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## **Illustrations of northern antiquities, from the earlier Teutonic and Scandinavian romances**

**Weber, Henry William**

**Edinburgh [u.a.], 1814**

Lady Grimhild's wrack

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## LADY GRIMILD'S WRACK.

THIS piece, being the first of three on the same subject, in the *Kæmpe Viser*, is given here on account of its relationship to the Teutonic Romances, of which Mr Weber has given a digest in this work. The following account of it is given by the editor of 1695.

“ Hereafter follow three ballads of Hero Hogen and Lady Grimild, of whom Saxo Grammaticus writes in his 30th Book, (*the passage is found in Lib. xij. F. 118. b. c. Edit. Basil. 1534.*) in the History of the Duke Saint and Martyr Knut; from which it is obvious to remark, that the piece is very old. Lady Grimild's father was Nögling, who is also called Niding, and lived on the island between Copenhagen and Kroneborg, which is called Hvæn, after Maiden Hvenild, by whom the Hero Hogen had his son Rankè. On this island are still to be seen the vestiges of strong-holds, graves, and foundations of buildings, where stood formerly these four castles, Nörborg, Sönderborg, Tarshöy, and Hammer. Here lived Lady Grimild, whose first husband was Sigfred Horne, as is stated in the *Heldenbuch*. But on the occasion of her second marriage, she invited her two brothers, Sir Hogen and Sir Folqvard, and caused them both to be put to death, as is related in the ballad.

“ The Swedish Chronicle, however, tells the story somewhat differently, and says, that, after Folqvard had slain the kemps whom Lady Grimild turned out upon him, learning that his brother was slain at

Nörborg, he was so enraged, that he drank a hornful of the blood of the dead, and so died with the other kemps. Upon which she went to Nörborg; and observing that the Hero Hogen had the better of the combat with the kemps there, she made an agreement with him, that after her kemps had once brought him to the ground, he should make no attempt to get upon his legs again, but should defend himself upon his knees as well as he could. On which this artful woman caused pease to be strewed upon wet hides upon the draw-bridge, where three of her kemps at once attacked the Hero Hogen, who fell upon his knees, and received a wound of which he afterwards died. He, nevertheless, slew the three kemps; and with the consent of Lady Grimild, in order that this race of heroes might not utterly fail, he became the father of a son by the maiden Hvenild. This son of Hero Hogen's, called Rankè, revenged the death of his father and his uncle upon his aunt Lady Grimild, whom he took with him to Hammershöy, to shew her Niding's treasures, which his father had left him at Nöge-len. When she had entered the cavern with him, he leapt out, and locked the door on her; so she remained sitting there, and died of hunger."

So far the last editor of the *Kæmpe Viser*, who seems not to have been acquainted with the *Wilkina* and *Niflunga Sagas*, afterwards published, in 1715, at Stockholm by Peringskiöld. How popular the story was seven or eight centuries ago, may be learnt from the following passage in Saxo Grammaticus: "Tunc cantor—sub involucro rem prodere conabatur —. Igitur speciosissimi carminis contextu notissimam Grimildæ erga fratres perfidiam de industriâ memorare adorsus, famosæ fraudis exemplo similitum ei metum ingenerare tentabat." Sax. Gram. Hist. Dan. Lib. xij.

With the circumstances of the story, as detailed in the *Teutonic Romances*, the reader is already acquainted. In the *Wilkina Saga*, a work which is in few hands, most of them are found, although with considerable variation as to names and places, and minute particulars. As we attach no historical authority to our ballad, we shall select from

the antient prose legend only a few passages which are most curious in another point of view.

The sea-lady, who makes so striking a figure in the ballad, is thus introduced, c. 338, p. 458: "When the others laid themselves down to sleep, Hogni took all his arms, and went out along the banks of the stream, under a clear moonlight, which enabled him to see his way distinctly. Now comes Hogni to a water which is called Mori, and there he sees some human beings on the water, and sees their clothes lying near the water between the two streams. He takes the clothes, and hides them; and these persons were no other than those that are called Mer-women, whose natural element is the sea or water. These Mer-women had gone out into the Rhine to sport. Now called the Mer-women to him, and begged him to give them their clothes; and came up out of the water. Now answers Hogni, 'First tell me where we may best cross the river; if you will not tell me what I ask of you, you shall not get your clothes.' Then said she, 'you may get safe over this river, but by no means return, however much you may exert yourself.' Now draws Hogni his sword, and kills the Mer-woman, cutting in two both her and her daughter.

