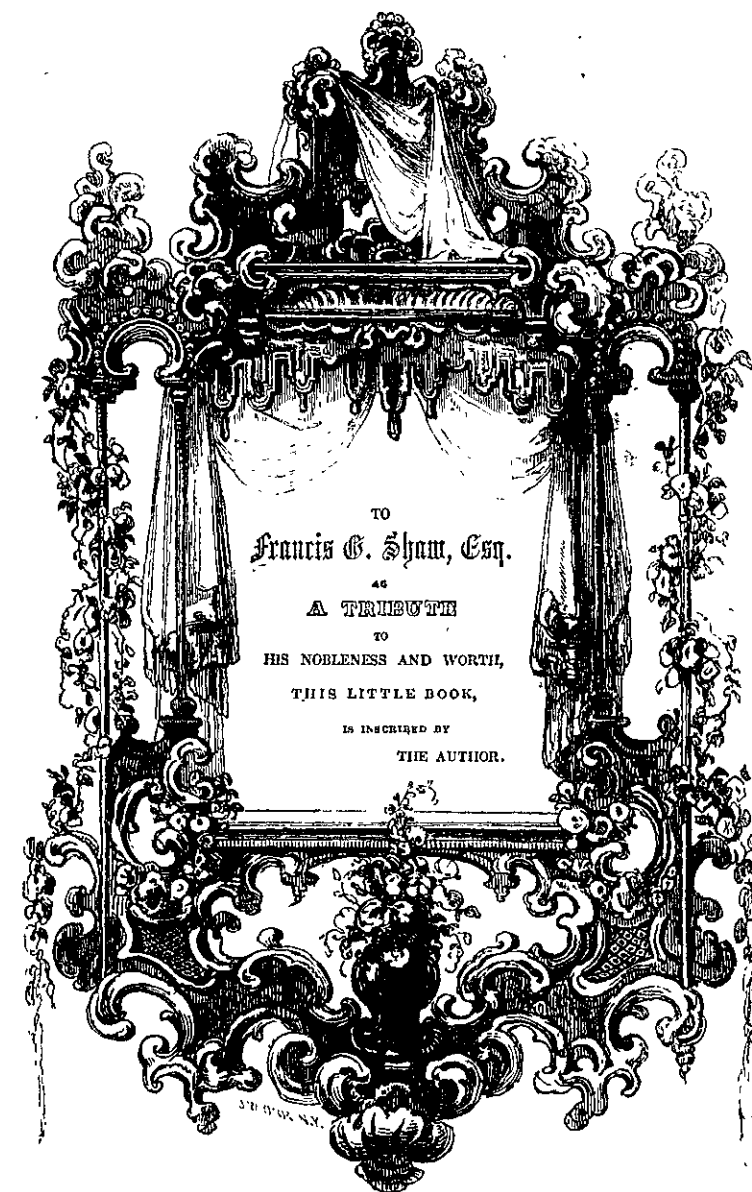




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PREFACE.

The following Tale was written originally for the *New York Evening Post*, but has since then been considerably modified and enlarged. It should perhaps be called an Extravaganza, as the writer had no purpose in it beyond a vague desire to glorify Art, by investing the principal incidents in the career of a reigning musical celebrity with the strange but beautiful costume of the Northern Myth. The unexpected success with which it was received has induced him to put it into this more permanent form. To his accomplished and generous friends, the Artists, Hicks, Rossiter, Walcutt and Whitley, to whom he is indebted for the original designs by which the text is illustrated, he must return his grateful thanks. Several most effective and spirited drawings were received from Mr. Duggan, but greatly to the author's regret no wood-engraver could be found to cut them properly in time for this publication. For the same reason, an exquisite design by Mr. Hicks, two sketches by Mr. Rossiter, and two smaller ones by Mr. Walcutt, are most reluctantly omitted.

V A L L A .

I....NORLAND.



AR off, there is a land where unbroken fields of snow stretch themselves drearily and without end, towards the icy pole. There, for two-thirds of the year, gloomy darkness reigns oppressively over the half-ripened harvests, save when the pale midnight sun casts its oblique rays into the pine forests, and illuminates them with streams of flowing silver. The sea breaks upon the rocks of the sounding coasts, and awakens myriads of polar birds, who wheel and scream in the air like so many spirits haunting the desolate heights, while the mists hanging about the cliffs, twisted into gigantic and fearful shapes, fill the mind with mysterious awe.

There too the ages of the Saga and the Heathen have left their stupendous traces. Every mountain, every vale, almost every tree has its tradition of spectre and transformation, and even while one walks the level fields, deep rumbling sounds tell of the great cauldrons of the giants under the ground, and of

far-stretching and brilliant grottos where the elves have their haunts, and fiery gnomes forge terrible weapons of war. But it is not all cold and desolate in that distant northern land. The sun, in the summer-time, warms the valleys and woods of the southern parts, into summer bloom; the air grows soft and balmy; the brooks are unlocked from their frozen sleep; snug little farms get astir with the sounds of cattle and farmers afield; and the heavy mosses which cling about the firs, blush with rosy and purple wild flowers.

But the days of the blossoms are few and short, and the friendly rays darted by the shining southern skies, fly swiftly back to their more genial zone. Yet the people there, both south and north, have warm sunny hearts; if nature repels them by her outward aspects, they find so much the more what is beautiful and lovely within. The wild play of fancy, the glow of imagination, the fresh verdure of love, the melting-fire of affection, compensate them for the want of tropical brilliancy and heat. That spiritual beauty which shines through the statues of Thorwaldsen, which we read in the poems of Tegnier, and the stories of Bremer and Andersen; which is heard in the wild melodies of Ole Bull and Jenny Lind, and fills the mystic utterances of Swedenborg, is an everlasting guerdon of the wintry North.

From that land, many long years ago, the snöcker or cockle of adventurous mariners put forth into measureless seas of ice, seeking for settlements in Greenland. The courageous youth, Bjorna, first; afterwards Lief; and still after him, Kalefné.—Along the coast, between the cliffs, winding through the hundred islands of the strand, like the sea-mews, they skimmed the seas. Through foaming breakers and through roaring storms

they sailed, out-flying the south-west wind, but at the much longed for Greenland they did not stop.



They sought instead a more distant land—a land whose shores, no longer nurturing the ice-bergs, were white with silver sand, whose surface was overgrown with wood, whose days and nights were of almost equal length, and where they ate the luscious grape and yellow Indian corn under the noble Masur tree.* Then on the Dighton rocks they carved in mysterious Runes the memorials of their brief sojourn, and went back to their northern home never again to return. Though to them the dangers of the ocean were a sport, and the rude whistlings of the tempests music, and the mad heavings of the sea a dance—they never more returned. They went home, and have slept long eras now beneath the snows.

*The spotted Maple.

II. LITTLE VALA AND THE BIRDS.



CENTURIES, we say, had fled, when a descendant of that bold northern race, a little girl, was playing among the flowers of the forests that skirted the ancient capital of Manheim.* She was blue eyed and flaxen haired, and skipped along the ground with limbs as lithe and flexible as those of Kulnesach, the reindeer, when he flies across the frosts. She was playing in the forests, because she loved the deep quiet of the woods, where she could hear the winds whisper in the trees, the pleasant little crickets chirp, and the birds sing their delicious songs from the boughs. How often on the bright summer afternoons, had she sought the deep groves, where she had learned to know the name of every plant—the ladies' mantle, and the silver weed, and the wild strawberry—and where she could talk with every bird, from the robbin and starling to the linnet and the nightingale.

On one of these occasions, when she had gone to wander through her favorite retreats, as she walked along a subdued murmur of tiny voices sounded from the grass, the spires of which bent to each other as if to hold sweet converse. The

* Stockholm.

flowers exhaled their richest odors; the purple rays of the setting sun fell upon the dark brown shadows of the forests, throwing far into the dusky glades a golden beam of light, in which many colored butterflies and myriads of sparkling moths sported. Note upon note of enchanting melody floated upon the air; and a strange half real, half heavenly elation excited her mind, and gave a quick spring to her steps.—She recalled, as she went, many a gay and grim legend of the mountains and fields; of the alfer who dwell in the middle of the oaks; of the dwarfs who shape the flashing dwarf crystals, and of the too fascinating Necken, whose irresistible songs accompany the bubbling of the brooks. Brushing away the early dew, which fell in showers of diamonds from the bushes of the wild rose, she penetrated to the inmost thicket of a glen, overhung with moss-grown trees, and surrounding a fountain—the fountain of Uller, as she called it, whose source was in the distant Rain Vallies.

There she took a seat upon a velvet rock, and began to call her favorite birds, each by its own gentle name, which she had given. The linnet she had named Löfna, after her who had power to reconcile divided friends; and the nightingale she called Siona, because she awakens the first sweet feelings in the breasts of youths and maidens; and the lark was styled Illyn, as she could sing away all the tears from the eyes of the unfortunate. These, and a thousand others, came flitting about her, hopping nearer and nearer, and eyeing her askance, until at last they timidly circled round her head, and coquetishly played with her locks. While they were thus engaged, she sung, in a voice sweeter than their own, these artless words.

Listen, sweet minstrels, come hither to me,
And carol your loves from the beech-nut tree;
In dresses of russet and crimson and white,
Whose colors were dyed in the dawn's golden light;
Come finches, come sparrows, come seven-sleeps, come!
Through the winding glades of your emerald home,
And pour on the tides of the tuneful breeze
Rich gushes of many-voiced harmonies.

To which all the feathered tribes, sitting down from their
secluded retreats and their lofty outlooks, quickly joined in
reply:

Who calls us away from our silent repose
On the dew-spangled branch of the fragrant rose;
The stalk of the mullein, the curl of the vine;
The soft silken lap of the wild columbine?
Tis Vala, the sybil, the gay child of song,
Who wanders the thickets and mosses among,
To learn the sweet art that is hid in our throats,
Then yield her, ye warblers, your richest of notes.

