

## THE ROCKWOOD REVIEW

### LEGENDS OF THE OLD NORSMEN.

(CONTINUED.)

The word Edda signified great-grandmother. A century later Snorre Sturleson, a native Icelander, wrote out a prose synopsis of the whole mythology, and his work is called the younger Edda. From these Eddas and other Sagas or histories have been obtained the ideas and old feelings of the brave old Northlanders. And in this Ultima Thule, Iceland, were preserved the pagan ideas of the Scandinavian countries,—a strange place to look for the literature of another land.

They believed greatly in races of Giants or Jotuns, Frost, Fire, Sea, and Tempest were Jotuns all to be dreaded, while the Sun and Summer-heat were gods. The gods dwelt in Asgard, the garden of the gods; and the Giants in Jotunheim, the house of the giants, between the two there was continual warfare. One idea of the creation is thus told,—Odin was descended from the frost giants, but he and his brothers slew the giant Ymer, and of his body the earth was made, of Ymer's blood they made the seas and waters, from his flesh the land, from his bones the mountains, from his hair the forests, and from his teeth and jaws with some bits of broken bones they made the stones and pebbles; then they took his skull and formed therewith the heavens and set a dwarf at the corner of each of the four quarters, these dwarfs are called Austre-East, Vestre-West, Nordre-North, Sudre-South; they erected a bulwark about the earth to protect it from giants, this bulwark was called midgard and was constructed from Ymer's eyebrows. The first man and woman were Ask and Embla, formed from the trees ash and elm.

Odin, the chief of the gods, was the fountain head of wisdom; the

founder of culture, writing, and poetry; the progenitor of kings; the lord of battle and victory. He is described as a tall one-eyed man, he pawned one eye in Jotunheim when he sought for wisdom at Mimer's fountain, he could not drink from the fount of knowledge unless he left his eye in pawn. He wears a broad brimmed hat and this represents the arched dome of heaven, he has on a blue or variegated cloak which is the blue sky or atmosphere, both hat and cloak symbolize protection. On his arm hangs a gold ring called Draupner from which links would drop and yet it would never be lessened, this is the symbol of fertility. On his shoulders are perched two ravens, Hugin, Reflection and Munin, Memory, they sit and whisper into the ears of Odin what they see and hear; at daybreak he sends them forth to fly over the world and they return with their reports in the evening. Two wolves recline at his feet and to them he gives the meat that is set upon his table, for he subsists upon the invisible food of the gods. He sits upon a high throne and looks out upon the world, or rides about on his eight-legged horse, Sleipner, the Slipper. He is called the All-Father as chief, and likewise the Val-Father or father of the slain, and his hall is Valhalla, the home of departed heroes, spears support the ceiling, coats of mail adorn the walls, it is roofed with shields; the maids who wait at the table are the Valkyries and they go on the battle fields to make choice of those who are to be slain and to sway the victory. The warriors who died bravely in battle were received into Valhalla, there they feed on the flesh of the boar which is cooked in the morning and becomes whole again every night; they drink mead, a wonderful liquid compounded from the air, fire, sea, and rime frost. A