"Hogen, advancing farther along the banks of the river, saw the ferryman with his boat in the middle of the stream, called to him, and, in order to make himself the more interesting to him, tells him he comes from Earl Elsung's land. The ferryman tells him that he cared as little about Earl Elsung as about any body else, and only carried people over for ready payment. Hogen offers him his gold bracelet if he will ferry him over; which the ferryman accepts with the more readiness, because he knows it will be a very acceptable present to his handsome young wife. Hogen orders him to row more against the stream, which he says was no part of his agreement; but Hogen compels him. In the mean time, Gunnar was ferrying over his men in small parties, in a skiff he had found, which the strength of the current upset, and the men with difficulty reached the land. Hogen now took Gunnar, with 100 men, on board the ferry-boat, and himself plying the oars somewhat too lustily, they broke in his hands. After bestowing some

hearty execrations on the carpenter who had made them so weak, he drew his sword, and struck off the head of the ferryman, who sat opposite to him. The King Gunnar exclaimed against such an act of wanton barbarity; but Hogen excused it on the score of good policy, to prevent his giving warning of their arrival."

Of the circumstance of Grimild being starved to death in the treasury, the reader has already found a variety in Mr Weber's digest of the Lay of the Nibelungen, to which these ditties are only an appendage; but here it may not be improper to remark, that all these treasuries were either natural caverns in mountains, or *earth-houses*, (as they were called,) built under ground in hillocks, the entrance to which, being concealed by trees and underwood, was known only to those to whom they belonged. Here money, plate, jewels, armour, or whatever was more precious, was deposited for security against any sudden invasion, such as they were constantly exposed to; and those who were interested in preventing the place from being explored, industriously propagated reports of its being the retreat of a *Drac* (dæmon) of the most malignant and terrible description. Every chief had his peculiar cavern, treasury, or hiding-place, which was known only to those whom it most concerned. Caverns of this kind are every where pointed out at this day in Norway, Sweden, and the Highlands of Scotland; and, if they are but sufficiently large and dark, never without some terrible story of the dragon or demon, who was encountered by the warrior, harper, or bag-piper, who, in quest of the treasure, ventured to advance too far. As it not unfrequently happened, that the whole family to which such a depôt belonged was cut off at once, the secret of its existence was lost; and being afterwards accidentally discovered, the strange treasure, combined with the popular belief of the place being the den of a dragon or dæmon, (for all dragons were dæmons,) gave rise to the common superstition of dragons brooding over hidden treasures; and, perhaps, was also in some degree connected with the belief of the *dwarfs*, who live in *hollow hills*, being invariably possessed of immense riches. It is also very credible, that the vanity of him who first explored the cavity often induced him, on coming to

the light of day again, to astonish his friends with strange stories of the dangers he had encountered, and the monsters he had subdued; and it is also worthy of notice, that it was one of the highest pretensions of those who affected to understand *magic runes*, that they were able to charm, or put to flight, *the dragon who brooded over heaps of gold*; and that dragons uniformly chose for their residence such places as we have been describing. These superstitions, the relics of antient manners, are found diffused every where over Europe and Asia, and wherever else the Asæ have settled.

The oldest and most remarkable *Gothic* treasury or earth-house now remaining, and which I consider as the greatest architectural curiosity in Europe, is what is vulgarly called the Tomb of Agamemnon, at Mycenæ, which has lately been cleared out and examined with the most accurate minuteness, by the Earl of Elgin, who is likely soon to favour the public with his delineations and description.

As one of the heroes drinking human blood has already been mentioned, we give the following stanzas on that subject, from the second ballad of Lady Grimild's Wrack, in the *Kæmpe Viser*. There is something horrible in the solemnity of the last stanza.

“ It was Hero Hogen,  
He rais'd his helmet syne :  
'I burn all so sorely  
Under hard brynie mine !

“ For-foughten all and weary,  
And quail'd this heart of mine :  
Might God, my heavenly father, grant  
I had a horn of wine !

“ Up he struck his helmet ;  
He drank the human blood :  
' *In nomine Domini !*  
Was Hero Hogen's word.”

## LADY GRIMILD'S WRACK.

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH KÆMPE VISER, p. 55.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1591.

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*Det var stoltè Fru Grimild,  
Hun lader miøden blandè :  
Hun biuder til sig de raskè ridder  
Af allè fremmedè landè, &c.*

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It was proud Lady Grimild  
Gar'd mask the mead sæ free,  
And she has bidden the hardy knights  
Frae ilka frem countrie.

