

THE ELDER EDDAS

OF SAEMUND SIGFUSSON.

Translated from the Original Old Norse Text into English

BY

BENJAMIN THORPE,

AND THE

YOUNGER EDDAS

OF SNORRE STURLESON.

Translated from the Original Old Norse Text into English

BY

I.A. BLACKWELL.

HON. RASMUS B. ANDERSON, LL.D.,

EDITOR IN CHIEF.



KING GUNTHER

(After a painting by B. Guth.)

Gunnar, Gunther, or Gunter, King of Burgundy, was probably a real personage of the troubled times with which his name is associated—a period distinguished as much for heroic characters as for tragic events. Gunther represents the best type of kingship of his age; a man swayed by his affections rather than by ambition, who scrupled at misdeeds, yet yielded to the mastering passions of love; one whose instincts were loyalty to friends and country, and who shrank from cruelties to gain his ends, but who fell a victim to woman's fascinations. History accordingly praises him more for a lover than for a sovereign.

[Pg iii.]

LIST OF PHOTOGRAVURES.

(ELDER AND YOUNGER EDDAS.)

Frontispiece—Gunnar (Gunther)

Siegfried Awakens Brynhild

Death of Atli

A Feast in Valhalla

[Pg iv.]

[Pg v.]

CONTENTS.

THE ELDER EDDAS OF SAEMUND.

Preface.

Introduction To The Voluspa.

Völuspå. The Vala's Prophecy.

The Lay Of Vafthrudnir.

The Lay Of Grímnir.

The Lay Of Vegtam, Or Baldr's Dreams.

The High One's Lay.

Odin's Rune-song.

The Lay Of Hymir.

The Lay Of Thrym, Or The Hammer Recovered.

The Lay Of The Dwarf Alvis.

The Lay Of Harbard.

The Journey Or Lay Of Skirnir.

The Lay Of Rig.

Oegir's Comotation, Or Loki's Altercation.

The Lay Of Fiolsvith.

The Lay Of Hyndla.

The Incantation Of Groa.

The Song Of The Sun.

The Lay Of Volund.

The Lay Of Helgi Hiorvard's Son.

The First Lay Of Helgi Hundingcide.

The Second Lay Of Helgi Hundingcide.

Sinfíotli's End.

The First Lay Of Sigurd Fafnicide, Or Gripir's Prophecy.

The Second Lay Of Sigurd Fafnicide.

The Lay Of Fafnir.

The Lay Of Sigrdrifa.

Fragments Of The Lay Of Sigurd And Brynhild.

The Third Lay Of Sigurd Fafnicide.

Fragments Of The Lay Of Brynhild.

The First Lay Of Gudrun.

Brynhild's Hel-ride.
The Slaughter Of The Niflungs.
The Second Lay Of Gudrun.
The Third Lay Of Gudrun.
Oddrun's Lament.
The Lay Of Atli.
The Groenland Lay Of Atli.
Gudrun's Incitement.
The Lay Of Hamdir.

[Pg vi.] **THE YOUNGER EDDAS OF STUR-
LESON.**

The Deluding Of Gylfi.
Gylfi's Journey To Asgard.
Of The Supreme Deity.
Of The Primordial State Of The Universe.
Origin Of The Hrimthursar, Or Frost-giants.
Of The Cow Audhumla, And The Birth Of Odin.
How The Sons Of Bor Slew Ymir And From His Body Made
Heaven And Earth.
Of The Formation Of The First Man And Woman.
Of Night And Day.
Of The Sun And Moon.
Of The Wolves That Pursue The Sun And Moon
Of The Way That Leads To Heaven.
The Golden Age.
Origin Of The Dwarfs.
Of The Ash Yggdrasill, Mimir's Well., And The Norns Or
Destinies.
Of The Various Celestial Regions.
Of The Wind And The Seasons.
Of Odin.
Of Thor.
Of Baldur.

