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FATRY LEGENDS

P8/3(2)

FAIRY LEGENDS

AND

TRADITIONS

OF THE

SOUTH OF IRELAND.

PART III.

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of figure dancing on a Cobweb.*

^

LONDON.

JOHN MURRAY.

MDCCCXXVII.

P813(3)

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FAIRY LEGENDS

TRADITIONS

OF THE
SOUTH OF IRELAND

PART III

THE WINTER

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TO
THE BROTHERS GRIMM
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WINTER

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~~THE BROTHER GRIMM~~
~~The Etchings and Wood Engravings by W. H. Brooke,~~
~~E. S. A.~~

Grimm

P8/3(4)

TO
DR. WILHELM GRIMM,

*Secretary of the Prince's Library, Member
of the Royal Scientific Society of Gottingen,
&c. &c. &c.,* at Cassel, in Hessen.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have the pleasure of presenting to you and your brother the third and concluding volume of a work illustrative of the traditionary superstitions of my country.

You will perceive that a considerable portion consists in a close translation of your introductory essay to the *Irish Elfenmärchen*; and I only hope that its appearance in an English dress may be as satisfactory to you, as your translation of the legends to which it is prefixed has been to the writers. But this, critically speaking, I fear, as many words, particularly the old German, presented

tr [similar difficulties] to those which you experienced in the Irish name *Boliaun*, even with its English explanatory, Ragweed*. However, I trust the general meaning has been conveyed.

I have given your essay without note or comment of my own, because I perfectly coincide in the candid opinion which you so kindly expressed to me in your last valuable letter, that an essay on Fairy superstition should exhibit a collection of inferences un-mixed with tales and traditions. "Although to the generality of readers," as you justly remark, "the book is thereby rendered what is called less entertaining; yet the scientific examination is undisturbed by the dispersion

* In justice to the care of the Messrs. Grimm, as translators, I give their note on the "Field of Boliauns."

"Hipp is here chosen, because barren and unprofitable tracts are often covered with thorns. In the original it is called *Boliaun*. The word is not in Nemich's *Catholicon*, nor indeed in any other dictionary. Natives of Ireland, whom a friend has questioned on the subject, affirm that *Boliaun* is a staff or cudgel; but from the context it must mean a plant. It is also explained by the addition *Ragweed*, which is likewise not an English word; but, as a native of Ireland says, signifies a weed which grows like a bush about an ell high, and has yellow flowers of a disagreeable smell."

of those points on which it really falls, and a clear and firm view of the subject is not lost by poetic amplifications." The corrections and additional notes which you have favoured me with are inserted in their proper places, and I have again to thank you for the communication of them.

5/ The collection of Welsh legends which appear in this volume will, I doubt not, prove acceptable to you, as from their similarity with those current in other countries, they afford an additional proof that the Fairy creed must have been a complete and connected system. I have taken some pains to seek after stories of the Elves in England; but I find that the belief has nearly disappeared, and in another century no traces of English Fairies will remain, except those which exist in the works of Shakspeare, Herrick, Drayton, and Bishop Corbet.

n/ In Devonshire, the Pixies or Pucksies are still remembered and described as "little people and merry dancers;" but I can collect no other anecdotes respecting their pranks than the two following:

About seventy years since a clergyman

named Tanner held two benefices between Crediton and Southmolton, adjoining each other. The farmers of both parishes attended the tithe audit annually at his residence; and in going to the glebe-house the distant parishioners had to pass an extensive moor, intersected by numerous tracks or sheep-walks. Although they reached their destination in safety in the morning, yet on their return they invariably found themselves "Pixy-laid," and were compelled to pass a night of bewildered wandering upon the moor. Such recreation at Christmas was not very agreeable, and it was determined that a deputation from the parishioners should proceed to Exeter, and consult an old woman celebrated for her skill in charming away the toothach. Her instructions against Pixy spells proved effectual. She directed the way-laid travellers, on reaching the verge of the moor, to strip themselves, and sit down on their clothes for five-and-thirty minutes, or more, according to the state of the weather; and so soon as they discovered the cloud which the Pixies had thrown around them to be dissipated, they might then safely proceed. By following

this valuable prescription Mr. Tanner's parishioners invariably reached their homes without further interruption from Pixy spells, or inconvenience from their hospitable pastor's excellent cockagee cider.