She bade them come, and nae deval,  
To bargane and to strife ;  
And there the Hero Hogen  
Forloot his young life.

It was the Hero Hogen,  
He's gane out to the strand,  
And there he fand the Ferryman  
All upo' the white sand.

" Hear thou now, gude Ferryman,  
Thou row me o'er the sound,

And I'll gie thee my goud ring ;  
It weighs well fifteen pound."

" I winna fare thee o'er the sound,  
For a' thy goud sae red ;  
For and thou come till Hvenild's land,  
Thou wilt be slaën dead."

'Twas then the Hero Hogen,  
His swerd out he drew,  
And frae the luckless Ferryman  
The head aff he hew.

He strak the goud ring frae his arm,  
Gae it the Ferryman's wife :  
" Hae, tak thou this, a gudely gift,  
For the young Ferryman's life."

It was the Hero Hogen,  
He danner'd on the strand ;  
And there he fand the Mer-lady  
Sleeping on the white sand.

" Heal, heal to thee, dear Mer-lady,  
Thou art a cunning wife ;  
And I come in till Hvenild's land,  
It's may I brook my life ?"

" It's ye hae mony a strang castell,  
And mickle goud sae red ;  
And gin ye come till Hvenöe land,  
Ye will be slaën dead."

'Twas then the Hero Hogen,  
His swerd swyth he drew,  
And frae the luckless Mer-lady  
Her head aff he hew.



Sae he has taen the bloody head,  
 And cast it i' the sound:  
 The body's croppen after,  
 And join'd it at the ground.

Sir Grimmer and Sir Germer  
 They launch'd sae bald and free,  
 Sae angry waxt the wild winds,  
 And stormy waxt the sea.

Sae angry waxt the wild winds,  
 And fierce the sea did rair;  
 In twain in Hero Hogen's hand  
 Is brast the iron air.

In twain it brast, the iron air,  
 In Hero Hogen's hand;  
 And wi' twa gilded shields then  
 The knights they steer'd to land.

Whan they were till the land come,  
 They ilk' ane scour'd his brand,<sup>\*</sup>  
 And there sae proud a maiden  
 Saw what they had in hand.

Her stature it was stately,  
 Her middle jimp and sma;  
 Her body short, her presence  
 Was maiden-like witha'.

They've doèn them till Nörborg,  
 And to the yett sae free:  
 "O whare is now the porter,  
 That here should standing be?"

<sup>\*</sup> This ceremony of *whetting* and *wiping* their weapons in the Danish Ballad, as here and in Sir Ebbé's Daughters in Buröe, is generally somewhat better timed than in the Scottish ballads, where it commonly takes place when the heroes are likely to have thought of something else.

" It's here am I, the porter  
That here stand watch and ward ;  
I'd bear your tidings gladly,  
Wist I but whence ye far'd."

" Then hither are we come frae  
A' gait whare we hae gane ;  
Lady Grimild's our sister—  
It's a the truth I've sayn."

In syne cam the porter,  
And stood afore the deas ;  
Fu' canny i' the tongue was he,  
And well his words could place.

Fu canny i' the tongue was he,  
And well his words could wale :\*

" There out afore your yett stand  
Twa wordy kemps but fail.

" It's out there stand afore your yett  
Twa sae well-wordy men ;  
The tane he bears a fiddle,  
The tither a gilded helm.

" He that bears a fiddle bears 't  
For nae lord's meat or fee ;  
And wharesoe'er they come frae,  
Duke's sons I wat they be."

It was proud Lady Grimild  
Put on the pilche sae fine.  
And she is to the castell yett  
To bid her brithers in.

" Will ye gae till the chamber  
And drink the mead and wine ;

\* This is a favourite expression, and is found in a number of other Danish ballads.

And sleep upon a silken bed  
Wi' twa fair ladies mine ?"

It was proud Lady Grimild  
Put on the pilche sae braw,  
And she's intill the ha' gane  
Afore her kempis a'.

" Here sit ye a', my merry men,  
And drink baith mead and wine ;  
But wha will Hero Hogen sla,  
Allerdearest brither mine ?

" It's he that will the guerdon fa,  
And sla this Hogen dead,  
Sall steward o' my castle be,  
And win my goud sae red."

It's up and spak a kemp syne,  
A lording o' that land,  
" It's I will win your guerdon,  
Forsooth, wi' this right hand.

" It's I will fa your guerdon ;  
Sla Hero Hogen dead ;  
Be steward o' your castell,  
And win your goud sae red."

And up spake Folqvar Spillemand,  
Wi's burly iron stang :  
" Come thou within my arms' length,  
I'll mark thee or thou gang !"

