

sprung up in allusion to the prominence of the leek in the *cuisine* of the Welsh people."

THE ELDER-TREE is the next inhabitant of the vegetable world which I shall select for description, and in it we shall find qualities revealed more mysterious by far than any that belong to the four national plants we have just been looking at. Amongst the northern nations a peculiarly weird character has always been ascribed to the elder. In England, magical practices with it were so common as to be taken special notice of by law. So we see, by turning to the "*Canones editi sub Eadgaro Rego*," where it is enacted that "every priest forbid the vain practices that are carried on with elder, and also with various other woods." As to the origin of its wonderful attributes, it would be rash to hazard a guess; but it seems as if we were on the way to discovering that origin when we consider the powerful being under whose protection the tree was represented to be, both in the Scandinavian and Teutonic mythologies, and also when we think of the solemn part which, according to popular tradition, the elder played in the crucifixion of our Lord.

According to a Scandinavian superstition, the elder-tree is inhabited by a being called Hyldemoer (Elder-mother), or Hyldegvinde (Elder-wife). By her all injuries done to the tree are avenged. In consequence of this the peasants, when about to cut the tree, ask permission in these words: "Hyldemoer, Hyldemoer, allow me to cut thy branches." And having said this—if they hear no rebuke—they spit thrice in order to drive away the vætts and other evil spirits.

In Lower Saxony, until very recent times, the country people, when about to lop the elder, observed a somewhat similar, though rather more elaborate, practice. They repeated the following prayer three times, with bended knees and folded hands: "Lady Elder, give me some of thy wood; then will I also give thee some of mine, when it grows in the forest."

No household furniture should be made of elder-wood; least of all a cradle; for were a child laid in it the Elder-mother would be sure to appear and strangle it.

In Prussia, Puschkait, the ancient Prussian God of the Earth, was said to reside in the elder.

The German names of the elder, says one writer, Ellhorn, Hollunder, Holler, Holder—whence our "elder"—indicate its association with Huldah, the good mother of northern mythology, whose offspring are the "elves." She was known by as many tender appellations as the Madonna, who succeeded her—Helle, Hilda, Bertha, Spillaholle (*i. e.*, Spindle Hulda), "Frau Rose." The varieties of the superstitions connected with the plant correspond to her varied helpfulness; and as she had rites performed in her honour in the Venusberg, near Eisenach, so late as the fifteenth century, it is not surprising that the superstitions concerning her