Of Njord.
Of The God Frey, And The Goddess Freyja.
Of Tyr.
Of The Other Gods.
Hodur The Blind, Assassin Of Baldur
Of Loki And His Progeny.
Binding The Wolf Fenir
Of The Goddesses.
Of Frey And Gerda.
Of The Joys Of Valhalla.
Of The Horse Sleipnir.
Of The Ship Skidbladnir.
Thor's Adventures On His Journey To The Land Of The Giants.
How Thor Went To Fish For The Midgard Serpent.
The Death Of Baldur The Good.
Baldur In The Abode Of The Dead
The Flight And Punishment Of Loki.
Of Ragnarok, Or The Twilight Of The Gods, And The Conflagration Of The
Of The Abodes Of Future Bliss And Misery.
The Renovation Of The Universe.
Ægir's Journey To Asgard.
Iduna And Her Apples.
The Origin Of Poetry.
Odin Beguiles The Daughter Of Baugi

GLOSSARY.

THE ELDER EDDAS OF SAEMUND.

PREFACE.

Sæmund, son of Sigfus, the reputed collector of the poems bearing his name, which is sometimes also called the Elder, and the Poetic, Edda, was of a highly distinguished family, being descended in a direct line from King Harald Hildetonn. He was born at Oddi, his paternal dwelling in the south of Iceland, between the years 1054 and 1057, or about 50 years after the establishment by law of the Christian religion in that island; hence it is easy to imagine that many heathens, or baptized favourers of the old mythic songs of heathenism, may have lived in his days and imparted to him the lays of the times of old, which his unfettered mind induced him to hand down to posterity.

The youth of Sæmund was passed in travel and study, in Germany and France, and, according to some accounts, in Italy. His cousin John Ogmundson, who later became first bishop of Holum, and after his death was received among the number of saints, when on his way to Rome, fell in with his youthful kinsman, and took him back with him to Iceland, in the year 1076. Sæmund afterwards became a priest at Oddi, where he instructed many young men in useful learning; but the effects of which were not improbably such as to the common people might appear as witchcraft or magic: and, indeed, Sæmund's predilection for the sagas and songs of the old heathen times (even for the magical ones) was so well known, that among his countrymen there were some who regarded him as a great sorcerer, though chiefly in what is called white or innocuous and [Pg viii.]defensive sorcery, a repute which still clings to his memory among the common people of Iceland, and will long adhere to it through the numerous and popular stories regarding him (some of them highly entertaining) that are orally transmitted from generation to generation. [1] Sæmund died at the age of 77, leaving behind him a work on the history of Norway and Iceland, which is now almost entirely lost.

The first who ascribed to Sæmund the collection of poems known as the Poetic Edda, [2] was Brynjolf Svensson, bishop of Skalholt. This prelate, who was a zealous collector of ancient manuscripts, found in the year 1643, the [Pg ix.]old vellum codex, which is the most complete of all the known manuscripts of the Edda; of this he caused a transcript to be made, which he entitled *Edda Saemundi Multiscii*. The transcript came into the possession of the royal historiographer Torfæus; the original, together with other MSS., was presented to the King of Denmark, Frederick. III., and placed in the royal library at Copenhagen, where it now is. [3] As many of the Eddaic poems appear to have been orally transmitted in an imperfect state, the collector has supplied the deficiencies by prose insertions, whereby the integrity of the subject is to a certain degree restored.

The collection called Sæmund's Edda consists of two parts, viz., the Mythological and the Heroic. It is the former of those which is now offered to the public in an English version. In the year 1797, a translation of this first part, by A.S. Cottle, was published at Bristol. This work I have never met with; nor have I seen any English version of any part of the Edda, with the exception of Gray's spirited but free translation of the *Vegtamskvida*.