The first straik fifteen kempis  
Laigh to the eard did strik :  
" Ha, ha, Folqvar Spillemand !  
Well wags thy fiddlestick !"

Syne dang he down the kempis  
 Wi' deadly dints and dour ;  
 And braid and lang the brigg was  
 Whare they fell in that stour.

Aneath were spread wet hides, and  
 Aboon were pease sae sma,  
 And Hero Hogen stumbled,  
 And was the first to fa'.

It was the Hero Hogen  
 He wad win up again :  
 " Hald, hald, my dearest brither,  
 Our paction well ye ken.

" Ye keep your troth, my brither ;  
 Still keepit it maun be ;  
 And ance thou till the eard fa,  
 Nae rising is for thee."

Sae moody Hero Hogen is,  
 Still keep his word will he ;  
 Till he has got his death-straik  
 A-fighting on his knee.

Yet dang he down three kempis ;  
 Nane o' the least were they :  
 Wi' hammers syne he brast whare  
 His father's treasures lay.

And him betid a luck sae blyth,  
 He gat the lady's fere,  
 And she was the proud Hvenild, that  
 A son to him did bear.

\* The readers of the real histories, as well as of the romances of the middle ages, will find nothing unnatural or incredible in the conditions of this combat, any more than in the agreement entered into between Folqvad and Grimild respecting his marriage, however extraordinary they may appear when judged of by the criterion of modern manners.

Rankè, \* hight that kemp, that  
 Revenged his father's dead :  
 Grimild in the treasury,  
 She quail'd for want o' bread.

Sae drew he frae that land out  
 Till Bern in Lombardy ;  
 There liv'd amang the Danish men,  
 And kyth'd his valour hy.

His mither she gaed hame again,  
 And Hvenske-land bears her name ;  
 'Mang gallant knights and kempis  
 Sae wide is spread their fame.

\* In the Wilkina and Nifunga Saga, cap. 367, p. 493, it is stated, that after Hogni had received his death-wound, Theoderic went to him, and inquired how he was? On which Hogni informed him that he might live a few days, but must certainly die of the wounds he had received. " Then King Tidrich caused Hogni to be carried to his inn, and his wounds to be bound up. For this office he sent a female relation of his own, called Herad. In the evening, Hogni requested Tidrich to give him this lady as his companion for the night, which was readily granted. In the morning, Hogni advised her to call the son which she should afterwards bear to him, *Aldrian*. At the same time he gave her the keys of the vault of Sigisfrod, where the Niebelung treasures were kept, which were to be delivered to her son Aldrian when he came to man's estate. And thereafter died Hogni, &c."

## NOTES ON LADY GRIMILD'S WRACK.

"There he fand the Mer-lady  
Sleeping o' the white sand."—P. 281, v. 8.

The reader may compare this situation of the Mermaid with that of Proteus, in the fourth rhapsody of the *Odyssey*, and the imitation of that in the fourth Book of Virgil's *Georgica*.

The existence of these sooth-saying syrens of the wave has been generally believed in every part of Asia and Europe, and has been as often defended as questioned, not only by the most learned philosophers, but by the most grave divines in modern as well as in ancient times. Those who have leisure and curiosity to amuse themselves with the waste of ingenuity and erudition which has been devoted to this subject, may consult *Girald. in Nymphis, Natal. lib. 8, Eustath. in Hom. Il. lib. xiix; Plat. Atl.; Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. 9, c. 4. Ed. Bip.; Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. lib. 12. c. 8.; Plutarch's* entertaining treatise *περί των ἰαλιονότων χερστέριων*; the learned *Eric Pontoppidan's Nat. History of Norway, &c. &c.*

As the anecdotes preserved of these marine people, both male and female, in various countries and ages, are so similar as to leave us no doubt of their being all referable to the same origin, we shall not detain our readers with vain distinctions about *Greek, Gothic, and Celtic*, such distinctions having in general produced little else but nonsense, whenever they have been attempted. The following notices are brought forward rather with a view of shewing the general consent of the various ages and nations on this subject; and offering a conjecture as to some of the phenomena by which such delusions were first created, and have been since continued. That the theories by which they were reduced to a system, and became the objects of reasoning speculation, came to the Greeks from

the Goths, and to the Goths from India, (the great cradle and nursery of *Man* and of *Mind*;) was the opinion of the best informed among the antients: "Those," says Plutarch (*de defect. orac.*) "appear to me to have solved many doubts and difficulties, who have assigned to the dæmons and genii an intermediate place in the creation between gods and men, and have thus discovered a means of communion between us and the superior natures; whether this doctrine originated with Zoroaster and the Magi, or was brought among us by Orpheus out of Thrace, &c."<sup>1</sup>

