed bulls.
The oxen bore eight
moons of the forehead and four heads,
hauling as they went in front of
the grassy isle's wide fissure.

2. GYLFI ENCOUNTERS THE THREE CHIEFTAINS OF THE ÆSIR¹

King Gylfi was a wise man skilled in magic. He was amazed that the Æsir knew so much that everything went according to their wishes. He wondered whether this was because of their own nature or whether it came from the divine power of the gods they worshipped. He set out on a secret trip to Asgard and changed into the likeness of an old man to disguise himself. But the Æsir, because they had the gift of prophecy, were the wiser in such matters. Before his arrival they foresaw his coming and, in preparation for him, they conjured up visual illusions.² When he entered the fortress, he saw a hall. It was so high that he could scarcely see over it, and golden shields covered its roof like shingles. As Thjodolf of Hvin³ says, Valhalla [Hall of the Slain] was roofed with shields:

On their backs they let shine
hall shingles of Svafnir [Odin],
when bombarded with stones,
those resourceful men.

Gylfi saw a man in the doorway of the hall. He was juggling short swords and had seven in the air at once. The man spoke first, asking the visitor's name. Gylfi named himself Gangleri, saying that he had travelled over trackless paths. He asked for a night's lodging and inquired who owned the hall. The man answered that it belonged to their king.

'I can take you to see him; then you can ask him his name yourself.' The man then turned and went ahead into the hall. Gylfi followed him and immediately the door closed after him. He saw many living areas there and groups of people. Some were playing games, some were drinking, and some had weapons and were fighting. He looked around, and it seemed to him that much of what he was seeing was incredible. Then he said:

'All doorways
before entering
gaze into carefully;
one never knows
where on the benches
enemies are sitting.'

(Sayings of the High One. 1)

He saw three thrones, each one higher than the other. Three men sat there, one in each seat. He asked the name of their ruler. The man guiding him replied that the king was in the lowest of the high seats; he was called High. Next came the one called Just-as-High, while the one highest up was called Third.⁴

Then High asked the new arrival if there was some more pressing cause of his visit, although he was welcome to food and drink as were all in the hall of the High One. Gylfi replied that he wanted to know first whether there was a wise man in the hall. High said that Gylfi would not escape unharmed unless he grew wiser, adding:

'Stand forward while you inquire;
The one who recounts shall sit.'

3. THE ALL-FATHER

Gangleri began to question: 'Who is the highest or the oldest of all the gods?'

High replied, 'He is called All-Father in our language, but in Asgard the Old, he has twelve names: one is All-Father, a second is Herran or Herjan [Lord], a third is Nikar or Hnikar [Thruster], a fourth is Nikuz or Hnikud [Thruster], a fifth is Fjolnir [Wise One], a sixth Oski [Fulfiller of Desire], a seventh Omi [Resounding One], an eighth Biflidi or Biflindi [Spear Shaker], a ninth Svidar, a tenth Svidrir, an eleventh Vidrir [Ruler of Weather] and a twelfth Jalg or Jalk [Gelding].'

Then Gangleri asked, 'Where is this god? What is he capable of doing and what outstanding deeds has he done?'

High replied, 'He lives through all ages and governs all things in his realm. He decides all matters, great or small.'

Then Just-as-High said, 'He made heaven, earth and the skies and everything in them.'

Then Third said, 'Most important, he created man and gave him a living spirit that will never die, even if the body rots to dust or burns to ashes. All men who are righteous shall live and be with him in that place called Gimle or Vingolf. But evil men go to Hel¹ and from there into Niflhel² [Dark Hel], which is below in the ninth world.'

Gangleri then asked: 'What did he do before heaven and earth were created?'

High answered, 'Back then, he was with the frost giants.'

4. NIFLHEIM AND MUSPELLSHEIM

Gangleri asked, 'What was the beginning, or how did things start? What was there before?'

High answered, 'As it says in *The Sibyl's Prophecy*:

Early of ages
when nothing was.
There was neither sand nor sea
nor cold waves.
The earth was not found
nor the sky above.
Ginnungagap¹ was there,
but grass, nowhere.' (*The Sibyl's Prophecy*. 3)

Next Just-as-High said, 'Niflheim [Dark World] was made many ages before the earth was created, and at its centre is the spring called Hvergelmir [Roaring Kettle]. From there flow those rivers called Svol, Gunnthra, Fjorm, Fimbulthul, Slid and Hrid, Sylg and Ylg, Vid and Leiptr. Also there is Gjoll, which lies next to Helgrind [Gates of Hel].'