The other legend of Devonian Elves resembles the German one alluded to in your Essay at page 110 of this volume; and is told of the family of Sukespic or Sokespitch, respecting whom, if you are curious to inquire into their history, I can refer you to Lysons's *Magna Britannia*, vol. 6, part ii. p. 118. This family resided near Topsham; and a barrel of ale in their cellar had for very many years continued to run freely without being exhausted. It was considered as a valuable heir-loom, and was respected accordingly, until a curious maid-servant took out the bung, to ascertain the cause of this extraordinary power. On looking into the cask, she found it full of cobwebs; but the Pixies, it is supposed, were offended, and on turning the cock as usual, no more ale flowed out.

Captain Sainthill, of the royal navy, who is now in his eighty-eighth year, informs me that when he was a boy, the common reply

at Topsham to the inquiry how any affair went on, when it was intended to say that it was proceeding prosperously, was, "It is going on like Sokespitch's can,"

Some traces of Fairy superstition still linger also in Hampshire. Gads Hill or God's Hill, near Newport, in the Isle of Wight, is remarkable for a very ancient church built on its summit, and, until lately, the old women, as they toiled up this hill to their devotions, might be heard lamenting "that the Fairies would not let the church bide on the plain, where it was intended to be built."

This church, according to the tradition, was commenced on the plain at the foot of the hill, and considerable progress was made with the building in that situation. One morning, however, when the workmen arrived, they found, to their great astonishment, that the walls had completely disappeared, and at last they discovered them on the summit of the hill, precisely in the same state they had been left in on the plain the preceding evening. As it was not intended to have the church in that elevated situation, the work-

men pulled down the walls, removed the bricks from the hill to the plain, and again commenced the building. But no sooner had the walls gained their former height, than they were again transported to the hill. The workmen, though less surprised than before, persevered in their intention of building on the plain, and having brought down the bricks, began for the third time to erect the church. When the walls were raised to the same height as before, they determined on watching for the persons who had so provokingly removed them to the summit of the hill, and had thus twice frustrated their intention. The weather favoured the workmen, for it was a beautiful moonlight night, and they distinctly saw innumerable little people busily employed in demolishing the walls. Although the bricks seemed considerably larger than these little creatures, yet they appeared to carry them without difficulty, and very soon completed their purpose of having the church upon the hill. Some of the workmen said that they saw them dancing in a ring on the site after having removed the bricks. Ocular proof being thus given of

the impossibility of carrying on the design of building the church on the plain, it was determined to erect it on the hill, where it was speedily completed without interruption. The hill, from the church, received the name of God's Hill, afterwards corrupted into Gads Hill; and when the building was finished, great rejoicing and shouting was heard, which was supposed to proceed from the little people making merry on account of their success.

This legend I received a few months since from a friend: he had obtained it from his nurse, who was then above ninety, and with whose death he has just acquainted me. It will, I am sure, my dear sir, recall a very similar tale in Mr. Thiele's Danske Folkesagn to your memory.

On mentioning the subject of Hampshire Fairies to Mr. Landseer, who has not confined his inquiries alone to "Sabeian Researches," he pointed out to my notice the names of "Puck-pool," and "Puck-aster Cove," in the Isle of Wight. The former, which is about two miles from Ryde, near the eastern skirts of the grounds belonging to Appley, is now a small, ~~edgy~~, and neglected

pond, which scarcely more than answers to the line, "The nine men's morrice is filled up with mud;" and beyond its name has nothing to recall Puck to the imagination. Puck-aster is a romantic fishing-cove on the south side of the island. "It may easily be conceived," said Mr. Landseer, "to have formerly been the scene of such fairy frolics as that merry wanderer of the night boasts of as being his pastime. Its hollows, where dark vapours must in past ages have lingered, are now drained; and the plantations of Mr. Arnold, and other gentlemen, who have built cottages there, have rendered it a scene at once smiling and wild. But every poetical spectator will see at a glance that it must in days of yore have been the very place where Robin Goodfellow, in very likeness of a friar's lantern, has laughed at the misled clowns; where those faithless phantoms, the wild-fires of autumn, have often sparkled and ported. The name Puck-aster (or Puck ~~as a~~ star) agrees precisely with these local phenomena."