For the extraction and relationships of this dubious race, the best authorities are old Hesiod (*Theog.*) and the Eddas. Of their power, passions, and other peculiarities, we must be contented to form our opinions from their history, and the anecdotes with which credulity has furnished us. Their number is uncertain; and those who have attempted to fix it, have spoken in very vague terms, and made no allowance for their wide dispersion and generally-allowed fecundity, which we find most frequently exemplified in their intercourse with beings of a superior or inferior nature:

Ἄνται μὲν θνητοῖσι παρ' ἀνδράσι κρηθεύουσι  
 ἀθάναται, γίνονται δὲ τοῖς ἰπυκίδα τέκνα.<sup>2</sup>

HES. THEOG. l. 1018.

Hesiod speaks of fifty:

— Νηρῶς ἀμύμονος ἕξογόνοντα  
 Κοῦραι πιστάκοντα, ἀμύμονα ἔργ' ἰδύϊαι.<sup>3</sup>

Ibid. l. 263.

<sup>1</sup> Both these conjectures are probably right; and we beg to recommend, in a particular manner, to the consideration of the readers of the Eddas, the history of the Thracian Orpheus, and the singular coincidence between some of the most remarkable passages in it and that of the Gothic Odin. —The modern hymns ascribed to Orpheus, are as little the production of Orpheus, as Sæmund's Eddas are the production of Odin or of Braga. It seems hardly possible, that the songs of the Thracian bard and mythologist, had they even been committed to writing, could have been understood in Greece so late as the age of Lycurgus, (the preserver, and most probably the *author*, of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*;) as, long before then, commerce, and a more settled state of society in Greece, had modelled their once common dialect in such a manner, as to make it quite a new language. At the same time, it is very likely that many of the Gothic (*Thracian*) hymns and legends may have been preserved among the Greeks, as our ballads have been among us, and may even now remain, having been incorporated with other pieces of the kind, in the *all-embracing* rhapsodies of "The Tale of Troy divine."—See the introduction to these ballads in this work.

<sup>2</sup> This is the oriental and gothic doctrine of the origin of giants, heroes, and demi-gods, which we find also in the sixth chapter of *Genesis*, and fourth verse;—so, at least, the Greek translators have understood that passage. In the Danish Bible, these *Giants* are very properly called *Kæmps*; the cautious Swedish translators have used the equivocal term, *tyrants*, which is a compound of *Tyr*, *Thyr*, or *Thor*, and means *eminently powerful men*.

Homer names thirty-three,\*

Ἀλλὰ μὲν ἂν κατὰ βίβλος ἄλλος Νηρηίδες ἦσαν

IL. B. 18.

who were in the train of Thetis; and Plato (*Atlant.*) mentions one hundred.

The elder Pliny informs us (*Hist. Nat. lib. 9. c. 4. Ed. Bip.*) that an embassy was sent from Olysipo (*Lisbon*) on purpose to inform the Emperour Tiberius, that in a certain grotto, or cavern, a Triton, of the same shape under which he is usually designated, had been distinctly seen, and heard blowing his conch, or spiral shell. "Nor," says the historian, "are we to disbelieve the stories told of Nereides compleatly covered over with rough scales; as one has actually been seen on the same coast, and the inhabitants heard at a great distance her lamentable whinings and howlings, when she was dying; and his lieutenant wrote to Augustus, that a number of Nereides had been found dead on the coast of Gaul. Several distinguished men of equestrian rank, have assured me, that they themselves have seen off the coast of Gades (*Cadiz*), a Mer-man, whose whole body was of a human form. He was accustomed to come on board ships in the night-time, and the part upon which he stood gradually subsided, as if pressed down by his weight, till, if he staid long, it sunk altogether."