Then Third said, 'First, however, there was that world in the southern region which is called Muspell.² It is bright and hot.'

That region flames and burns and is impassable for foreigners and those who cannot claim it as their native land. Surt [Black One] is the name of he who waits there at the land's edge to defend it. He has a flaming sword, and when the end of the world comes, he will set off to battle and defeat all the gods, burning the whole world with fire. So it is said in *The Sibyl's Prophecy*:

Surt comes from the south
with the fiery destruction of branches.
The sun shines from the sword
of the gods of the slain.
Stone cliffs tumble
and troll witches stumble.³
Men tread the Road to Hel
as the sky splits apart.' (*The Sibyl's Prophecy*. 52)

5. GINNUNGAGAP AND THE EMERGENCE OF YMIR

Gangleri asked: 'How were things set up before the different families came into being and mankind increased?'

High replied, 'When those rivers, which are called Elivagar [Storm Waves], came so far from their source, the poisonous flow hardened like a slag of cinders running from a furnace, and became ice. When this ice began to solidify and no longer ran, poisonous drops spewed out and froze into icy rime [hoarfrost]. Then layer by layer, the ice grew within Ginnungagap.'

Then Just-as-High said, 'That part of Ginnungagap, which reached into the northern regions, became filled with thick ice and rime. Inside the gap there was mist and wind-whipped rain. But the southern part of Ginnungagap grew light because of sparks and glowing embers flowing from Muspellsheim.'

Then Third spoke: 'Just as coldness and all things grim came from Niflheim, the regions bordering on Muspell were warm and bright, and Ginnungagap was as mild as a windless sky. It

thawed and dripped at the point where the icy rime and the warm winds met. There was a quickening in these flowing drops and life sprang up, taking its force from the power that sent the heat. The likeness of a man appeared and he was named Ymir. The frost giants call him Aurgelmir, and from him come the clans of the frost giants, as it says in *The Shorter Sibyl's Prophecy*:

All the seeresses¹ are
from Vidolf,
all the wizards
from Vilmeid,
but the sorcerers are
from Svarthofdi
and all the giants
come from Ymir. (*The Lay of Hyndla. 33*)

'Here as the giant Vafthrudnir says:

From where Aurgelmir first came,
the wise giant,
among sons of giants.

When poison from Elivagar
splashed out in drops
it grew until forming a giant,
from there all our clans
have come;
therefore they are all so cruel.'

(*The Lay of Vafthrudnir. 30-31*)

Then Gangleri asked, 'How did the families grow from that point or how did it come about that others came into being? And do you believe that the one whom you were just talking about is a god?'

High answered: 'In no way do we accept him as a god. He was evil, as are all his descendants; we call them frost giants. It is said that as he slept he took to sweating. Then, from under his left arm² grew a male and a female, while one of

his legs got a son with the other. From here came the clans that are called the frost giants. The old frost giant, him we call Ymir.'

6. THE PRIMEVAL COW AUDHUMLA, YMIR AND THE BIRTH OF ODIN

Gangleri asked, 'Where did Ymir live, and what did he live on?'

'Next it happened that as the icy rime dripped, the cow called Audhumla was formed. Four rivers of milk ran from her udders, and she nourished Ymir.'

Then Gangleri asked, 'On what did the cow feed?'

High replied, 'She licked the blocks of ice, which were salty. As she licked these stones of icy rime the first day, the hair of a man appeared in the blocks towards the evening. On the second day came the man's head, and on the third day, the whole man. He was called Buri, and he was beautiful, big and strong. He had a son called Bor, who took as his wife the woman called Bestla. She was the daughter of Bolthorn the giant, and they had three sons. One was called Odin, another Vili and the third Ve. It is my belief that this Odin and his brothers are the rulers of heaven and earth. We know that is his name, and it is what we call the one whom we know to be the greatest and the most renowned, and you too can easily call him that.'

7. BERGELMIR AND THE APPEARANCE OF THE SECOND RACE OF FROST GIANTS

Then Gangleri asked, 'How did they get on together? Who among them was the most powerful?'