"When I visited this fairy spot," continues Mr. Landseer, "recollecting how large a

Puck-star

portion of Shakspeare's life there is of which nothing is known, and reflecting how impossible it is to suppose that any portion of his life could have been inactively spent, my fancy was quite ready to fill up part of the hiatus with a supposition that our great bard was at some time during that period rambling with strolling players, and that in the course of those rambles he had visited the Isle of Wight, and gathered there some of his local fairy lore. Some thirty and odd years ago, when I was there, the island was periodically visited by histrionic strollers from the continent of England. (This was an immemorial custom). And in the time of Shakspeare, the Isle was so well wooded, that he might have found in it all his fairy scenery (for it may well be classed under sea-shore and forest scenery); and where else do you find the name Puck stamped in the country itself? The northern counties of England, I am inclined to think, those which retain the memory of the Elves most strongly. Yorkshire, in particular, has many secluded districts; and although I have been unable to obtain

any tales, I know that some exist respecting the appearance and freaks of the Barguest and the Bogles. At Thorn, in that county, about fifty years since, it was a common practice of the children to go to a neighbouring hill on a particular day (Shrove Tuesday), in order that they might hear the Fairies frying their pancakes within the rock.

In Buckinghamshire and Wiltshire, where I have had opportunities of going among the peasantry, and conversing with them, I could extract no other supernatural tales than those respecting witches, and their intercourse with the Evil One; who, according to the traditions of these counties, cannot be so formidable an enemy as he is generally considered, having been more than once vanquished by a drunken blacksmith, whose name varies in different districts, but who was well known, and is perfectly remembered by many credible witnesses in each.

Thus, my dear Sir, I have laid before you the result of nearly three years' constant inquiry after the Elves in England. Scotland has had an abundance of Fairy historians, and with what they have written, it is evident that

Insert
M.S.
No 1.

few are better acquainted than yourself. As, however, establishing the connexion which you have pointed out between witchcraft and Fairy superstition (page 140 of this volume) you will, I think, be pleased with the following communication, for which I am indebted to the kindness of Sir Walter Scott.

"A rummager of our records," writes Sir Walter, "sent me the other day a most singular trial of an old woman, who was tried, condemned, and burned alive for holding too close a connexion with Elf-land. The poor old woman was in fact tried for having succeeded in curing maladies by her prayers and spells, as well as her herbs and ointments. Her familiar was one Tom Reqd, whom she saw almost daily, at the hour of noon. He died, as he told her (for to her he was a post-humous acquaintance), in the fatal battle of Pinky, called 'the Black Saturday,' and, it seems, was carried off by those wandering spirits, the fairies, who, when heaven and hell were sharing stakes, came in for some portion, it would seem, of so magnificent a spoil as 'the Black Saturday' afforded.

"I cannot help, therefore, enclosing you

sketch of Tom Reqd, a favourite, as it appears, of the queen of Elf-land. To save you and myself trouble, I use the modern orthography, but retain the Scottish words.

"Asked by what art or knowledge she could tell divers persons of things they tint (lost), or were stolen away, or help sick persons? Answered and declared, 'that she herself had no kind of art or science so to do, but divers times, when any such persons came to her, she would inquire at one Thome Reqd, who died at Pinky (as he himself affirmed), who would tell her what she asked.' Item, she being inquired (at) what kind of man this Thome Reqd was? Declared, 'he was an honest, seemly, elderly man, gray-bearded, and had ane gray coat, with Lombart sleeves of the old fashion, ane pair of gray breeks, and white schankks (leggings or stockings), gartered above the knee, and ane black bonnet on his head, close behind and plain before, with silken laces drawn through the lips (brims) thereof, and ane white wand in his hand.