Scarcely had the first troop of wood-choristers closed, when
still others, troops upon troops flocked around, and poured out
their hearts, in mellifluous streams of song. The woods rang,
and re-echoed with the bewildering chorus. Vala—for that, as
the birds have already told our readers, was the name of the
little girl—listened to the infinite modulation, sound rising upon
sound, note intertwining with note, now distant, now near, now
swelling like a gale, and now tinkling like the bell of the goat-
herd on the Alpine peaks, till her whole being was bathed
and borne upward by the thousand-fold melodies. Rever-
ently,—absorbed,—in breathless awe and adoration,—she lis-
tened till overcome by her ecstasy she dissolved into tears.
Then the birds crowded more closely than ever about her;
they watched her with their round bright eyes, hopping
anxiously from spray to spray, as if they knew and sympa-
thised in her distress. Suddenly suspending their concert of
sounds, which they feared might have been too much for her,

they approached her one by one, and uttered their cheerfulest
consolations; the thrush whistled from the thorn-bush; the
robin chirruped in the fir-tree; the linnet caroled from the
sprigs of the ash: while the lark filled the whole woods with
profuse trills and outpourings of gladness. Vala lay for hours
in this swoon of ravishment and bliss; but what her dreams
were then, whither her mind wandered, what glorious scenes
she saw, what sweet communion with the spirits of the bird-
heavens she held, no one knows, and a spell was upon her that
she should not tell.



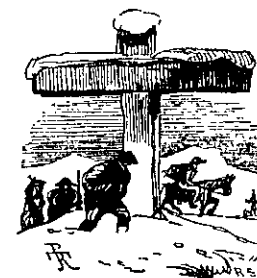
She came gradually to herself, but the night in the meantime
had advanced, and warned her to return to her home; yet as

she walked silently back while the shadows were gathering fast over the lowly vallies, where the cow-herds were calling the kine from the hills, and bells tinkled from summit to summit, she sighed to herself: "Oh why was not I a bird, that I might fly away, when dark winter comes, to those summer realms, where they sport and sing forever!" Then a sweet, ringing voice said to her from the air, "Thou shalt be a bird;" but in her distraction she heard it not, and hurried on gloomily towards the cottage where her parents dwelt.

Again, as she entered the thicket which led to the cottage-gate, the same voice said, "Thou shalt be more than a bird!" Vala heard the words, and fell on her knees in agitation; but the airy figure, from which they proceeded, vanished away on the instant. Bewildered and thoughtful, Vala entered the house.



III....SORROWS AND SAGAS.



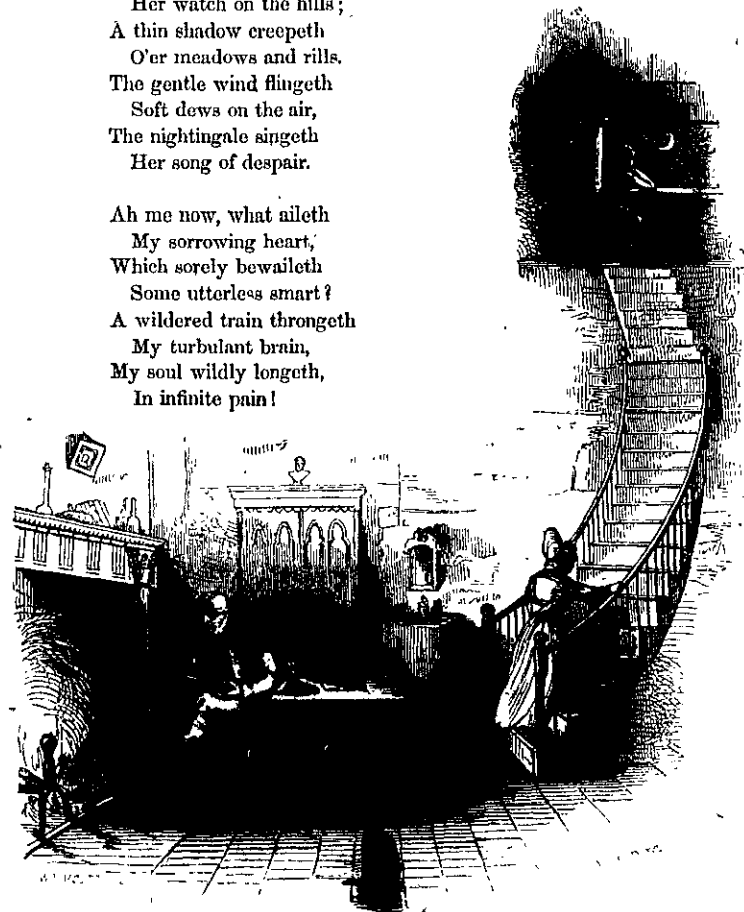
HE dark winter soon came, and the birds went away; but our little Vala flew not away with the birds. But during the long winter evenings she sat lonely and drooping by the lambent fireside, and yearned ardently for the return of the spring.—

Near the pine-torch on the table, sat the father, ruling the big copy-books to be used by the children of the small school he taught in the village. Ever and anon he would look up from his work, take a whiff from his painted tobacco pipe, and, casting a glance at the idle girl, mutter that she would never earn her oatmeal, much less a coriander cake. She is more idle, he said, than the dogs who sleep in the pastor's kitchen. Then, the mother—the excellent housewife—as she dipped the curdled milk into a pot, with a huge silver spoon, in preparation for the next day's morning meal, would heave a sigh.—She too lamented the dreamy idleness of the child, but, mother-like, thought that some good would yet come out of it. The girl grew more sorrowful still, and the tears trickled down her cheeks. "Away with you to bed," shouted the father, who proposed reading a word or two out of Atterböm to himself,

and did not wish to be disturbed. Vala stole noiselessly to her room, and, as she was accustomed to utter all her emotions in song, she took a seat by the window, when, throwing it up, in spite of the cold, that she might look at the pale moonlight as it fell upon the red fir-cones, she sung:

The pallid moon keepeth
Her watch on the hills;
A thin shadow creepeth
O'er meadows and rills.
The gentle wind flingeth
Soft dewa on the air,
The nightingale singeth
Her song of despair.

Ah me now, what aileth
My sorrowing heart,
Which sorely bewaileth
Some utterless smart?
A wildered train throngeth
My turbulent brain,
My soul wildly longeth,
In infinite pain!



But the good mother from below, who heard her voice, and knew by the tone that it was a plaint of distress, ascended the

stairs soon after, and sought to beguile the child of her woe, by stories of the old Scandinavian past. She would talk of Alvater, creator of gods and men, who held the least as well as the greatest in his complacent arms; of Fräa, the mild and bounteous, whose look was an eternal spring, and who loved to hear the prayers of mortals; of Baldar the beautiful, brilliant as the white lily, god of eloquence and just decision; and of Bragur, who strikes the chords of the golden Telyn, while his wife, Iduna, keeps the apples of immortal life.

Rousing her interest thus, the good mother would wander into the more fearful or more fantastic traits of northern mythology. She would tell of Thor, the thunderer, whose hammer struck along the skies, crushed thunder out of every object; of Gerda, the daughter of the ice giant, whose shining white arms stretched out of the windows of the north, set the whole heavens ablaze with lights; of Heimdal, who guarded the seven colored bridge to the skies, against the evil giants; who could hear the grass grow and the wool on the backs of lambs; and finally of the fair sisters, the Nornas, who sit at the foot of the wondrous ash, Igdrasill, whose roots are deep down in the gloomy kingdoms of Hela, but whose top reaches to the highest heaven. Thus the mysteries of life and death, and of much that is after death, were darkly shadowed forth to the child, as they had been to the childhood of the nation,—to take in future time a clearer significance.

Yet mingled with these obscurer traditions were given truths from a better source—such as the immortal bard of Frithioff's Saga, chaunts to the "Children of the Lord's Supper," when he tells them that

"Love is the root of creation: God's essence: worlds without number
Live in his bosom like children; he made them for this purpose only,
Only to love and be loved, he breathed forth his spirit
Into the slumbering dust, and, upright standing, it laid its
Hand on its heart, and felt it was warm with a flame out of Heaven,"

Much more the good mother breathed over her child, and
then repeated, in a tone half recitation and half song, to a wild
northern air, this charm to rest:

High o'er the summits
Broods Peace,
Among all the branches
Thou :ee'st
Scarcely a breath;
The birds are asleep in the nest;
Wait thee, now—thou too shalt rest,
Calmly as death.

Under the influence of this the gentle Vala, composed,
cheered and comforted, sank into a soft sleep, only to dream
of Gladheim, the palace of Joy, and Wingolf, where the peren-
nial fountains flow.



IV.....THE CHANGEABLE LADY.



PRING came at last, and the sum-
mer, and with the latter, the Mid-
summer's eve, a day peculiarly dear
to the good people of the Northland.
It was a day of merriment and hap-
piness, when all classes dressed in
their holiday attire, might have
been seen streaming towards the
high festival trees. Their houses were decorated as for a fete.
In the interiors the floors were strewn with fir-twigs, mingled
with blossoms and leaves of flowers; while the outsides were
hung with evergreen boughs, and branches woven in inter-
minable wreaths around door-ways and windows.

In the centre of the village, the point to which all the vari-
ous groups were tending, they had planted tall trees, which,
stripped of their bark, were wrapped round with many colored
strips of paper. A thousand nameless objects dangled in the
wind from their outstretching arms, empty egg-shells, which
clattered as they swung, little flags waiving merrily, clippings
of paper, wind mills, dolls gravely treading the thin air, and
all making sport for the youngsters, who gathered in multi-
tudes below. There, too, on smaller poles were suspended

sweet meats and play things, to which the eager longing children bent their eyes, as the happy groups in Germany do about the Christmas Tree.