'The sons of Bor killed the giant Ymir,' answered High. 'When he fell, so much blood gushed from his wounds that with it they drowned all the race of the frost giants except for one who escaped with his household. The giants call that one

Bergelmir. He, together with his wife, climbed up on to his wooden box,¹ and there they kept themselves safe. From them come the races of the frost giants, as is said here:

Countless winters²
before the earth was created
back then Bergelmir was born;
that is the first I remember
when the wise giant
was placed on the box.'

(*The Lay of Vafthrudnir*. 35)

8. THE WORLD IS CREATED FROM YMIR'S BODY

Gangleri answered, 'What did Bor's sons do next, if you believe they are gods?'

High said, 'It is no small matter to be told. They took Ymir and they moved him into the middle of Ginnungagap and made from him the world. From his blood they made the sea and the lakes. The earth was fashioned from the flesh, and mountain cliffs from the bones. They made stones and gravel from the teeth, the molars and those bones that were broken.'

Then Just-as-High said, 'With the blood that gushed freely from the wounds, they made the sea, and by fashioning that sea around, they belted and fastened the earth. Most men would think it impossible to cross over this water.'

Then Third added: 'They also took his skull and from it made the sky. They raised it over the earth and under each of the four corners they placed a dwarf. These are called East, West, North and South. Then they took the embers and sparks shooting out from Muspellsheim and flying randomly. These they placed in the middle of the Ginnung Sky, both above and below, to light up heaven and earth. They fixed places for all these burning elements. Some were placed up in the heavens, whereas for others, which had moved about under the heavens, they found

places and established their courses. It is said in the old sources that, from then on, times of day were differentiated and the course of years was set. So it is said in *The Sibyl's Prophecy*:

Sun did not know
where she had her home.
Moon did not know
what strength he had.
The stars did not know
where their places were. (*The Sibyl's Prophecy*. 5)

'This was before the earth was created,' Third added.

Then Gangleri said, 'I hear of great happenings. It was wondrous work and skilfully done, but how was the earth set in order?'

Then High answered: 'It is circular around the edge and surrounding it lies the deep sea. On these ocean coasts, the sons of Bor gave land to the clans of the giants to live on. But further inland they built a fortress wall around the world to protect against the hostility of the giants. As material for the wall, they used the eyelashes¹ of the giant Ymir and called this stronghold Midgard² [Middle Earth]. They took his brain, threw it up into the air, and from it they made the clouds. As is said here:

From Ymir's flesh
was the earth created,
from the bloody sweat, the sea,
cliffs from bones,
trees from hair,
and from the head, the heavens;

And from his eyelashes
the gentle gods made
Midgard for the sons of men;
and from his brains
all the oppressive
clouds were formed.'

(*The Lay of Grimnir*. 40-41)

9. MEN ARE CREATED AND ASGARD IS BUILT. THE ALL-FATHER SEES EVERYTHING

Then Gangleri said, 'It seems to me that they accomplished great things when the earth and the sky were made, the sun and the moon set in their places and the days divided. But the people who inhabit the world, where did they come from?'

Then High answered, 'The sons of Bor were once walking along the seashore and found two trees. They lifted the logs and from them created people. The first son gave them breath and life; the second, intelligence and movement; the third, form, speech, hearing and sight.¹ They [Bor's sons] gave them clothing and names. The man was called Ask [Ash Tree] and the woman, Embla [Elm or Vine]. From them came mankind and they were given a home behind Midgard's wall.'

High said: 'Next they made a stronghold for themselves in the middle of the world, and it was called Asgard. We call it Troy. There the gods lived together with their kinsmen, and as a result many events and happenings took place both on the earth and in the sky. One place there is called Hlidskjalf [Watchtower]. When Odin sat in its high seat, he could see through all worlds and into all men's doings. Moreover, he understood everything he saw. His wife was called Frigg, Fjorgyn's daughter, and from this family has come the kindred we call the family of the Æsir. They lived in Old Asgard and the realms that belong to it; each member of this family is divine. For these reasons he can be referred to as All-Father, since he is the father of all the gods and men and of everything that has been accomplished by his power. Earth was his daughter² and his wife. With her he had his first son, and this is Asa-Thor [Thor of the Æsir]. He has strength and might, and because of this, he defeats all living creatures.'