"Item, being interrogated, how and in what manner and place the said Thome Reqd

dedicatory

sair dole (sore lamentation)

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came to her? Answered, as she was ganging betwixt her *ain* (own) house and the yard [of Monkcastle, driving her kye to the pasture, and making heavy ~~sore~~dole with herself, *greeting* (weeping loudly), very fast for her cow that was dead, her husband and child that were lying sick on the land, ill, and she now arisen out of *gissance* (from gissaule, French, an in-lying woman), the foresaid Thome met her by the way, *halsed* her (saluted her courteously), and said, 'Good day, Bessie,' and she said, 'Good day, good man.' 'Santa Maria!' said he, 'Bessie, why makes thou so great dole and great wisting for any worldly thing?' She answered, 'Alas! have I not cause to make great dole? for our *gear is trakit* (our cattle destroyed by sickness), and my husband is on the point of death, and one baby of my own will not live, and myself at a weak point: have I not cause, then, to have so sore a heart?' But Thome said, 'Bessie, thou has craved God, and asked something you should not have done; and therefore I consell thee to wend to home, for I tell thee thy *bairn* (child) shall die ere you come home, thy two sheep shall die too,

Note +. *halse* is meet in
 Scotch as in
 German &c

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XXI

but thy husband shall mend, and be hail and feir as ever he was.' Then Thome Redd went away from me, in through the yard of Monkcastle, and I thought he *gaed* (went) in at a narrow hole of the dike, smaller than earthly man could have gone through, and so I was something *fleyft* (affrightened).

"Notwithstanding his religious commencement, Thome became afterwards unreasonable in his demands, insisting, that Bessie should deny her Christendom, and yield up the faith she took, at the ~~fair~~ stone; but on this point she was, by her own account, resolute. Nevertheless Thome appeared afterwards in her dwelling, her husband and three tailors being present, although neither the integer nor fractional part of a man were aware of his elvish presence. He took her out of doors with him to the kill-end, where there were twelve persons, eight women and four men. "The men were clad in gentlemen's clothing, and the women had all plaids round about them, and were very seemly like to see, and Thome was with them. "Demanded, if she knew any of them? Answered, 'none

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INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

except Thome.' Demanded, what they said to her? Answered, 'they bade her sit down, and said, welcome Bessie, wilt thou go with us?' But she answered not, because Thome had forbidden her; with much more to the same purpose; especially how she excused Thome of the most distant approach to impropriety, except that in pressing her to go to Elf-land, he caught her by the apron to enforce his request; and how Thome reminded her, that when she was recovering of her confinement, a stout woman had come into her house, sat down on a bench beside her, and asked for a drink, in exchange for which she gave Bessie words of comfort. 'That,' said Thome, 'was the queen of Elf-land, his mistress, who had commanded him to wait upon her and do her good.' - *Thus far Sir Walter Scott.*

Lengthy as my letter already is, I must crave your indulgence while I add a few words in conclusion, on Irish fairies, as a note of yours reminds me of my inadvertance in leaving the name Shefro, by which I have designated the first section of the Irish Fairy Legends, unexplained.

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The term *Shefro* (variously, but correctly, written *Ṣíabhrú, Ṣíabhrú, Ṣíabhrú, Ṣíabhrú, Ṣíabhrú, &c.*) literally signifies a fairy house or mansion, and was adopted as a general name for the Elves, who lived in troops or communities, and were popularly supposed to have castles or mansions of their own.

Sia, sigh, sighe, sigheann, siabhra, sia-chaire, siogidh, are Irish words, evidently springing from a common root, used to express a fairy or goblin, and even a hag or witch. Thus we have the compound *Leannan-sighe*, a familiar, from *Leannan*, a pet, and *Síghd-hraoidheachd*, enchantment with or by spirits.