Merrily the music sounded from the flute, the cithern and the harp; heartily the young men and the maidens, whirled away in the waltz, which Schiller so beautifully compares to the winding dances of the stars. The old women chattered and gossiped; the old men laughed and sipped their home-brewed ale; while the children, in the maddest mirth, gambled and frolicked over the green grass of the plain.



But the loudest in her mirth there, and the wildest in her antics was the little girl that had made so many friends among

the groves. She ran and leaped with the fastest, screamed with the loudest, danced with the gayest, and when the boisterous sports were done, she gathered the little circles round her, and sung with the sweetest grace, and at the same time the archest drollery, her Song of the Birds.

Come children, away,
From the dance and play
To the groves!
Where the flowers are springing,
And the little birds singing
Of their loves.
Tralla—tralla—lira, liralà!
How the merry little rout
Through the branches flit about,
Tralla, lira la!
And split their swelling throats
With a rubadub of notes,
Te wee,—tiskadee—wobble—wobble—cha!
Tralla, lira, lira, la—lira la!
Chirrup, chirrup—peewet—to whoo!
Chatter, whistle, warble, cuckoo!
How the insects glitter,
And the green leaves twitter,
Tralla! tralla!
While the starling, and the wren, and the linnet sing,
And the alder dance in the fairy ring,
Come away!—Come away!

As the echoes of her sprightly voice died off in the distance, the birds in the copse seemed to catch and prolong the strains, which they mingled with the vesper hymns they were then sending up, on the fragrance of flowers, into the evening glow. All the children entranced, yet amazed and provoked to laughter by her imitations, broke simultaneously forth into clappings and shouts of applause. "Again, Vala," they cried, "again Yuchla." "Thy voice is clearer than the bell," said some; "brighter than the lark's, when, from the dewy depths of the sky, he heralds the morn," continued others; "and richer

than the nightingale's, from the darkling shadows of the woods, lamenting the thorn in her breast," added a third party. Then they all spontaneously began to dance round and clap their hands, crying "Yes, a nightingale—a nightingale—sing again, Vala, the nightingale." The elders, attracted by the noise, came nearer and soon formed part of the group.

Vala, nothing loth, but pleased with the pleasure she had given, remarked, with a charming simplicity, "I am so happy that I can sing.

"Well, you may be," said one of the more intelligent of the company, who, in common with the others was delighted with her voice."

"But who taught you to sing, dear child?"

"Nobody taught me, because I learned it all in listening to the birds."

"Then you can sing only what the birds sing?"

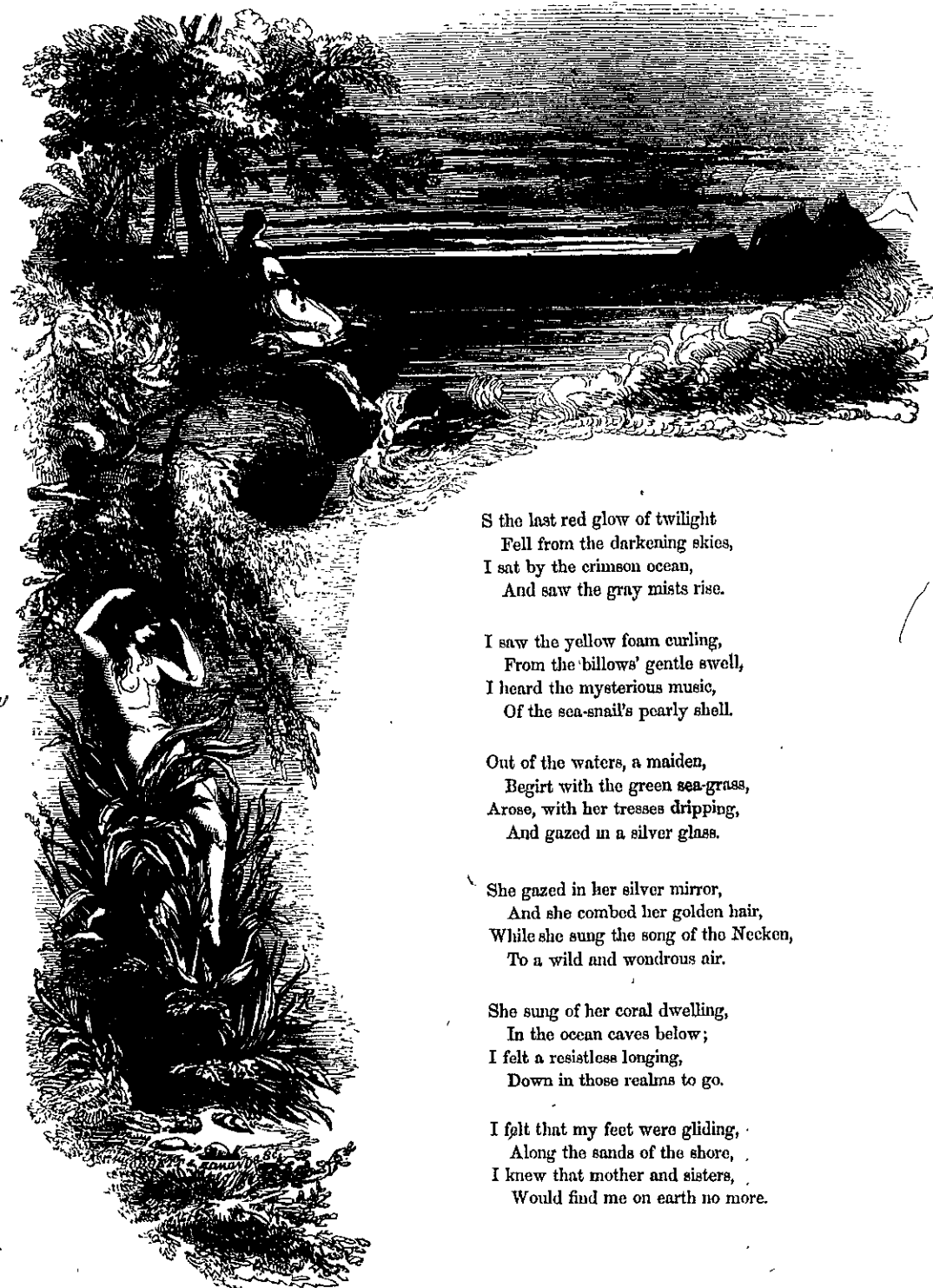
"And a great deal more," she quickly responded; I can sing what the Alfer sing, when they dance on the green in the moonlight, and the song of the Necken when they charm the maideus into the sea.

"Oh sing us the Alfer dance," shouted some of the children, who seemed to be more familiar with her accomplishments in this line than their elders.

"No—no," cried others again,—“we have danced enough, let us have the song of the Neck!”

"Tis very beautiful" replied Vala, with a calm consciousness of her power—"Listen!"

Then, resuming her place in the midst of the group, she sung



S the last red glow of twilight
Fell from the darkening skies,
I sat by the crimson ocean,
And saw the gray mists rise.

I saw the yellow foam curling,
From the billows' gentle swell,
I heard the mysterious music,
Of the sea-snail's pearly shell.

Out of the waters, a maiden,
Begirt with the green sea-grass,
Arose, with her tresses dripping,
And gazed in a silver glass.

She gazed in her silver mirror,
And she combed her golden hair,
While she sung the song of the Necken,
To a wild and wondrous air.

She sung of her coral dwelling,
In the ocean caves below;
I felt a resistless longing,
Down in those realms to go.

I felt that my feet were gliding,
Along the sands of the shore,
I knew that mother and sisters,
Would find me on earth no more.

No burst of approbation followed this legend, which was sung with as weird and wondrous an air as it ascribed to the Neck; but the whole circle stood breathless, with their faces blank and their eyes staring, as if they had been smitten suddenly with some great dread and sorrow. The girl too, overcome by the emotion of her own song, cast down her head. The blood had fled from her cheeks, her looks were wild, and she trembled in every limb.

"*Arh gott im Himmel!*" exclaimed a little Lady who suddenly appeared in a brilliant dress of changeable satin, adorned with jewels and chains and ornaments of all kinds, and who, elbowing her way through the throng, was the first to break the silence. "But can she always sing so," she cried, and rushing towards the girl, caught her up in her arms and gave her a thousand kisses. "Dearest angel, daughter of all the Litchells, canst thou sing more like that?"

"Oh yes indeed," replied she, the solemn mysterious expression still remaining on her features, "I can sing all the songs Odin taught Volthar, when he hung him nine days in the wind, pierced by a sword. 'Twas on the tree whose root mortals dare not name. No king's daughter, no son of man can sing them, but they only whom the Aser love, who have drank of the honey dew, and read the Runes. Nine songs I know," she continued in an elevated inspired tone—"yes twelve, which Dain the Dwarf, and Asvid the giant, and Dwalain the elf, and Voluspa the prophetess, have heard, yet beside them no other. The first is for help in the time of need; the second for medicine; the third blunts the swords of enemies; the fourth breaks the chains of evil love; the fifth directs the flying arrow; the sixth charms away anger; the

seventh puts out the flame of burning houses; the eighth turns beasts into men; the ninth disarms the witches when they fly through the air; the tenth stills the winds; the eleventh raises the dead; and the twelfth awakens true maiden's love! Ha! ha! ha!"

Then the girl laughing strangely, ran away, calling her companions after her as she went. But the strange Lady followed at the top of her speed, shouting to the volant troop to come back: "Vala, thou eldest-born of Freia, come back. Vala—I will get thee gold and silver, and precious stones. Thy path shall be strewn with flowers and the young men and the old men shall call thee blessed."