The Lay of Volund (*Volundarkvida*) celebrates the story of Volund's doings and sufferings during his sojourn in the territory of the Swedish king Nidud. Volund (*Ger. Wieland, Fr. Veland and Galans*) is the Scandinavian and Germanic Vulcan (*Hephaistos*) and *Dædalus*. In England his story, as a skillful smith, is traceable to a very early period. In the Anglo-Saxon poem of *Beowulf* we find that hero desiring, in the event of his falling in conflict with *Grendel*, that his corslets may be sent to *Hygelac*, being, as he says, the work of *Weland*; and king *Ælfred*, in his translation of *Boethius de Consolatione*, renders the words *fidelis ossa Fabricii, etc.* by *Hwæt (hwær) Welondes?* (Where are now the bones of the famous and wise goldsmith *Weland*?), evidently taking the proper name of *Fabricius* for an appellative equivalent to *faber*. In the *Exeter Book*, too, there is a poem in substance closely resembling the Eddaic lay. In his novel of *Kenilworth*, *Walter Scott* has been guilty of a woeful perversion of the old tradition, travestied from the Berkshire legend of *Wayland*

Smith. As a land-boundary we find Weland's smithy in a Charter of king Eadred A.D. 955.

On the Lay of Helgi Hiorvard's Son there is nothing to remark beyond what appears in the poem itself.

The Lays of Helgi Hundingide form the first of the series of stories relating to the Volsung race, and the Giukungs, or Niflungs.

The connection of the several personages celebrated in these poems will appear plain from the following tables:[Pg x.]

Sigi, king of Hunaland, said to be a son of Odin | **Rerir** |
Volsung = a daughter of the giant Hrimnir
 _____ | | **Sigmund** = Signi = Borghild =
 Hiordis | | | Hamund. **Sinfiotli. Helgi** = Sigrun **Sigurd** =
 Gudrun _ | _____ | | **Sigmund**, Svanhild. m Jor-
 mnrek. **Giuki** = Grimhild. _____ | |
Gunnar=Glaumvor. **Hogni**=Kostbera. **Guthorm. Gudrun**, =
 1 Sigurd. | 2 Atli. Solar. Giuki. Snævar. 3 Jonakr. **Budli**. | **At-**
li = Gudrun: **Brynhild** = Gunnar. Oddrun. Beckhild = Hei-
 mir. | | Erp. Eitil Alsvid. Jonakr = Gudrun _____ |
 | _____ | | Erp Hamdir. Sorli.

[Pg xi.]The Eddaic series of the Volsung and Niflung lays terminates with the Lay of Hamdir; the one entitled Gunnar's Melody is no doubt a comparatively late composition; yet being written in the true ancient spirit of the North is well deserving of a place among the Eddaic poems. Nor, indeed, is the claim of the Lay of Grotti to rank among the poems collected by Sæmund, by any means clear, we know it only from its existence in the Skalda; yet on account of its antiquity, its intrinsic worth, and its reception in other editions of the Edda, both in original and translation, the present work would seem, and justly so, incomplete without it.

The Prose, or Younger Edda, is generally ascribed to the celebrated Snorre Sturleson, who was born of a distinguished Icelandic family, in the year 1178, and after leading a turbulent and ambitious life, and being twice the supreme magistrate of the Republic, was killed A.D. 1241, [4] by three of his sons-in-law and a stepson. When Snorre was three years [Pg xii.]old, John Lopton of Oddi, the

grandson of Sæmund the Wise, took him into fosterage. Snorre resided at Oddi until his twentieth year, and appears to have received an excellent education from his foster father, who was one of the most learned men of that period. How far he may have made use of the manuscripts of Sæmund and Ari, which were preserved at Oddi, it is impossible to say, neither do we know the precise contents of these manuscripts; but it is highly probable that the most important parts of the work, now known under the title of "The Prose Edda," formed a part of them, and that Snorre—who may be regarded as the Scandinavian Euhemerus—merely added a few chapters, in order to render the mythology more conformable to the erroneous notions he appears to have entertained respecting its signification. Be this as it may, the Prose Edda, in its present form, dates from the thirteenth century, and consists of—1. *Formali* (Fore discourse); or the prologue. 2. *Gylfa-ginning* (The deluding of Gylfi). 3. *Braga-roedur* (Conversations of Bragi). 4. *Eptirmali* (After discourse); or Epilogue. The Prologue and Epilogue were probably written by Snorre himself, and are nothing more than an absurd syncretism of Hebrew, Greek, Roman, and Scandinavian myths and legends, in which Noah, Priam, Odin, Hector, Thor, Æneas, &c, are jumbled together much in the same manner as in the romances of the Middle Ages. These dissertations, utterly worthless in themselves, have obviously nothing in common with the so-called "Prose Edda," the first part of which, containing fifty-three chapters, forms a complete synopsis of Scandinavian mythology, derived principally from the Poetical Edda.

