

back to the beginning of time, and tell of the birth of the worlds and the coming of the gods to rule over them.

Norway faces the sea with a line of cliffs so massive that their foundations seem everlasting. Islands without number rise out of the tossing waves; the deep, tranquil waters of the fjords, overhung with fir-covered mountains, and bright at night with the quenchless splendor of the stars, flow through narrow channels to the outer ocean; and against the sky great mountains stand vast and immovable, as if from eternity to eternity. No Norseman, steering his adventurous galley along these rocky shores, seeing, perhaps, the mighty rush of the polar seas against the North Cape, and hearing the long reverberation of Thor's hammer roll from mountain peak to mountain peak, would have believed that these things had not been as he saw them from the very beginning, if the Eddas, wiser than any wisdom of man, had not told him of a time when even the gods had not begun to live, and in the vast space where no worlds hung and no heavens shone there was nothing but the unseen spirit of the great All-father, solitary and silent in the depths.