After a while, Vala ran back, but now she remarked what she had not before noted, that this singular lady was not merely dressed in a species of changeable silk, as she had supposed, but that the dresses had the wonderful property of changing themselves as often as they pleased. Sometimes they were silk, but at other times they were velvet, and gingham, and coarse linsey-woolsey; and at others again they were mere tatters and rags. Vala was greatly surprised at this, and she looked at the strange metamorphosis those dresses were all the while undergoing with utter bewilderment and awe.

But her astonishment rose to a higher pitch, when she saw that the Lady herself as well as her dresses, was passing through an endless series of rapid and brilliant transformations. At one time she seemed to be a queen, shining with jewels; at another, a village maiden with baskets of flowers; and then a withered beldame with distaff and spindle; but whether old or young, a beggar or an empress, she yet, by some peculiar art, continued always to retain her own personal consciousness

and life. Vala was so terrified when she beheld this perpetual fluctuation of dress and character, this unending miracle of change, that she was fain to have run away again. Surely, she thought, this must be some witch or child of the evil Loki, who can put on what look she pleases. But an unaccountable charm resided in the changeable Lady, and Vala was drawn to her almost in spite of herself. At last summoning all her courage, and muttering a powerful charm which she had learned would keep away the black elves, she came near her and said: Oh wonderful woman, who art thou?

"Truly!" replied the stranger, "I am a mistress of the Enchanted Realm, which hangs between the heaven and the earth, where the spirits of light and beauty have their home."

"Is it in the world?" timidly asked Vala, pondering the answer just given.

The Changeable one replied, "It is in the world, but above it, a kind of terrestrial-celestial Temple of Delight, whose midnight is more gorgeous than its noon, and where the commonest people glitter in all the magnificence of kings and queens. "What a dear delightful place it must be!" interrupted Vala, dancing about with excitement: but the Changeable Lady proceeded.

"There dwell the heroes of all time, whose praises are struck on golden harps by the immortal Bards, while the Valkyrias of poetry, music, dance, architecture, eloquence and action, carry around foaming cups of delicious mead. There the wretched are made glad, the dull lively, the prosaic ideal, and the common place glorious. No kingdom of earth is so old; none will last so long; it began before Odin; it will outlive the gods. It is everywhere in time, and omnipresent in

space; and when the wolf Fenris shall have swallowed the Past, the gay and beautiful creatures of our world will still flourish and bloom!"

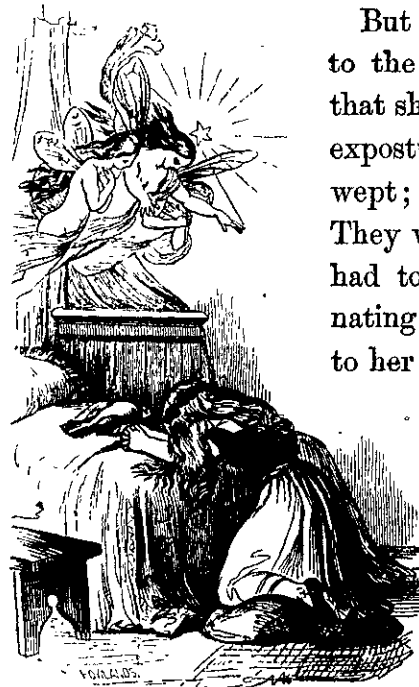
Vala, who had hung with rapture upon this description of the new and beautiful world, finding herself more and more attracted by some irresistible charm, sprang suddenly into the arms of the Lady, exclaiming, "Oh! sweet lady, take me there, dear lady, take me there; 'tis of that world I have dreamed since I was a child. Where is it, and what is its name?"

"Lichtalfheim, or the Home of the Bright Spirits, it is called by the initiated, though vulgar mortals, in their profane speech, have named it the Theater!" resumed the lady.

"The theater!" shrieked now the pious mother, who had gradually drawn nearer to overhear the conversation in which her child was so strangely and passionately interested, "God in heaven protect us! The theater; 'tis the black home of Loki! 'Tis the lowest hall of Niflheim, where the serpents coil and hiss. Come hither my child and pray to be forgiven for having thought of that wretched abomination."

All the good people now rolled up their eyes in horror, and pointed their fingers at the Stranger, who had thus confessed her relation to a place, which in their minds, was associated with all that was bad. They might even have proceeded to the length of driving her, on that account, from their society, had not Vala,—so completely had she been seduced by the witchery of the Lady,—persuaded them to forbear.

"At any rate," they at last cried, "let us not leave the child in her wicked power! Come, Vala, come away!"



But the child did not go; she clung to the Changeable Lady; she insisted that she must see the new world; she expostulated with her parents; she wept; she stormed; but in vain.— They would not yield, and in the end had to tear her away from the fascinating presence, and carry her by force to her home, where she threw herself in anguish upon her bed, and wept bitter, scalding tears.

Day after day she renewed her entreaties that she might be allowed to go to that Enchanted Realm, and because she was refused by her pious friends, she moped and sorrowed more than ever.

At last, after several months, when they found that she was pining away, they consented, with sorrowing hearts, that she might pay a visit to those mysterious and magical Haunts, should the illustrious Changeling ever again be found. Scarcely had they spoken when she appeared. Again, they were reluctant, but the teasing importunate Vala prevailed, and finally set out. We will not describe her ardent joy, as she approached the sacred premises; nor yet her infinite disappointment and sorrow, when she was told by the Arch-magician there that long years of toil would be necessary to fit her for reception as one of the enchanted people. She was however informed, that far away there lived a Song-Smith, a stern but powerful Kobold, who could alone prepare her to be initiated into the wonderful terrestrial-celestial arts and mysteries.

V....THE SONG SMITH.



ALA'S parents were poor, and it was only with infinite difficulty and at great sacrifice, that they procured the means of sending her to the far off forges of the Song-Smith. But her hopes were bright, and she consoled them in their sore need, with rainbow promises, that she would yet send them back mountains of gems. They smiled at her excited fancies, even in the bitterness of their distress, and parted from her with drooping eyes.

She travelled over seas, over mountains, over plains, over dales, and at last arrived at an immense and populous city of the Gnomes, which glittered in the sun-light with a thousand pinnacles and spires. She was without friends, and, save the poor herdsman, who had accompanied her as a guide to the walls of the metropolis, all alone; her soul sank within her as she saw the gay crowds pass by her in the thoroughfares. The gorgeous palaces of the genii rose on all sides in overpowering splendor. Brilliant plates of glass covered their fronts; ornaments of gold were wreathed about their high broad doors; the columns were of marble and porphyry, and the interiors were furnished with the richest silks, tapestries, and procelain.

But, alas, this magnificence was not for Vala. She was doomed, as she well knew, like all those that would qualify themselves for companionship in the Enchanted Realm, to work out her hard apprenticeship far away in the distant dens of the great city. There the dirty gnomes and the black alfer, hideous, begrimmed and distorted, were manufacturing indescribable splendors, not for their own use, but for that of their more fortunate brothers, who, by a freak of the Nornas not easily explained, had acquired and were assured an exclusive right to the enjoyment of all the glories of life.

Vala made the best of her way thither, through long dark lanes filled with foulness and reeking with corruption, and came to a dilapidated den, swarming with repulsive creatures, some rioting in drunkenness, others twisted into every variety of deformed shape, and all bearing unmistakeable marks of pain, endurance, and hard labor. There she saw that while the greater part were engaged in new pleasures and splendors for their more fortunate brothers of the other end of the city, a few stood over the rest with thongs and whips to keep them from touching a particle of what their own hands had thus made. Vala was too deeply moved by the sights she saw and the sounds she heard,—sights of suffering and sorrow,—sounds of war and discord,—to speculate, even if she had been disposed, on this strange perplexity of condition. She ascended mournfully to the little cell which she had been compelled to select for her own occupancy, during the period of her preparatory discipline.

Early the next morning after her arrival in the Gnome city, she arrayed herself in her tastiest garb, and set out for the workshop of the Song-Smith. He lived in a spacious hall, that

seemed to be constructed entirely out of the lungs of mortals, save that the floors were made of box-wood, the sleepers of brass, and the beams of catgut. On the sides stood confused crowds of inanimate figures, most of them grotesque and monstrous, but a few graceful and pleasing. They were, however, inanimate only when left alone; for if a stranger touched them, they gave out the fearfulest sounds that were ever heard in the witches chorus on the Brocken—sighs, shrieks, gibbers, hisses, wails and roars. They would scream like an infant in agony; they would howl like brutes in their rage; they would chatter like ghosts in the cold moonlight; and they would groan and whistle and tramp like hyenas in a wood. But let a friend or familiar approach them, and suddenly, their hideous screechings would change into Eolian harmonies more sweet and fascinating than the mystic runes engraven on tongue of the eloquent Bragi.

As Vala entered, she trembled to her inmost nerves. She could hardly reach the stand where the tall Song Smith sat in the midst of the instruments of his trade. He was gloomy and dark, and his eyes shot forth a strange unhalloved fire. "What do you want?" he asked in a soft southern tongue, but with a severe and repulsive accent. "I want to be taught all the art and mystery of song," was the modest half articulated reply. "Sit down then, and sing," rudely continued the Smith. Vala almost sinking with agitation, essayed to sing an old rhyme about Sir Ulef and the Elves; but she was too much frightened to get beyond a single stave. The gloomy old Kobald frowned! Then she partially recovered herself, and sung in a wild monotonous tone, what seemed partly a melody and partly a chaunt. The air, we venture to say, was one that the

old Song-Smith, with all his experience, had never before heard, in all his born days.



Sir Ulef rose at the break of day,
Saddled his steed and galloped away;

Clattered the hoofs the stubble among
Merrily clurped the crickets and sung.

The Alfer danced in a forest ring
Round the green throne of the Erl King.

Glittered the moon on the falling dew,
The ravens croak and the owls too-who!

The Erl King's daughter, who led the band,
Reached Sir Ulef her lily-white hand.

Mournfully sighed through bushes and trees,
The muffled breath of the wailing breeze.