THE TRANSLATOR.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] The following, the first among many, may serve as a specimen.

Sæmund was residing, in the south of Europe, with a famous Master, by whom he was instructed in every kind of lore; while, on the other hand, he forgot (apparently through intense study) all that he had previously learned, even to his own name; so that when the holy man John Ogmundson came to his abode, he told him that his name was Koll; but on John insisting that he was no other than Sæmund Sigfusson, born at Oddi in Iceland, and relating to him many particulars regarding himself, he at length became conscious of his own identity, and resolved to flee from the place with his kinsman. For the purpose of deceiving the master, John continued some time in the place, and often came to visit him and Sæmund; till at last, one dark night, they betook themselves to flight. No sooner had the Master missed them than he sent in pursuit of them; but in vain, and the heavens were too overcast to admit, according to his custom, of reading their whereabouts in the stars. So they traveled day and night and all the following day. But the next night was clear, and the Master at once read in the stars where they were, and set out after them at full speed. Then Sæmund, casting his eyes up at the heavens, said, "Now is my Master in chase of us, and sees where we are." And on John asking what was to be done, he answered: "Take one of my shoes off, fill it with water, and set it on my head." John did so, and at the same moment, the Master, looking up at the heavens, says to his companion: "Bad news; the stranger John has drowned my pupil; there is water about his forehead." And thereupon returned home. The pair now again prosecute their journey night and day; but, in the following night, the Master again consults the stars, when, to his great amazement, he sees the star of Sæmund directly above his head, and again sets off after the fugitives. Observing this, Sæmund says: "The astrologer is again after us, and again we must look to ourselves; take my shoe off again, and with your knife stab me in the thigh; fill the shoe with blood, and place it on the top of my head." John does as directed, and the Master, again gazing at the stars, says: "There is blood now about the star of Master Koll, and the stranger has for certain murdered

him," and so returns home. The old man now has once more recourse to his art; but on seeing Sæmund's star shining brightly above him, he exclaimed: "My pupil is still living; so much the better. I have taught him more than enough; for he outdoes me both in astrology and magic. Let them now proceed in safety; I am unable to hinder their departure."

[2] Bishop P.E. Muller supposes the greater number of the Eddaic poems to be of the 8th century. *Sagabibliothek II*, p, 131.

[3] Codex Regius, No. 2365, 4to. The handwriting of this MS. is supposed to be of the beginning of the 14th century.

[4] Snorre, at the death of John Loptson (A.D. 1197), does not appear to have possessed any property whatever, though he afterwards became the wealthiest man in Iceland. His rise in the world was chiefly owing to his marriage with Herdisa, the daughter of a priest called Bersi the Rich,—a very enviable surname, which no doubt enabled the Rev. gentleman to brave the decrees of Popes and Councils, and take to himself a wife—who brought him a very considerable fortune. If we may judge from Snorre's biography, Christianity appears to have effected very little change in the character of the Icelanders. We have the same turbulent and sanguinary scenes, the same loose conduct of the women, and perfidy, and remorseless cruelty of the men, as in the Pagan times.

[Pg xiii.]

INTRODUCTION TO THE VOLUSPA.

As introductory to the Voluspa, the following description of a wandering Vala or prophetess may be thought both desirable and interesting: "We find them present at the birth of children, when they seem to represent the Norns. They acquired their knowledge either by means of *seid*, during the night, while all others in the house were sleeping, and uttered their oracles in the morning; or they received sudden inspirations during the singing of certain songs appropriate to the purpose, without which the sorcery could not perfectly succeed. These *seid*-women were common over all the North. When invited by the master of a family, they appeared in a peculiar costume, sometimes with a considerable number of follow-