10. NIGHT AND DAY

'A giant called Norfi or Narfi lived in Giant Land. He had a daughter named Night, who was black and swarthy like her kinsmen. She was married first to the man called Naglfari; their son was named Aud [Wealth]. Next she was married to Annar [Second]. Their daughter was named Earth. Finally she married Delling, who was from the family of the gods. Their son was Day, and he was as bright and beautiful as his father's people. Then All-Father took Night and her son Day. He gave them two horses and two chariots and placed them in the sky to ride around the earth every twenty-four hours. Night rides first with the horse called Hrimfaxi [Frost Mane], and every morning foam from the horse's bit sprinkles the earth. Day's horse is called Skinfaxi [Shining Mane], and with its mane it lights up all the sky and the earth.'

11. SUN AND MOON

Then Gangleri said, 'How does he steer the course of the sun and the moon?'

High said: 'There was a man named Mundilfari who had two children. They were so fair and beautiful that he called one Moon [Mani] and the other, a daughter, he called Sun [Sol], marrying her to the man named Glen. But the gods were angered by this arrogance, and they took the brother and sister and placed them up in the heavens. There they made Sun drive the horses that drew the chariot of the sun, which the gods, in order to illuminate the worlds, had created from burning embers flying from Muspellsheim. The horses are called Arvak and Alsvinn. In order to cool them, the gods placed two bellows under their shoulders; according to some lore, the bellows are called Isarnkol. Mani guides the path of the moon and controls its waxing and waning. He took from the earth two children named Bil and Hjuki. They had been walking from the well called Byrgir, carrying between them on their shoulders the

pole called Simul with the pail called Soeg. Vidfinn was the name of their father. These children follow Mani, as can be seen from the earth.'

12. THE WOLVES

Then Gangleri asked, 'The sun moves quickly and it is almost as though she fears something. She cannot go faster on her journey even if she were afraid of her own death.'

Then High answered, 'It is not surprising that she moves with such speed. The one chasing her comes close, and there is no escape for her except to run.'

'Who is chasing her?' asked Gangleri.

High said, 'There are two wolves, and the one who is chasing her is called Skoll. He frightens her, and he eventually will catch her. The other is called Hati Hrodvitnisson. He runs in front of her trying to catch the moon. And, this will happen.'

Then Gangleri asked, 'Of what family are the wolves?'

High replied, 'An ogress lives to the east of Midgard in the forest called Jarnvid [Iron Wood]. The troll women who are called the Jarnvidjur [the Iron Wood Dwellers] live in that forest. The old ogress bore many giant sons, all in the likeness of wolves, and it is from here that these wolves come. It is said that the most powerful of this kin will be the one called Managarm [Moon Dog]. He will gorge himself with the life of all who die, and he will swallow the moon,¹ spattering blood throughout the sky and all the heavens. Because of this, the sun will lose its brightness while the winds will turn violent, roaring in from all directions. So it is said in *The Sibyl's Prophecy*:

In the East the old one lives²
in Iron Wood
and there she bears
Fenrir's brood [the wolves].

From all of them comes
one in particular,
the ruin of the moon
in the shape of a troll.

He gorges himself on the life
of doomed men,
reddens the gods' dwelling
with crimson gore.

Dark goes the sunshine,
for summers after,
the weather all vicious.

Do you know now or what?'

(*The Sibyl's Prophecy*. 40-41)

13. BIFROST [THE RAINBOW BRIDGE]

Then Gangleri said, 'What is the path from the earth to the sky?'

Then, snickering, High answered: 'Your question shows little knowledge. Haven't you heard that the gods built a bridge from the earth to the sky and it is called Bifrost? You will have seen it, and possibly you call it the rainbow. It has three colours and great strength, and it is made with more skill and knowledge than other constructions. Sturdy though it is, it will break when the sons of Muspell ride over it [at Ragnarok]. Then their horses will swim across great rivers and so they will advance.'

Then Gangleri said, 'Since they can do whatever they wish, it seems to me that the gods did not build the bridge reliably if it will break.'

High replied, 'The gods deserve no blame for the construction. Bifrost is a sound bridge, but nothing in this world can be trusted when the sons of Muspell attack.'

14. ASGARD AND THE ORIGIN OF THE DWARVES

Then Gangleri said: 'What did All-Father do, once Asgard was built?'

High replied, 'In the beginning he assigned rulers, asking them to judge with him people's fate and to oversee the arrangements of the stronghold. This was done at the place called Idavoll [Eternally Renewing Field] in the middle of the stronghold.¹ Their first task was to build the temple where they placed their seats – twelve in addition to All-Father's throne. That building is the best and the largest on earth. Outside and inside everything seems to be made of gold, and the place is called Gladsheim [Home of Joy]. They built a second hall, a sanctuary, which belonged to the goddesses,² and it was exceptionally beautiful. People call this building Vingolf [Friendly Quarters].