Here we have a very remarkable story of an apparition on board a ship at sea, established upon such authority as no reasonable man can question; and the reality of such appearances is still confidently affirmed from their own experience, by mariners in every country; who, on such occasions, supposing the phantom to be the devil, have recourse to crucifixes, holy water, *pater nosters*, or such other prayers or spells, as religion or superstition suggest. As it cannot well be supposed, that *all* these people are either themselves deceived, or wish to deceive others, several useful purposes<sup>2</sup> may be answered, by endeavouring to throw some light upon a subject, which, at first glance, appears not a little mysterious and embarrassing.—In the story just quoted, the *subsiding of the vessel* under

\* Of all the specimens of bad taste and faulty composition adduced by Pope in the "Bathos," perhaps there is not one more perfect in its kind, than his own translation of this passage of the *Iliad*. It would be difficult to specify such another jumble of contradictions and nonsense. In disposing of such a string of compound Greek names in English rhyming numbers, we grant that epithets and amplifications were necessary, but these were suggested by the *names themselves*; Eustathius had explained them all; and if Pope himself neither understood the text nor the commentary, he ought to have had recourse to some of his more learned friends who did.—This censure is not meant to extend farther than to the passage specified, which, as having been written by Pope, in the full maturity of his taste and judgment, is really a curiosity.

<sup>2</sup> The story of Maclean of Lochbuy is still fresh in the memory of every one; and this is not the only instance in which such delusions have been followed by the most fatal consequences, which could have happened only to people who were unable to refer them to any natural cause.



the weight of the phantom, must be imputed to the fears of the spectators. They felt their hearts sink within them at the sight, and naturally enough imagined that the vessel was sinking under them. Had any vessel ever been sunk under such circumstances, it is hardly probable that any of the crew, already unnerved and palsied by terror, could have survived to tell the tale. But the existence of the appearance described by the Roman knights being admitted, it remains for us only to say, that there is no necessity for believing that there was any *trick* in the case; and that it was not a *Mer-man*, but a real and virtual *Chimæra* begotten upon a cloud.—*Centaur*s of the same description have often been seen by travellers on horseback; and we have no doubt, but most of our readers will, from their own recollection and experience, be disposed to confirm our opinion, that many of the most imposing deceptions of sight, arise from the power of reflecting objects, which certain dispositions of light and shade give to clouds. Nor is the solution of such phenomena either incurious or unimportant; as it furnishes one reason why, in all hilly and cloudy regions, and in the neighbourhood of rivers, lakes, and morasses, the stories of ghosts, giants, dwarfs, mer-men, mermaids, kelpies, spunkies, &c. &c., are more common than in level and dry countries:

(“ Quis Deus, incertum est) habitat Deus. \*

Si tibi occurrit vetustis arboribus, et solitam altitudinem egressis frequens lucus, et conspectum cæli densitate ramorum aliorum alios protegentium submovens; illa proceritas silvæ, et secretum loci, et admiratio umbræ, in aperto tam densæ atque continuæ, fidem tibi numinis facit. Et si quis specus saxi penitus exesis mortem suspenderit, non manufactus, sed naturalibus causis in tantam laxitatem exacuatus; animum tuum quadam religionis suspitione percutiet. Magnorum fluminum capita veneramur; subita ex abdito vasti amnis eruptio aras habet. Coluntur aquarum calentium fontes; et stagna quadam, vel opacitas, vel immensa altitudo sacravit.” (Senec. Epist. lib. 1. Ep. xli.)

Yet it is not, as is commonly supposed, merely to the solitude, awful vastness, and gloomy wildness of an uncultivated country, and the ignorance and simplicity of its thinly-scattered inhabitants, that we are to impute that credulity and superstition, and those strange wanderings of imagination by which they are distinguished. In mental energy, activity, sagacity, and intelligence, a Norwegian, Swedish, Swiss, Tyrolese, or Scoto-Gælic peasant, is in general much superior to a man of the same rank in England, or in the more cultivated parts of Germany; and, among mountaineers, (the goitrous Alpine idiots excepted,) imbecility and derangement of mind are not more common than feebleness and deformity of body. They know those people very ill, who consider them as mere raving extravagant visionaries; for imagination has much less to do with their belief in apparitions, and shadowy and supernatural inhabitants of mountains, rocks, woods, and streams,

\* Virgil. *Æn.* lib. viij. l. 352.

than is generally supposed. Experience shews, that in proportion as a country is cultivated, the woods are cleared, fewer damp, noxious, and fiery vapours, (such as formerly hovered near the earth, and exhibited phenomena altogether inexplicable to the unlettered forester) are produced; clouds, mists, and meteors, become more rare; the air becomes more pure and dry; the marshes, even of their own accord, change their nature; and the boundaries of the lakes and rivers are considerably contracted. The shadowy and fiery forms, which every where hovered around the belated hunter, shepherd, and fisherman, are no longer to be found; and when evidence ceases, there is no great merit in no longer believing.

