

THE ROCKWOOD REVIEW

LEGENDS OF THE OLD NORSMEN.

(CONCLUDED.)

The Nisse corresponds to the Scotch brownie, and no farm house thrives unless it has its Nisse. If he favor the maids and men, the kitchen will be swept and the water will be brought in, and in the stable the horses will be groomed and perhaps fed. But woe betide the servants who are not in favor! for the Nisse can be just as busy putting things into disorder, and can punish them by placing all sorts of obstacles in the way of doing their work.

The Neck is a river-spirit and is also a musical genius, he is represented as sitting on the surface of the water, like a pretty little boy with golden ringlets, and a red cap on his head, and he has a gold harp on which he plays, charming everything in nature.

The Mermaids are sometimes evil, sometimes good; they are very beautiful and sit upon the water combing their sea-weed hair with golden combs, or they are busy driving their snow-white cattle to feed on the strands, or small islands. At other times they haunt the fires of fishermen, cold and shivering maidens; they are then dreaded, as the fishermen know, they may be enticed by their beauty to the dwellings of the mermaids, at the bottom of the sea. People that are drowned, are thought to have been carried off by these bewitching beauties of the deep.

The Norns are the Fates—Past, Present and Future, and they sit at the foot of the wonderful Tree of Life, Ygdrasil which figures so extensively in Norse mythology,—It is an Ash tree, and the ash was sacred to the gods; its roots are deep down in the kingdom of Death; its trunk reaches heaven high, and its branches stretch out over the universe. The Norns constantly

water its roots; the Past and Present sit spinning a web from east to west, the Future tears asunder the golden thread of life, which was begun in the dawn and stretched to the sunset.

Once there was a Norwegian who had a wonderful mill, which would grind out anything he commanded of it. A sea captain hearing of its magic powers, became desirous of possessing it, accordingly he came with his ship to Norway and by some means won the favor of the mill-owner and borrowed it. He placed the mill in the hold of his vessel, and as soon as he was out of port, commanded it to grind salt. It forthwith began to grind salt until it filled the hold, and the captain, not having learned from the former owner how to make it stop, it continued to grind until every part of the vessel was filled to overflowing, with salt. Finally the ship sank. The mill is still going round and has never yet stopped working. If you don't believe this story, go and see for yourself the maelstrom off the west coast of Norway; some people call it a whirlpool, but it is really what we have said. This is the true reason why the sea is salt.

Balder the beautiful was the god of the summer sunlight; he is represented as being ever just, ever kind, the favorite of all nature, gods, and men; so fair and dazzling in form and features, that rays of light seem to issue from him. Loke, the wicked one, saw that no matter what happened, Balder was never hurt, and in fact it was a past-time of the gods to have Balder stand up in their meetings and serve them as a mark, and they would hurl stones and darts at him, but he always remained unharmed. His mother, Frigg, wife of Odin, had once gone all over the earth and exacted a promise from everything in nature that it would not hurt