'Next they set up forges and made hammer, tongs and anvil, and with these they fashioned all other tools. Following this, they worked metal, stone, wood and great quantities of gold, such that all their furniture and household utensils were of gold. That age is called the Golden Age before it was spoiled by the arrival of the women who came from Giant Land.³

'Next the gods took their places on their thrones. They issued their judgments and remembered where the dwarves had come to life in the soil under the earth, like maggots in flesh. The dwarves emerged first, finding life in Ymir's flesh. They were maggots at that time, but by a decision of the gods they acquired human understanding and assumed the likeness of men, living in the earth and the rocks. Modsognir was a dwarf and Durin another. So it says in *The Sibyl's Prophecy*:

Then all the powerful gods went
to their thrones of fate,
the most sacred gods, and
decided among themselves
that a troop of dwarves

should be created
from the waves of blood⁴
and from Blain's limbs.
There in men's likeness
were made many
dwarves in the earth,
as Durin said. (*The Sibyl's Prophecy*. 9–10)

'And these, says the prophets, are the names of these dwarves:

Nyi, Nidi,
Nordri, Sudri,
Austri, Vestri,
Althjolf, Dvalin,
Nar, Nain,
Niping, Dain,
Bifur, Bafur,
Bombor, Nori,
Ori, Onar,
Oin, Modvitnir,
Vig and Gandalf,
Vindalf, Thorin,
Fili, Kili,
Fundin, Vali,
Thror, Throin,
Thekk, Lit, Vitr,
Nyr, Nyrad,
Rekk, Radvinn. (*The Sibyl's Prophecy*. 11–13)

'But these, too, are dwarves and they live in the rocks, whereas those mentioned before live in the ground:⁵

Draupnir, Dolgthvari,
Haur, Hugstari,
Hledjolf, Gloin,
Dori, Ori,

Duf, Andvari,
 Heptifili,
 Har, Siar. (*The Sibyl's Prophecy. 13 and 15*⁶)

'These came from Svarin's mound to Joruvellir [Pebble Plains] at Aurvangar [Mud Fields], and Lofar is descended from them. These are their names:

Skirpir, Virpir,
 Skafinn, Ai,
 Alf, Ingi,
 Eikinskjalldi,
 Fal, Frosti,
 Finn, Ginnar.' (*The Sibyl's Prophecy. 15-16*)

15. THE ASH YGGDRASIL, THE NORNS AND THE THREE WELLS

Then Gangleri said, 'Where is the central or holy place of the gods?'

High answered, 'It is at the ash Yggdrasil. There each day the gods hold their courts.'

Then Gangleri asked, 'What is there to tell about that place?'

Then Just-as-High said, 'The ash is the largest and the best of all trees. Its branches spread themselves over all the world, and it stands over the sky. Three roots support the tree and they are spread very far apart. One is among the Æsir. A second is among the frost giants where Ginnungagap once was. The third reaches down to Niflheim, and under this root is the well Hvergelmir; but Nidhogg [Hateful Striker] gnaws at this root from below.

'Under the root that goes to the frost giants is the Well of Mimir. Wisdom and intelligence are hidden there, and Mimir is the name of the well's owner. He is full of wisdom because he drinks of the well from the Gjallarhorn.¹ All-Father went there and asked for one drink from the well, but he did not get

this until he gave one of his eyes as a pledge. As it says in *The Sibyl's Prophecy*:

Odin, I know all,
 where you hid the eye
 in that famous
 Well of Mimir.
 Each morning
 Mimir drinks mead
 from Val-Father's pledge.
 Do you know now or what?

(*The Sibyl's Prophecy. 28*)

'The third root of the ash is in heaven, and under that root is the very holy well called the Well of Urd. There the gods have their place of judgment. Every day the Æsir ride up over Bifrost, which is also called Asbru [Bridge of the Æsir]. The horses of the Æsir are named as follows: Sleipnir [Fast Traveller] is the best; Odin owns him, and he has eight legs. The second is Glad, the third Gyllir, the fourth Glaer, the fifth Skeidbrimir, the sixth Silftröpp, the seventh Sinir, the eighth Gils, the ninth Falhofnir, the tenth Gulltopp and the eleventh is Lettfeti. Baldr's horse was burned with him. Thor, however, walks to the court; wading those rivers named as follows:

Kormt and Ormt
 and the two Kerlaugs,
 through these Thor will
 wade each day
 when he goes to judge
 at the ash Yggdrasil,
 because the bridge of the Æsir
 burns with fire –
 holy waters seethe.' (*The Lay of Grímnir. 29*)

Then Gangleri said, 'Does fire burn over Bifrost?'