Sigh-gáitithe, or *siaheann-gáitithe*, a whirlwind is so termed, because it is said to be raised by the fairies. The close of day is called *Sia*, because twilight,

"That sweet hour, when day is almost closing,"

is the time when the fairies are most frequently seen. Again, *figh* is a hill or hillock, because the fairies are believed to dwell within. *Sidhe, sidheadh*, and *sigh*, are names for a blast or blight, because it is supposed to proceed from the fairies. I could readily produce other

9/
9/
instances, to show nearly as extended an use of the word *fi*, or *she* (it is so pronounced) as that of *alp*, which is so well illustrated in your Essay. In that curious poem, "The Irish Hudibras," 1689, the word *Shoges* is used. This is probably *figh oges*, young spirits; *oge* corresponding to our word junior.

Bmt/
" Within a wood near to this place
There grows a bunch of three-leaved grass,
Called by the Boglanders* shamroques (*shamrocks*)
A present for the queen of *Shoges* †,
Which thou must first be after fetching,
And all the cunning's in the catching," &c. p. 23.

In another place the nun says,

n/
" Yet for the grace I have with Joaney,
Queen of *Shoges*, and my own croney,
I know as much /ees as another, †
But dare not tell it, were it my brother." p. 81.

o/
It is related in O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, part, iii, and other works, that St. Patrick, who, with some of his followers, were engaged in chanting matins at a fountain one morning very early, were taken for *sidhe* or fairies by the daughters of King Laygar, whither the

Clowns,

+ Spirits.

fair pagans repaired "to wash their faces, and view themselves in that fountain as in a mirror." The passage is curious, and I will quote it, as I do not think you have seen it.

o/
" When the princesses saw these venerable gentlemen, clothed in white surplices, and holding books in their hands, astonished at their unusual dress and attitudes, they looked upon them to be the people *Sidhe*. The Irish call these *Sidhe*, *aërial spirits* or *phantoms*, because they are seen to come out of pleasant hills, where the common people imaginè they reside, which fictitious habitations are called by us *Sidhe* or *sidha*. St. Patrick, taking an opportunity of addressing the young ladies, introduced some divine topic, which was concerning the existence of one God only. When the elder of the sisters, in reply, thus unembarrassed, inquired, 'Who is your God, and where doth he dwell? Does he live in heaven, or under, or on earth? or is his habitation in mountains, or in valleys, or in the sea, or in rivers? Whether has he sons remarkable for their beauty? and are his daughters handsome and more beautiful than the daughters of this world? Are many employed about the

education of his son? Is he opulent, and in affluent circumstances, and does his kingdom abound with a plenty of wealth and riches? In what mode of worship does he delight? Whether is he decked in the bloom of youth, or is he bending under the weight of years? Has he a life limited to a certain period, or immortal? In which interrogations there was not a word of resemblance or comparison between the pagan gods, Saturn, Jupiter, Apollo, Venus, Diana, Pallas, Juno, and the unknown divinity; nor did she allude, in her discourse, to that Cromcruch, the principal god of our heathen deities, or to any of their attributes.

“ From whence we may infer, that the divinities of the Irish were local ones; that is, residing in mountains, plains, rivers, in the sea, and such places. For, as the pagan system of theology taught, ‘as souls were divided with mortals at their birth, so fatal genii presided over them, and that the Eternal Cause has distributed various guardians* through all nations.’ And that these topical

* Symmachus Ethicus, b. i. Epist. 4.

genii never went to other countries.”—Translated by the Rev. James Hely, A. B. vol. ii. p. 55. Dublin, 1793.

I have now only, my dear Sir, to return you my best and warmest acknowledgments for the flattering manner in which you and your brother have accepted the dedication of this volume; and to assure you that

I remain

your grateful and
very faithful servant,

~~T. CROFTON CROKER~~

London,
1st November, 1827.

*Insert word list
of Autograph*

(T. Crofton Croker)

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