"Come now, Sir Ulef, and dance with me,
A garment of silk will I give to thee."

"I cannot tarry,—I must not stay,
For morning will bring my bridal day."

"A garment of silk so white and fine,
My mother bleached in the pale moonshine."

"I cannot tarry,—I must away,
For to-morrow is my wedding-day."

"A house of gold so shining and tall,
Built in the grottoes of Rubezthal."

"I cannot tarry, I must away,
Or comes there to me no wedding day."

"Sweet kisses of love shall be thy reward,
If thou'lt but dance on the bright greensward."

"I cannot—must not—I will not delay,
For to-morrow is my bridal day."

Glitters the moon in the falling dew,
The ravens croak, and the owls too-who.

"Thou wilt not, Sir Ulef, dance with me?
Nor bride nor bridal-day shalt thou see."

Fearfully flashes the fire of her eyes,
Down sinks Sir Ulef, never to rise.

Sir Ulef's Bride at her castle door,
Waited, but thither he never came more.

The Song Smith heard this singular ballad with ill-concealed impatience. "Hum!" after a time, he said, the wild fire radiating from his eyes, "what baroque and devilish stuff is that? It will not do, you have no manner, no style, no *aplomb*, no *tout ensemble*,—no, ah,—what do you call it,—but yet you have a voice,—go home! and come to me in three years! adieu!" Saying this, he bowed her down stairs.

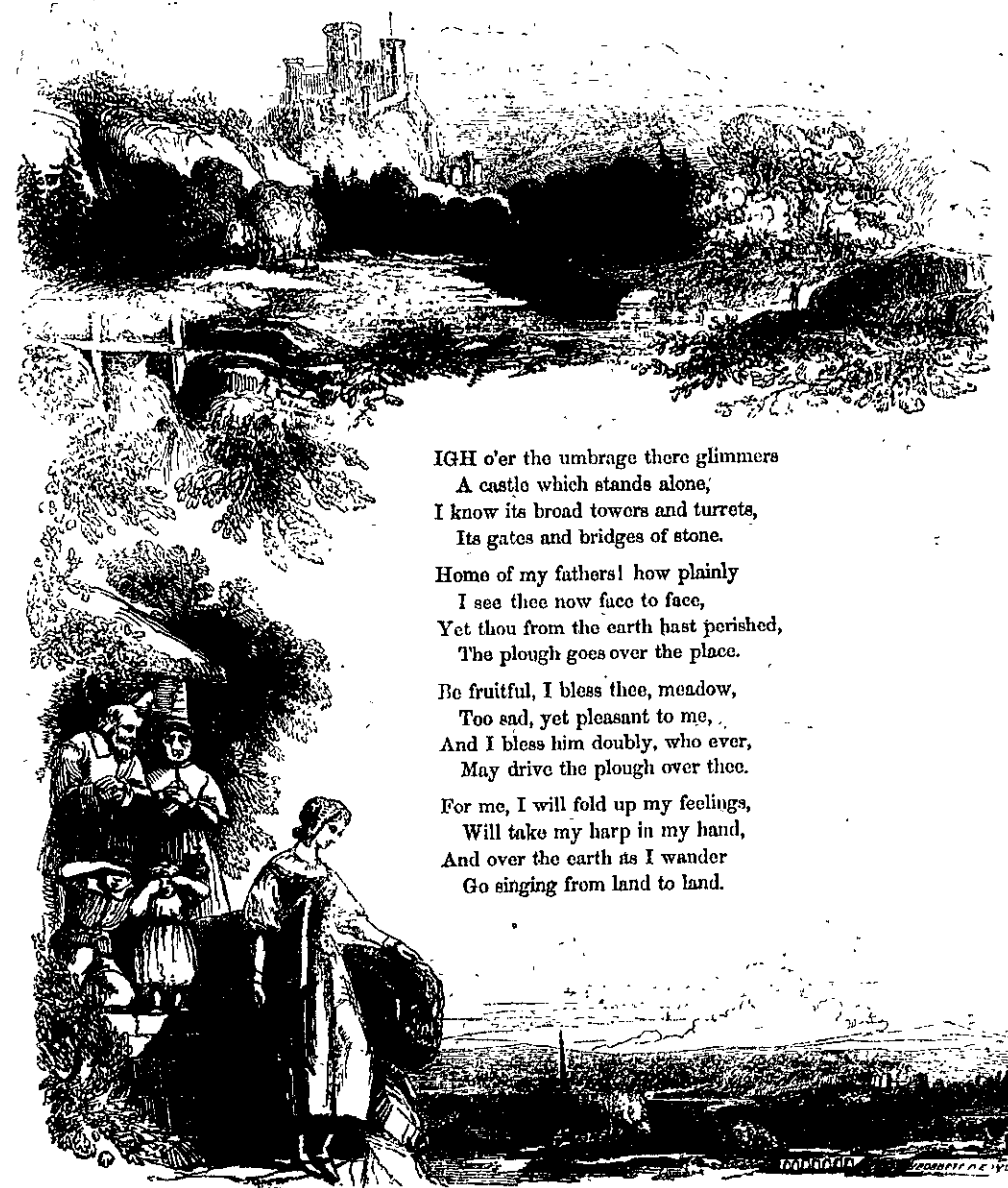
Poor Vala! The Peri driven from the gates of Paradise could not have been more sadly wounded and cast down, than she was when she heard this dread sentence, coming like a moan from the immeasurable voids. The sweet fancies of a life were turned into wormwood and gall. Her rainbows of

hope had suddenly vanished into thick night. A black unutterable despair covered the earth and the Heavens. Her limbs scarcely bore her to her little dark cell when she flung herself upon the bed and wept aloud in all the desolation of an inconsolable anguish. But it was not for herself she wept; she thought of her parents far away, struggling wearily under the heavy load of poverty; she thought of her brothers and sisters doomed to long lives of unrequited toil; she thought of the blight that would fall upon all the fine hopes she had conceived from the promises of the Changeable Lady.

"Oh," she said, "it would be so beautiful to sing, so beautiful to console the old and bowed down and broken hearts, so beautiful to scatter treasures among the poor, when I return among my good friends. But now I am forced down into the dark halls of Elidmir; I walk alone through the pale realms of Hela, whose palace is Misery, whose table is Hungar, and whose servant, Delay; Mitgard, the snake, encompasses me, and Nidhöggur, the dragon, will gnaw forever at the roots of my joy. Indeed, indeed, I shall wander, like Ran's daughter, the dolorous, with pale hair, from rock to rock, seeking warm hearts that I may clasp to my cold bosom."

In the midst of her repinings, a canary who hung a prisoner at the casement, warbled a farewell to the setting sun. She sprang from her bed took the bird and laid him close to her white breast. The sound had revived grateful reminiscences of the hours that she had formerly spent in the woods. Who, dearest Consoler, she said, taught thee to sing, who but the Alfater of whom the good mother speaks? Hast thou any Song-Smith? hast thou then years of apprenticeship; hast thou the *aplomb* and the *tout ensemble*, and all the other horrible things?

No! no! no! Then she put aside the bird and took up the cither, which was her constant companion, and sung parts of a rhyme, which she had once heard her mother sing, the music of which, perhaps, more than the words, was her inspiration. Perhaps too, in the closing stanza she fancied there was something suited to her own condition.



IGH o'er the umbrage there glimmers
A castle which stands alone;
I know its broad towers and turrets,
Its gates and bridges of stone.

Home of my fathers! how plainly
I see thee now face to face,
Yet thou from the earth hast perished,
The plough goes over the place.

Be fruitful, I bless thee, meadow,
Too sad, yet pleasant to me,
And I bless him doubly, who ever,
May drive the plough over thee.

For me, I will fold up my feelings,
Will take my harp in my hand,
And over the earth as I wander
Go singing from land to land.

The last verse was sung in a tone so plaintive, and yet so passionately sweet, that it arrested one who was passing below in the street. "*Per dio*," he said to himself, "but Dante's Beatrice never sang so divinely amid the choir of Paradise? Who can it be? I must see." He ascended to the room and entered. It was the Song-Smith himself—and the song he found, was one that had, years before, been made out of the incidents of his own early life.* He caught the girl in his arms; he smothered her with kisses; he showered whole flower-baskets of praises on her; in short, there was no bound to his enthusiasm. "Come," he said, "come learn with me! I will teach thee all I know; I will make thee the wonder of the world—a Mara—a Sontag—a Malibran." "No," answered the modest maiden, who could not easily forget the coldness of her first reception, and the repugnance with which she had been inspired by her experience of the Gnome City; "I hate your horrible Niffeheim, and I will never sing in it more." Then she tore herself petulently away.

She was as good as her word, and she never sang there, though the whole city afterwards offered her all the silver, and gold and precious gems in its palaces, to induce her to come.

* We rather suspect he stole it from the father of Peter Schlemihl.—see Notes.—Editor.



VI....HOME OF THE WHITE ELVES.



UT in the inscrutable decrees of the Nörnen, who sit at the pools of fate, poor Vala, despite her repugnance and resentment, was destined to go through her wearisome but fruitful years of discipline among the Gnomes. They were years of toil, of pain, and of struggle to her—years when she had to battle incessantly and with stout heart against the Black Spirits, who malignantly sought to seduce her into their infernal ways. They plied her with the poison draught of false praise, and drove her to madness with the ring and clatter of their foul discords. But she fought on resolutely to the end; until one day to her inexpressible delight, she was summoned to attend the mysterious ceremonies of that magical Litchtalfheim, or Home of the White Elves, for which she had so often yearned.