High replied: 'The red you see in the rainbow is the burning fire. The frost giants and the mountain giants would scale

heaven if Bifrost could be travelled by all who wanted to do so. There are many beautiful places in heaven and everything is divinely protected. A handsome hall stands under the ash beside the well. Out of this hall come three maidens, who are called Urd [Fate], Verdandi [Becoming] and Skuld² [Obligation]. These maidens shape men's lives. We call them the norns. There are yet more norns, those who come to each person at birth to decide the length of one's life, and these are related to the gods. Others are descended from the elves, and a third group comes from the dwarves, as is said here:

Born of very different parents
I believe the norns are,
they do not share kinship.
Some are of the Æsir,
Some are of the elves,
Some are the daughters of Dvalin.'

(*The Lay of Fafnir*. 13)

Then Gangleri said, 'If the norns decide the fates of men, then they do so in a terribly uneven manner. Some people enjoy a good and prosperous life, whereas others have little wealth or renown. Some have a long life, but others, a short one.'

High said: 'The good norns, the ones who are well born, shape a good life. When people experience misfortune, it is the bad norns who are responsible.'

16. THE CREATURES OF THE ASH TREE YGGDRASIL

Then Gangleri said, 'What more of importance can be said about the ash?'

High replied, 'There is much to be told. An eagle sits in the branches of the ash, and it has knowledge of many things. Between its eyes sits the hawk called Vedrfolnir [Wind Bleached]. The squirrel called Ratatosk [Drill Tooth] runs up

and down the ash. He tells slanderous gossip, provoking the eagle and Nidhogg. Four stags called Dain, Dvalin, Duneyr and Durathror move about in the branches of the ash, devouring the tree's foliage.¹ In Hvergelmir there are so many serpents with Nidhogg that no tongue can count them. As it says here:

The ash Yggdrasil
endures hardship,
more than men know.
A stag bites from above
and its sides rot;
From below Nidhogg gnaws.

(*The Lay of Grimnir*. 35)

'So it is said:

More snakes
lie under the ash Yggdrasil
than any old fool imagines.
Goin and Moin,
they are Grafvitnir's sons,
Grabak and Grafvollud, and
Ofnir and Svafnir
will always, I believe,
eat away the tree's shoots.

(*The Lay of Grimnir*. 34)

'It is also said that those norns who live beside Urd's Well draw water every day from the spring and that they splash this, mixed with the mud that lies beside the well, over the ash so that its branches will not wither or decay. That water is so sacred that all things which come into the spring become as white as the membrane called *skjall* [skin] which lies on the inside of the eggshell. As it says here:

I know an ash,
it is called Yggdrasil,
a high, holy tree,

splashed and coated with white clay.
 From it come the dews
 that fall in the valleys.
 It will always stand
 green over Urd's Well. (*The Sibyl's Prophecy*. 19)

'People call the dew, which falls to the earth, honey dew, and bees feed on it. Two birds nourish themselves in the Well of Urd. These are called swans, and from them comes the species of bird with that name.'

17. THE HIGH ONE TELLS OF OTHER PLACES IN HEAVEN

Then Gangleri said, 'You know much to tell about the heavens. Are there other significant places besides the one at Urd's Well?'

High said, 'There are many magnificent places there. One is called Alfheim [Elf World]. The people called the light elves live there, but the dark elves live down below in the earth. They are different from the light elves in appearance, and far more so in nature. The light elves are more beautiful than the sun, while the dark elves are blacker than pitch. One place is named Breidablik [Gleaming Far and Wide], and no place there is more beautiful. There also is the place called Glitnir [Radiant Place]; its walls, columns and pillars are of red gold, and its roof is of silver. Then there is that place called Himinbjorg. It stands at heaven's end, right at the far edge of the bridge where Bifrost enters heaven. There is also the great place called Valaskjalf; it belongs to Odin. The gods built it and roofed it with pure silver. Inside this hall is Hlidskjalf, as this throne is called. When All-Father sits in this seat, he sees over all the world.