When the Highlander, returning amid the clouds of night, or even in broad day, from the chace, or from tending his flocks, sees delineated in the fogs which cover the precipitous sides of the opposite mountain, the dilated, multiplied, and infinitely diversified reflections of his own form, robed in mist, and often bordered or broken by bickering flames and meteorous exhalations, those stupendous and colossal forms,

" Like ghaist of Fian brim,  
That stride frae craig to cleugh, hung round  
Wi' gloamin vapours dim—"

while he is treading on the edge of a precipice, with all his senses awake to his situation, can it be imagined he should either believe he is dreaming, or should disbelieve the evidence of his own eyes? Put the man who despises his credulity in the same situation, however he may affect to reject conviction, he will often find it extremely difficult to remove the impression made upon his senses.

Of the power which bodies of mist, of certain forms and in certain situations, have of magnifying and removing the objects which they involve, every one who has lived in a mountainous country has had constant experience. This effect is common and generally known; but their power of *reflecting* objects is less understood, and therefore much more imposing. Now, as to the apparitions which have been seen on board ships, they have generally appeared during those dreadful calms, which in warm latitudes often precede a storm, and they have frequently been accompanied by blue streams of light, which have all the while flitted and played about the ship, and among the shrouds. The air at such a time is in the exact state in which vapours and exhalations are most likely to be collected and embodied for a time on board a ship at sea, that being the only solid object to which they can attach themselves. It is also to be observed, that both the distance and the cloud being necessarily small, the figures seldom exceed the stature of the person they represent, and that they have always been the perfect likeness of a *man*, because no *woman* has been present. These spectres being single, may be imputed to the columns of mist being smaller, and the distribution of light and shade more uniform at sea, than on a more diversified surface at land. Their locomotion, going round the ship, &c. before they vanish, must be regulated by the manner in which the vapours are attracted; and the sul-

plureous smell which sometimes remains behind on the disappearance of such objects, both at sea and on shore, can only be imputed to the electrical element and other vapours of which the cloud consists.

As to *Mer-maids*, they are commonly said to be seen above water as low as the waist, by people when fishing not far from the shore, in creeks, and near the mouths of rivers; on which we shall only observe, that a person in a fishing-boat cannot see either the shadow or reflection of his own form, lower than the part which appears over the gunwale of the boat; and that in Wales and the Isle of Man, and more particularly in Norway and Sweden, (which places are most famous for mermaids,) women are still employed in rowing fishing-boats, while the men fish; and very often there are only women in the boats.—But we desire not to be understood, as meaning to give too extensive an application to a theory, which is here merely hinted at. It is no wish of ours to systematize and account for all the *deliramenta* of imbecility, ignorance, and credulity.

Nor have clouds only the power of *magnifying*, but also, according to their form and consistency, (like convex mirrors,) of *diminishing* the images which they reflect. Hence the *Ettins* (*giants*) of colossal magnitude, and the *Dverggar* (*dwarfs*) of three span long;

“Manch Ritter nur einer Ellen lang.”—(Heldenb. Th. 4.)

who in Scandinavia are supposed to live in rocks and hollow mountains. How these came to be all great enchanters, and to be peculiarly endowed with the power of being invisible when they please, is easy to be understood; as they are most frequently seen among rocks and caverns, and vanish on being approached. The singular noises produced at certain times in the interior of rocky mountains and caverns, by concealed vapours, winds, and waters, account for the belief, that the giants labour in the work-shops of the dwarfs, and that the dwarfs are cunning artificers in all kinds of metals. How these dwarfs come to be so often seen and heard in mines, may be understood, by considering the nature of a miner's employment, the situations in which he is continually placed, and the phenomena of which he is a constant witness.

“*The body's croppen after,  
And join'd it at the ground.*”—P. 282, v. 12.

Here we have a very notable trait in the character of a mermaid, who, although susceptible of pleasure and pain, and subject to accidents, like all the more-than-human beings in the pagan *dæmonology*, was nevertheless exempted from dissolution, till the arrival of the period of existence assigned to her nature. Concerning the duration of this period, the opinions are various and dissonant; but all agree that it was very long. By Hesiod,<sup>\*</sup> the oldest and best authority on this subject, it is thus shadowed forth:

<sup>\*</sup> See Plutarch. de defect. orac.