Her way thither led through a dreary lawn; no fresh dews fell upon the grass; no golden beams from the sun bathed it; and the perfume of flowers was changed into noxious exhalations. High walls, whose loop-holes gleamed ever and anon with many colored balefires, rose on every side of inextricable passages and lanes, soft with the mud and rubbish of a deluge. In the midst of all stood a dingy Dome, sacred in the day-light

to silence and rats; but whose fantastic front in the evening was beleaguered by eager impetuous crowds, some in rags, but mostly in jewelled dresses of ermine and silk. As she approached, a little boy with a link, beckoned her to a small door in the rear, which she entered, and, threading her way up endless winding stair-cases and along dark corridors, she came full upon a great open space, which had the look of an immense gloomy cavern. Strong smells of burning sulphur and fresh paint puffed out from its huge black jaws.

Such another confused, wonderful cave of the Imps she had never seen. It seemed as if all the objects of creation had been taken apart, and flung there into heaps. Faint lights flickered at intervals on the columns and walls, only serving to render the darkness more visible, and the forms more hideous and grotesque. In one place the trees stood on their tops; great feudal castles projected down from the midst of cities, hung like Fata Morgana in the air; carriages rode on the roofs of Swiss huts; and the vast ocean wrapped itself round a piece of gilt furniture. In another place, periwigs, skullcaps and coffins were irretrievably mingled with stew-pans and burnished armor. A motley crowd of all imaginable personages moved busily through the openings—cardinals, kings, mermaids, ghosts and Jack Puddings; gauze angels with little wings chatted with green snakes and red salamanders; fearful sepulchral figures were smoking pipes on the stuffed bodies of elephants; clowns twigg'd the nose of a sleeping Belshazzar; and undressed children sat eating lollipops from the outstretched legs of monstrous nondescripts.

Then, frightful discordant noises arose—screaming and snor-

ing and wailing—as if all the familiars of the Song-Smith had made this their Walpurgis rendezvous.



Whoop, scream, clatter, smash,
Kettles thunder, cymbals clash;
Trumpet, flute and violin,
Swell the preparation din;
Fiddles shriek, and oboes sigh,
Bassoons echo from the sky.
Small drums madly roar and bang,
Viola sob and howl and twang,
Demons all from lowest hell,
Who toll their fiend-world's dreadful knell.

But scarcely had Vala time to note her own surprise, when a bell sounded like the silver bell of the Alfer, and all the parti-colored figures glided away to their dens; the jar and tumult ceased; the trees and houses and waterfalls rose into their natural positions, and a broad flood of light poured suddenly in on all sides, as from ten thousand stars. Then she felt that she was at last near what she had so long sighed for. A mighty presence, like some deep master passion, hovered about her; she inhaled a rapturous inspiring atmosphere; her head swam with the vague dizziness of delight, and her whole being was roused into a ravishing strength and excitement. From the invisible depths there pealed into her inmost being a sound more delicious than she had ever before heard. It was grave and awful, as the booming of the forest when it is swept by the winds, yet sweeter than the strains of the Eolian when the zephyrs linger upon its chords. It seemed to be a song preluding some mighty anthem, and might have been called the song of the Spirit of Harmony, the words of which, as near as they may be recalled, ran in this wise;

The Spirit, I, whose mighty word,
Fluttered the primal solitude,
When Night, the ancient Mother heard,
And scattered all her dusky brood.

The blear-eyed Anarchs fled afar,
Through frost and blight and formless space,
Amid the loud discordant jar
Of planets wheeling to their place.

Ten thousand thousand sparkling zones,
All green with fields and bright with flowers,
Then wound in clear—ethereal tones,
The circle of the winged hours.

And Music wandered from her cells,
In piny groves and mountain-caves;
Breathed in the ear of ocean-shells,
The soft low murmur of the waves.

Chirruped with crickets in their nooks,
And hummed with bees and lowed with herds;
And leaped and laughed with gurgling brooks,
And carolled with the gleesome birds.

Awoke all primal melodies,
Which warp and warble on the wind;
With tempests swept the woods and seas,
And thrilled the hearts of human kind.

For all are echoes of my Voice
That rings harmonious through the whole,
In which the viewless motes rejoice,
And Suns go sounding as they roll.

When the sound of this glorious strain had ceased and died awfully away, like the expiring tones of an organ, Vala raised her eyes and found herself, in a moment, by some unaccountable and powerful enchantment, back into the early ages of Gaul; the sacred oaks of the Druids rose gloomily with their deep shadows around her; the altar of sacrifice burned in the woods; the crescent moon hung in the dark blue skies; a mystic wreath was on her brow; and her bosom swelled and palpitated with the fiercest contending impulses and passions. She had been transformed by the solemn charm into a priestess and a mother. A Roman general had won her most passionate love; he had left her, the base one, for another, and

now the fierce warriors and gloomy vengeful elders demanded his life at her hands. Oh! then how love and wrath, and superstition and pride battled in her pent-heart! How she plead with him in tones so sweet that they might have charmed the evil spirit out of Loki; how she threatened him as in the harsh roll of gongs! In the yearnings of an infinite despair she raised the knife over her sleeping children; in the prompting of as infinite a love, gave herself for their sakes to the flames. With what proud dignity, with what heart-wringing pathos, with what natural sweetness and tenderness, with what wild fire and fearful energy, she went through the varying phases of her new life, who shall describe? And when in that final agony of love and self-sacrifice, she fell in the dread temple of Irminsul, it seemed as if a tempest had dragged the sphered moon from its sky. She fell, apparently never to rise again.

But suddenly a roar like the crashing of Thor's hammer, and lightening flashes from ten thousand eyes, restored her to her own natural consciousness. She arose from the funeral pile, pale, trembling, timid; a myriad of up-turned delighted faces greeted her from the air; at each step her feet pressed innumerable wreaths and clusters of flowers from the solid earth; jeweled hands waved her the warmest greetings of ducal and royal hearts; a soft shower of golden rain enveloped her; and multitudes of voices on the breath of kisses, proclaimed that henceforth and for ever her name should be written in the Immortal Runes. Then, a stream of happiness poured into her soul such as mortal had never known,—such as the dwellers in Ashgard only feel when they ride with the heroes on the plains of Ida.

VII.....THE DRAGON SHIP ELLIDA.



NCE immersed in the witch element of the Enchanted Realms, Vala soon became its mistress, the bewitchingest of its many witches and fays. Her charms were more powerful and seductive than all that is told in the eastern fable of Scheherazade, or the northern sagas of Arne Magnusen. The power and rapidity of her magical transformations surpassed those even of the Changeable Lady, who had been the cause of so much early wonder. Now, a simple, tender, devoted peasant, she subverts the wiles of the famous devil, Robert of Normandy: then an orphan and subtler girl, she entrances the great army of the Tyrol; again she sports with Puck and Ariel and Robin Good fellow; and anon she raises the buried nations of Asia from their tombs. Wherever she waves her wand and speaks the magic words, new glories and splendors spring from the clouds. She travels over the whole of one quarter of the globe, and is everywhere welcomed as the cynosure and great Northern Star. All eyes are directed towards her movements; all hands are raised in plaudits; and all hearts are made glad by

her approach. She too, is delighted by the consciousness that she possesses so much ability to give pleasure to others ; but she is not elated into any insane joy. Nor amid the ovations of perpetual applause does she forget the good old parents who listen with overful hearts to the stories of her success ; but she sends back to their distant home those mountains of gems which in her earlier aspirations she had promised. Her poor neighbors, too, are made glad by the profusion with which she scatters jewels and treasures into their laps. She heals the wounds of their poverty with the precious salve of abundance and pours the balm of consolation into their stricken souls.

But now in the midst of her triumphs, the old scenes of her incantations find her no more ; she disappears—and her worshippers are inconsolable for her loss. She is out upon the seas which roll her to some distant land. The angry aegers of the tempest flap their pursuing winds behind her ; the hundred-footed trolls lash the waters into fury with their twisted and scaly tails ; huge sea-crabs and walruses lift the seathing billows upon their backs, and dash them down again fearfully into the briny deep ; but what recks the courageous Vala ! Her dragon-ship Ellida, whose iron jaws eat living coals, and whose lungs emit red hot smoke ; whose broad white wings sweep the clouds from the sky ; and whose feet are swift revolving wheels, walks fearlessly over the backs of all the monsters of the deep. In vain they breath their rage, and weave their spells ; she flies a race with the tempest and leaves the sea-gulls behind.

Vala, who stands dunmoved and serene upon the deck, shining like a star through the rifts of the clouds, recalls and

sings passages from the words of the excellent Tegner, where he depicts his noble hero Frithiof at sea.

" Helge on the strand,
 Chaunts his wizard spell,
 Potent to command
 Fiends of earth and hell.
 Gathering darkness shrouds the sky,
 Hark the thum-ler's distant roll,
 Lurid lightnings as they fly,
 Streak with blood the sable pole.
 Ocean boiling to its base
 Scatters wide its wave of foam,
 Screaming as in fleetest chase,
 Sea birds seek their island home.
 * * * *

Deeper and more oft,
 Yawns the gulf of death,
 There is whistling aloft,
 There is crackling beneath.
 Yet amidst the war of waves,
 Now pursuing, now opposed,
 Shock and blast Ellida braves,
 Gods her seamless fabric closed ;
 As a meteor's scudding light
 Shoots athwart the flashing deep,
 As a chamois launched in flight,
 Bounds o'er catarnet and steep."