'At the southern reaches of heaven's end is a hall, the most beautiful of them all and brighter than the sun. It is called Gimle. It will remain standing when both heaven and earth are gone, and good and righteous men will inhabit that place through all ages. As *The Sibyl's Prophecy* says:

I know a hall, standing
 fairer than the sun
 better than gold
 at Gimle.
 Worthy men
 will live there
 through the days of all time
 enjoying happiness.'

(*The Sibyl's Prophecy*. 64)

Then Gangleri said, 'What will protect this place when Surt's fire burns heaven and earth?'

High answered: 'It is said that a second heaven lies to the south and above this heaven. It is called Andlang [Long and Wide]. Still further up, there is a third heaven called Vidblain [Wide Blue]. We believe that this region is in heaven, but now only the light elves live there.'

18. THE ORIGIN OF THE WIND

Then Gangleri said: 'From where comes the wind? It is so strong that it whips the great oceans and stirs up fire. But as strong as it is, no one can see it, so wondrously is it made.'

High said, 'I can easily tell you that. At the far northern end of heaven sits a giant named Hraesvelg [Corpse Gulper]. He has the shape of an eagle, and when he beats his wings to take flight, the winds blow out from under them. As is said here:

Hraesvelg, he is called,
 who sits at heaven's end,
 a giant in eagle's shape.
 From his wings,
 it is said, the winds
 blow over all men.'

(*The Sibyl's Prophecy*. 37)

19. SUMMER AND WINTER

Then Gangleri asked, 'Why is there such a difference between the heat of summer and the cold of winter?'

High answered, 'A wise man would not have asked, because everyone can answer this. But if you are a man of such little learning that you have not heard this before, then I would rather that you, in your ignorance, ask than continue to be unaware of what one ought to know. Svasud is the name of the father of Summer. He is a man so content that from his name comes the expression "it is *svasligt*", referring to what is pleasant. The father of Winter is alternately called Vindloni or Vindsval [Wind Chill]. He is the son of Vasad [Damp Cold]. These are cruel and cold-hearted kinsmen, and Winter takes its nature from them.'

20. ODIN THE ALL-FATHER

Then Gangleri said, 'Which Æsir ought men to believe in?'

High answered, 'There are twelve Æsir whose nature is divine.'

Then Just-as-High added: 'The goddesses are no less sacred, nor are they less powerful.'

Then Third said, 'Odin is the highest and oldest of the gods. He rules in all matters, and, although the other gods are powerful, all serve him as children do their father. Frigg is his wife. She knows the fates of men, even though she pronounces no prophecies. So it is said here, when Odin himself spoke with one of the Æsir called Loki:¹

"You are raving, Loki,
and out of your mind,
why, Loki, do you not stop?
Frigg knows,
I believe, the fate of all,
though she herself says nothing."

(*Loki's Flyting*. 21, 29, 47)

'Odin is called All-Father, because he is the father of all the gods. He is also called Father of the Slain [Val-Father], because all who fall in battle are his adopted sons. With them he mans Valhalla and Vingolf, and they are known as the Einherjar. He is also called Hanga-God [God of the Hanged], Hapta-God² [God of Prisoners] and Farma-God [God of Cargoes], and he named himself in many other ways on his visit to King Geirrod:

"I call myself Grim
and Gangleri,
Herjan, Hjalmbéri,
Thekk, Thrid,
Thunn, Unn,
Helblindi, Har,
Sann, Svipal,³
Sanngetal,
Herteit, Hnikar,
Bileyg, Baleyg,
Bolverk, Fjolnir,
Grimnir, Glapsvid, Fjolsvid,
Sidhott, Sidskegg,
Sig-Father, Hnikud,
All-Father, Atrid, Farmatyr,
Oski, Omi,
Jafnhar, Blindi,
Gondlir, Harbard,
Svidur, Svidrir,
Jalk, Kjalar, Vidur,
Thror, Ygg, Thund,
Vak, Skilfing,
Vafud, Hroptatyr,
Gaut, Veratyr.'" (The Lay of Grimnir. 46-50)

Then Gangleri said, 'You have given him a large number of names. Truly,⁴ it would be a mark of great learning to be able to relate all the events that lie behind each of these names.'

Then High said, 'To go carefully through all of that requires much wisdom. Nevertheless, it can quickly be said that most