Ἐννία τοι ζωὴ γενεῆς λακέρυζα κορώνη,  
 Ἄνδρον ἑσάντων ἔλαφος δὲ τε τετρακέρατος·  
 Τρεῖς δ' ἑλάφος ἡ κόραξ γεραιότετασ' ἀντὰρ ἡ φαινίξ  
 Ἐννία τοὺς κόρακας· θένια δ' ἑσάντων τοὺς φαινίξ  
 Νύμφαι ἰνπλέκαμαι, ποιεῖαι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο.<sup>1</sup>

That is, "the clamorous crow lives nine times the flourishing age of man; the stag four times the age of the crow; the raven thrice the age of the stag; the phœnix nine times as long as the raven; but ye, ye beautiful-haired Nymphs, daughters of Jove, the eternal ruler of the world,<sup>2</sup> ye live ten times the age of the phœnix."

Adopting the most general opinion that the *flourishing age of Man* is thirty years, the life of a Mermaid must extend to no less a period than 291,600 years!

The end of so long a life is a very notable event, and excites, as may be expected, in a very extraordinary manner, the sympathy not only of the kindred demones, (as in the romantic story told by Plutarch (*ut supra*) of the miraculous annunciation of the death of the Great Pan,) but also of the elements which they inhabit.

The far-travelled grammarian, "Demetrius, said,<sup>3</sup> that there are a number of uncultivated islands scattered around the coast of Britain, some of which are said to be inhabited by demones and heroes. Visiting these by order of the emperour, to make observations and collect information, he came to one which lay next to those that were uncultivated, containing a few inhabitants who were esteemed sacred and inviolable by the Britons. Shortly after his arrival, the air became troubled; the most portentous tumult of the elements ensued; the winds blew a hurricane; and vertiginous volumes of fire were precipitated from the clouds to the earth. When the storm had subsided, the islanders told him that some of the supernatural beings had ceased to exist; and that such events were often followed, not only by hurricanes and storms, as in the present instance, but by pestilential infections of the air.—In one of these islands, moreover, Kronos (Saturn) is said to be confined, in a profound sleep, under the care and custody of Briareos, and has with him

<sup>1</sup> Not much admiring Jupiter's *goat-skin buckler*, we have ventured to suppose the popular epithet, used by Hesiod, and in the Homeric rhapsodies, to have had originally a more dignified meaning; and have accordingly derived it from *ἀνι*, ay, always, and *γαιόχοιο*, *terram tenens*; which applies equally to Jupiter *Supreme*, or to Jupiter *the prince of the power of the air*.

<sup>2</sup> See Dr Leyden's *Mermaid*, *Bord. Min. v. iii. p. 297*.

<sup>3</sup> See *Plut. de defect. orac.* Among other curious tales, the same interlocutor tells one of a singular character, whom he met with near the Red Sea, who was supernaturally beautiful and wise, spoke many languages, and was endowed with the gift of prophecy; all which accomplishments were conferred upon him by the mermaids and fairies, with whom he spent most of his time, shewing himself among men only twice every year.—The following may be compared with the story on which Mr Scott's *Glenfinlas* is founded:—"During my long stay in Crete, I observed an absurd sacrifice, in which they exposed a body without the head. This, they told me, was Molos, the father of Merion, who, having ravished a mermaid, was found without the head."

many dæmons, as his companions and servants. The chains which have been devised for securing him are the chains of sleep."

The foregoing anecdote is deserving of attention on several accounts. It brings the subject home to us at a very early period; it is the oldest exemplification with which we are acquainted, of the popular belief of the Britons in these matters; and it shews in one point of view the identity of the Eastern and Western, Greek, Gothic, and Celtic mythological creeds. We shall not here stop to inquire which of the Eddic gods and demi-gods are designated under the Greek names of *Kronos*<sup>1</sup> and *Briareos*, nor what kind of society and service the Dæmons can furnish to a *sleeping deity*; as these notes have already been extended to a much greater length than was at first intended.—But the commentator has been reading Plutarch, and may have caught the infection of his garrulity; which would be the less to be regretted, had he also learnt from him the art of making garrulity entertaining.

"*Sae angry wast the wild winds,  
And stormy wast the sea.*"—P. 182, v. 14.

This is to be imputed to the displeasure of the marine lady, at being put to the trouble of groping for and fastening on her own head again; and if we may trust the tales of our own times, as well as of those who have gone before us, the resentment of these demi-goddesses has often been more fatal when not so justly provoked; unless it be allowed that the *spretæ injuria formæ* in having her love slighted, is a greater outrage in the eyes of a female, than having her head cut off.

<sup>1</sup> *Kronos* was probably the same as *Krodo*, who remained among the Saxons till the days of Charlemagne, by whom his shrine was destroyed. See Schedius de Dies Germanis, Syng. 4. c. 2. For *Briareos*, see Sax. Gramm. Hist. Dan. lib. vj. Fol. 52. A.