

and gathers in a brightly luminous belt of mist stretching towards the southwest, with only a few patches of luminous haze visible here and there. After a while scattered rays suddenly shoot up from the fiery mist, almost reaching to the zenith; then more; they play over the belt in a wild chase from east to west. They seem to be always darting nearer from a long, long way off. But suddenly a perfect veil of rays showers from the zenith out over the northern sky; they are so fine and bright, like the finest of glittering silver threads. Is it the fire-giant Surt himself, striking his mighty silver harp, so that the strings tremble and sparkle in the glow of the flames of Muspellsheim? Yes, it is harp music, wildly storming in the darkness; it is the riotous war-dance of Surt's sons. And again at times it is like softly playing, gently rocking, silvery waves, on which dreams travel into unknown worlds.

"The winter solstice has come, and the sun is at its lowest; but still at midday we can just see a faint glimmer of it over the ridges in the south. Now it is again beginning to mount northward; day by day it will grow lighter and lighter, and the time will pass rapidly. Oh, how well I can now understand our forefathers' old custom of holding an uproarious sacrificial banquet in the middle of winter, when the power of the winter darkness was broken. We would hold an uproarious feast here if we had anything to feast with; but we have nothing. What need is there, either? We shall hold