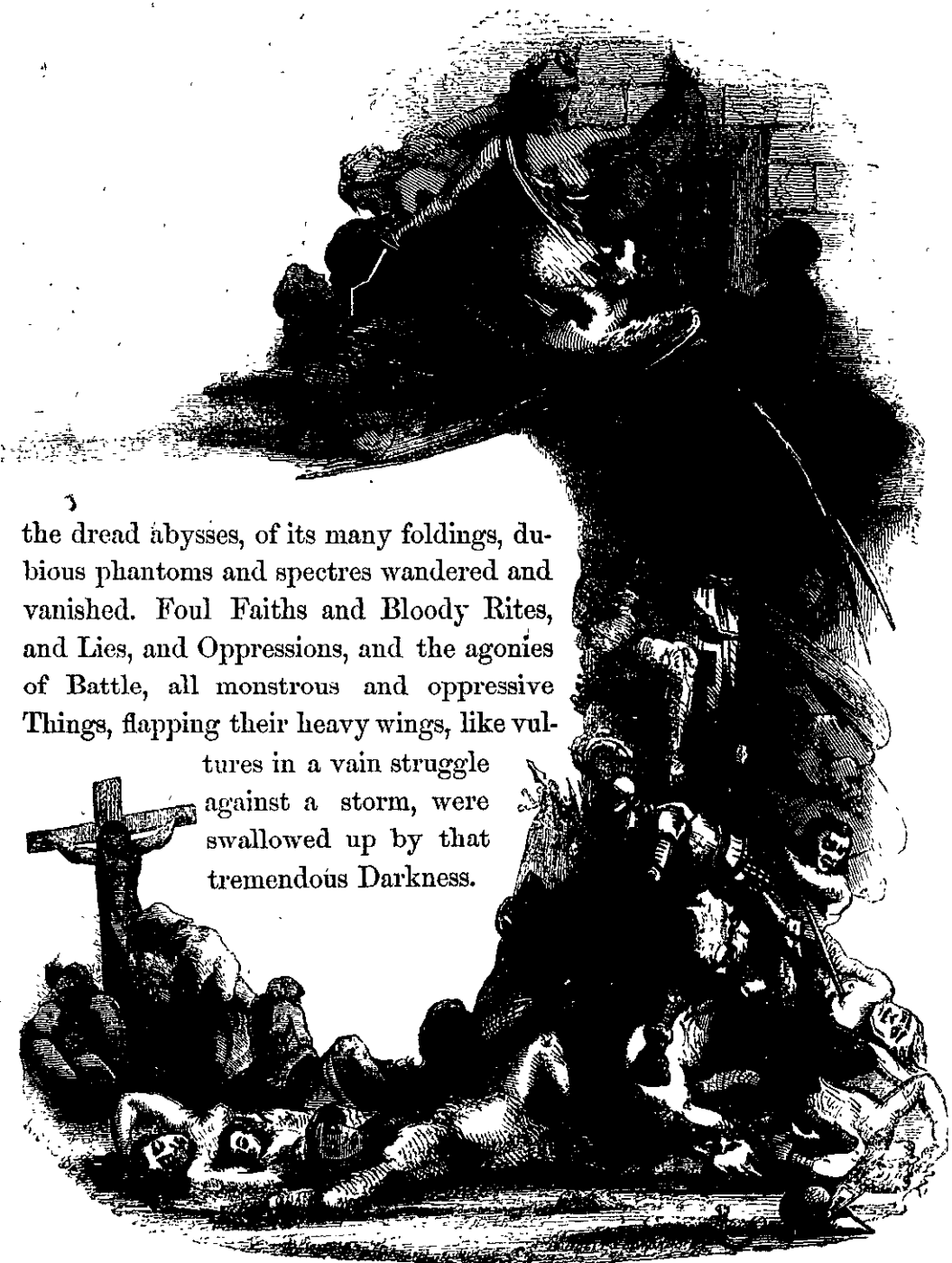
The beautiful soft tones of her voice, floating like a spell over the heaving seas, seemed to charm them into silence and rest. The frantic riot of the elements was at once subdued, and the great monsters of the deep, sunk sullenly back into their slimy beds.

Thus the brave Ellida glided, like the phantom-ship of the flying Dutchman, towards the setting sun ; and soon Vala saw a new earth arise out of the opening fogs, gigantic in its grandeur and resplendant with the beauty of groves. It stretched

from the vast dark ocean, to where its bounds were lost in the golden mists of evening. On the north, rose lofty palatial structures, thousands of miles in breadth, which shone like crystals in the sun; to the south, waved tropical forests and palm groves, where birds of exquisite and gorgeous plumage flitted, and awful mountains, covered with stately pines, were upheaved to the everlasting snows. Fields luxuriant with corn that might have filled the granaries of empires; orchards red and purple with the richest fruits; magnificent cities busy with trade and bursting with vast accumulations of wealth; pleasant villages sequestered in the blue shade of the hills, where the bells of cows and the songs of the laborers were heard; cataracts thundering from their steeps; an incomprehensible activity of life; a prodigious greatness of structure; a rushing sound as of multitudes advancing they knew not whither; ten thousand nameless signs and agencies of some new Work begun, some fresh Creation heaving out of chaos—all these things, so new, so strange, so grand, bewildered and oppressed Vala with a profusion and weight of emotions that she had never before felt. "This is, indeed, a new Earth," she exclaimed, "whose inhabitants fly through measureless spaces on the backs of flame-breathing griffins, and talk to each other from the distant extremities of their globe in the tongue of the lightnings."

As she approached the shore, there was heard behind her a roaring and a clamor as of ghouls mingled with hissings and wild sobs. A fearful quaking came over her that seemed bodeful of the crash of worlds. Then a Voice said, "Behind you is the past—look!" And she looked and saw a vast black cloud drawn over the east far back, in the dim vistas, deep down in

the dread abysses, of its many foldings, dubious phantoms and spectres wandered and vanished. Foul Faiths and Bloody Rites, and Lies, and Oppressions, and the agonies of Battle, all monstrous and oppressive Things, flapping their heavy wings, like vultures in a vain struggle against a storm, were swallowed up by that tremendous Darkness.



VIII.....GIRL; OR THE GOLDEN REALM.

WHEN Vala had stepped her foot upon the new Earth, she received into her being, with the perfume of the balmy atmosphere, a sense of indescribable peace and joy; all diseases seemed to have fallen from her limbs, and all sorrows from her mind. She would have rushed to join the multiplying groups of happy and free people that sprang up on every hand; but she was arrested by the approach of numberless men and women, dressed in garlands, and with their faces wreathed in smiles of joy, who came forward to bid her a hearty welcome. At first a band of sportive children, to whom her name was as familiar as that of an intimate friend, holding vessels of sweetest incense in their hands, and bearing on their arms baskets of roses, which they flung from time to time at her feet, stepped in advance of the rest, singing as they advanced

Lo! how quiet lies the ocean,
Like a mirror calm and fair,
Not a zephyr's softest motion,
Stirs the waves of purple air.

Seas, and storms it gave them pleasure,
To have borne Thee on their breast,
Well they knew the precious treasure,
Which they freighted to the West.

Then a chorus of beautiful women took up and prolonged the strain:

Welcome Vala, Norland's daughter,
To our deepest, warmest heart,
Sweet enchantress of the song-world,
Mistress of the realms of Art.

We, the children of that Vinland,
Which thy fathers sought of yore,
From its sea-board to its inland,
Bid thee welcome to our shore.

These were again sustained by an advancing company of young men, who added:

Beauty's blue-eyed Saga teller,
We have known and loved thee well;
Rapture-bringer, woe-dispeller,
Empress of the magic spell.

Singer of the mystic stories,
Born amid the sunny North;
Pour thy rich melodious glories,
In extatic rapture forth.

When finally the whole assembled host, uniting their several strains, poured forth their gratulations in this wise:

Discord-queller,
Woe-dispeller,
Song-queen of the mystic North;
Saga-singer,
Rapture-bringer,
Pure in heart and rich in worth.

Vala, when the whole assemblage had repeated this welcome, and as soon as she could recover from the surprise and delight with which she was overcome by the new and varied objects around her, responded in a song of greeting, in which certain well-known names were strangely mingled with words of enthusiastic compliment.

Hail, Vinland, hail,—green land of leaves,
Of lakes-like seas and boundless woods,
Whose mighty king of streams receives,
The tribute of ten thousand floods.
Two oceans guard thy broad domain,
All climates bless thy varied year,
Thy fields go waving white with grain,
Thy garners swell with ruddy cheer.

Thou'rt younger from thy Maker's hands,
Of fresher strength and nobler mind,
Than those outworn and wa-ted lands,
My flying feet have left behind!
For they are of the Past;—but thou
Unstained by crime, unbowed by fears,
Stand'st tiptoe on the Future's brow,
And fill'st the hope of coming years.

From wild New England's stormy coasts,
To California's golden gates,
Thy children spread in restless hosts,
Through circling brotherhoods of States,
Across thy vast unlorded plains,
Freedom for aye shall build her home.
The Arts shall rear their fairest fances,
Religion raise her noblest domes.

Scarcely had the last cadences of Vala's exquisite voice melted away into the distance, when all the gay forms about her appeared to vanish, and the same mysterious Voice which had so often sounded to her from the air, said,—“Before you is that future—look.” She turned, and instantly grew dizzy with an intolerable splendor. It seemed as if seven suns were blazing at once from a firmament of sapphire and garnet; yet as her eyes expanded to the light, she saw through a soft purple haze interminable plains profusely decked with the most odoriferous plants. Never before had it entered into her heart to conceive that the Earth could be so gloriously transformed. Bright colored birds and butterflies were flying in and out of the branches of gigantic but graceful trees, under which beautiful wild animals basked in harmony; countless children sported on velvet lawns, and amid dewy under-woods, which passing streams reflected in various brilliancy; the forms of noble women, of heroic men—ministered to by innumerable spirits, who laughed from the rose buds and danced in the rainbows



But she had not time to satiate her eyes with these beautiful sights, before other prospects opened and revealed to her new splendors of appearance, and new wonders and delights of life. She saw landscapes of entrancing beauty; she heard sounds of heavenly rapture; and innumerable societies of human beings, each complete and perfect in itself, yet circling about and interwoven with the rest, revolved in a kind of inextricable harmony, like the myriad effulgent stars which roll in unison through the skies. In the midst of each rose a central far-shining Palace, which seemed more magnificent than the fabled abodes of the oriental genii. As she gazed, the intoxicated girl whispered to herself "this must be the much famed Brimer, region of blessedness and undying growth, which is to succeed the twilight of the gods, when the Gjaller horn shall sound, and the old world fall into destruction and decay. This, the new Heaven and the new Earth, but dimly typified in the Home of the White Elves,—and which Voluspa the prophetess foretells,—when the Dwarfs and Giants shall have fled, when the Dragons shall die, when the Aser and the Alfer are no more, and the wise and the true and the good of all lands and times shall reassemble on Ida, whose pastures shall yield spontaneous plenty, and Baldér the Beautiful, reign forever." But while she was revolving those vague but impressive prophecies from the Past, the whole atmosphere became suddenly aglow, and across the heavens were written in mystic fire characters, as she was herself wafted beyond the reach of mortal eyes, these words, full of Hope and Peace, even to us, dear Readers:

HARMONY;
E PLURIBUS UNUM;



NOTES.

No. 1.

VON CHAMISSE is the author of the song of which Vala sings a few verses on page 33. The whole of it is so beautiful, even in a translation, that we subjoin it. We suspect that if the wood-cut had been large enough, Vala would have sung the whole; but as she did not, we give it to the reader here:

In dreams I go back to childhood,
I shake the years from my head;
How the images draw me homeward,
Which I thought so long since dead.

High o'er the umbrage there glimmers
A castle which stands alone,
I know its broad towers and turrets,
Its gates and bridges of stone.

From rusty armorial bearings,
The lions look friendly and true,
I greet the familiar old objects,
As I hasten the court-yard through.

There lies the Sphynx, at the fountain,
And there the gray fig tree gleams,
There in the shade of the casement,
I dream my earliest dreams.

I walk in the silent chapel,
I seek my ancestor's grave,
There is't; and there, from the pillars,
Hangs the old helmet and glaive.

My eyes, through their mists see legends,
But ah, can read them no more,
Tho' clear from the painted window,
The light falls broad on the floor.

Home of my fathers! how plainly
I see thee now face to face,
Yet thou from the earth hast perished,
The plough goes over the place.

Be fruitful, I bless thee, meadow!
So sad, yet pleasant to me,
And I bless him doubly, who ever,
May drive the plough over thee.

For me, I will fold up my feelings,
Will take my harp in my hand,
And over the earth as I wander
Go singing from land to land.

No. 2.

As the Mythology of the Northern Nations, which the author has used is less generally known than the classic Mythology of the Ancients, it may be convenient to some of our readers to present an outline of the leading features of the Scandinavian Myth. We condense therefore the following particulars from Crichton's "History of Denmark Sweden and Norway," published by Harper & Brothers.

It is from the mystic song or dialogue of Voluspa, that we derive our information of the cosmogony and sacred mythology of the North. We there read that in the beginning a vast chaos reigned over the universe; there was neither heaven nor earth, but only the bottomless abyss of Ginnungagap, and the two regions of Nifelheim and Muspelheim; the latter the abode of fire, where Surtur ruled; the other containing the well of Hvergelmer, whence issued twelve poisonous streams (Ellivagar,) which generated ice, snow, wind, and rain. From the connexion of heat and moisture proceeded drops, and hence was produced the giant Ymer, with his brethren the Rimthursar, the evil ones, who rose amid that limitless ocean of vapors which filled the immensity of space.

As yet the human species had no existence; when Odin, intent upon beautifying the universe, created a man and woman, Ask and Embla, from two pieces of wood (ash and elm) thrown by the waves upon the beach. These were the first pair, and the three Asen endowed them with life, comeliness and intellect.

The gods themselves inhabited Asgard, which may be considered as the Scandinavian Olympus. It contained a number of cities and halls, the largest and most splendid of which was named Gladheim, or the mansion of joy, wherein were twelve seats for the primary deities, besides the throne occupied by Allfader, the universal father. Another edifice erected for the goddesses was Vingolf, the abode of love and friendship. In Alfheim dwelt the luminous elves or fairies, a distinct race from the black genii that live under the earth. The celestial capital was overspread with the famous ash Ygdrasil, the tallest and most beautiful of all trees, whose branches covered the whole earth, and towered above the heavens. To preserve it evergreen, it was watered by the Nornor, the fates or destinies that distribute to man the various events of his life, good or bad.

Of the deities that inhabited Asgard, the first and greatest was Odin, the Jupiter and Mars of the North, Allfader, the father of the Asen (or Aser), creator and governor of the universe, the god of battles, and the patron of arts and magic.

His daughter Frigga (the earth) became his wife, and mother of the Asen; the firstborn of whom was Thor, the active, the swift, the strongest and bravest of gods and men. He presided over the air and the seasons, launched the thunder, and guarded mankind from the attacks of giants and evil genii with whom he waged perpetual war.

Balder, the second son of Odin, was the most graceful, eloquent, and amiable of

all the gods; endowed with every good quality, peysical and intellectual. Nothing could equal his beauty, which seemed to dart forth rays of light; his eyes shone with a lustre more brilliant than the morning star, and the hair of his eyebrows was compared to the whitest of all vegetables. To him belonged the power of appeasing tempests. His wisdom and mildness gave him authority over the other Asen, and his decrees, when once passed, were irreversible. But he seldom appeared in their assemblies, being neither addicted to their passions, nor fond of their warlike pursuits. His delight was to live peaceably in his palace of Breidablik (wide-shining), whose situation was indicated by the bright zone which during clear nights, shines in the vault of heaven.

The number of goddesses (Asynier) was twelve, and to each were assigned particular functions. Next to Odin in might and fame was his chaste spouse Frigga, the Juno and Ceres of the Scandinavians, who is to receive after death such wives as have been distinguished by heroic fidelity. She was mother of fertility and plenty. Gna was the messenger whom she despatched over the world to perform her commands. Fylla was entrusted with the custody of her toilet, and admitted into her most important secrets. Freya, the daughter of Niord, often confounded with the wife of Odin, was second to her only in honor and dignity. She was the Venus of the North, the parent of all connubial enjoyments, the dispenser of happy marriages and easy parturition. Abandoned by her husband Odur, she continually wept his absence, and her tears were drops of pure gold.

Besides these female divinities, there were twelve Valkyries (choosers of the slain), nymphs of paradise, whose office was to pour out mead for the brave in Valhalla, and also to attend them in battle.

For a time the earth presented the image of happiness; innocence and knowledge reigned universally; and gold became the most common of metals. In Asgard the gods lived joyfully, playing with their golden tablets until the arrival of the giant maids, whom they married. That alliance proved the root of mischief: avarice and the love of gain, introduced by Gullveiga (the weigher of gold), spread among men; while the peace of the celestial inhabitants was disturbed by ill omens and fearful presages. From the giant brood descended Loki, the Evil One; the artificer of fraud, who surpassed all created beings in perfidy and cunning. By his wife Angerbode (messenger of wrath) he had three children.

The heavenly empire depended on the fate of Balder. During his life it was secure. His death, however, had been predicted; and he was at last killed by the blind God Hoder, whose punishment was as terrible as his crime. With cords made from the entrails of his own son he was bound to a rock; a serpent above him dropped poison on his face, which his wife Sign, collected into a basin, and emptied as often as it was filled. While the venom distilled upon him, he howled with horror, and writhed his body with such violence as to produce earthquakes. In that dreadful situation he must remain until the Ragnarok, the last day for gods and men shall approach.

Various and terrible presages are to be the harbingers of this final destiny of the

world. The axe-age, the storm age, the sword age, and the wolf-age, will distress the plains of the earth. Iniquity shall universally prevail; when sons shall be the murderers of their fathers, and brothers stain themselves with brothers' blood. Immediately shall succeed three long, desolating winters, and snow from the four corners of the world, with no summer intervening. Prodiges more awful will follow. The great dragon rolling himself in the ocean, shall cause the land to be overflowed, and vomit forth into the air torrents of venom. The giants will rage, the dwarfs sigh at the doors of the rocks, which will dash against each other, while Loki breaks loose and regains his freedom. The ash Ygdrasil will crack and bend, and all the trees be torn up by the roots. The wolf Fenris, bursting his chains and opening his enormous jaws shall devour the sun; then will the stars fly from their places and all nature reel with horror and dismay.

Meantime, Heimdall shall wind the Gjaller horn, to rouse the deities to battle. In vain will Odin seek advice at the well of Mimer. Armed for the strife, he marches his brilliant squadrons to the plain of Vigrid where the combatants on both sides annihilate each other. Fenris devours Odin, but perishes at the same instant by the hand of Vidur. Thor beats the serpent Midgard to the earth, but is himself suffocated in the flood of venom which he emits. Heimdall and Loki fall in single combat, and Tyr is killed by the hound Garmr. Freyr, having lost his sword, meets his death from Surtur, who winds up the catastrophe by setting fire to the world, the conflagration of which is thus sung by the Vala:

"The sun all black shall be,
The earth sink in the sea,
And every starry ray,
From heaven fade away,
While vapors hot shall fill
The air round Ygdrasil,
And, flaming as they rise,
Play towering to the skies."

But the prophecies of the Northern sibyl do not terminate with this scene of universal destruction. She invokes a deity greater than those that have perished. A new heaven and a new earth shall arise out of chaos; and it is promised that man, in this other world shall live eternally happy or miserable, according to his actions. The human race, two of whom are to escape the general doom, shall be restored and nourished by the dew of the morning. Nor will Vidur and Vale, sons of Odin, perish, but live in the Ida plain where Asgard stood; the children of Thor will save themselves by their mighty hammer; and the daughter of the Sun will again tread the bright path of her mother. Then will Balder and Hodder return from Hela, (or Hell) and revive the ancient magnificence of the gods in the saloon of Odin. The celestial regions, where the blessed will reside, are Brimer and Sindre; but the best of them is Gilme, which is built of shining gold."

THE END.