

Belief in the injurious power of an evil eye, even on youths, was prevalent in Partick at the time we are speaking of. And we remember vividly when we were considered to be under the spell of an evil eye, and the means taken to remove the evil consequences. The form gone through to charm away the evil influence we have seen performed upon children years afterwards, and we know that the same charm has been performed in Partick within these twenty years. It was as follows:—I was made to sit upon a chair placed before a large fire, the door was locked, and the operator—a woman—took a sixpence that had been previously borrowed—an essential condition—and lifted from a salt-dish as much salt as the coin would carry. Salt and coin were put into a tablespoonful of water and stirred with the forefinger until the salt was dissolved; then the soles of my feet and palms of my hands were moistened three separate times with the solution. I had then to taste it three times, after which the operator's wet finger was drawn across my brow. This was called *scoring aboon the breath*. The remaining contents of the spoon were cast right over into the back part of the fire, the woman saying, as she did so, "*Gude preserve us frae a' skaith!*" These were the first words permitted to be spoken during the ceremony. I was then put to bed and re-covered. There can be little doubt that this practice was a survival of some ancient form of fire-worship. The placing of the patient before the fire, and the

throwing the contents of the spoon into it, evidently denote an appeal to and offering of a sacrifice to the fire-god. Relics of this ancient fire-worship prevail over all the Continent of Europe, as well as this country, and crops up every here and there in our folklore. We were told of two or three old people in Partick who were in the habit of throwing a small piece of bread into the fire every evening, before going to bed, for luck. Tylor, in his "Primitive Culture," says—"The Esthonian bride consecrates her new hearth and home by an offering of money cast into the fire. The Bohemians consider it a godless thing to spit into the fire, and that crumbs left at a meal should be given to the fire." These last two were common superstitions in Partick—to spit into the fire was unlucky, but to cast the crumbs into it was lucky. There was another charm against an evil eye believed in by Partick people, but we never saw it put in practice. If the person exercising the influence could be induced to enter the house of the one suffering, and there *scored aboon the breath* with anything that would break the skin and draw blood, such as a scratch with a pin or nail of the hand, this completely removed the spell.

One other thing which caused a mother to feel anxious about her baby remains to be mentioned. If any one should happen to look steadfastly at the child, and be overlavish in praise of its beauty and healthy appearance, the mother would clasp it to her bosom with a foreboding fear, exclaiming, nervously, "It is nae bonnier nor better than other bairns" (gude forgie her). The Turks have a similar superstition in relation to this, and, under such circumstances, spit upon the

child. The Christian mother's fear was that she should be caused to think too much of her baby, and, consequently, God would remove it from her. This superstition is not yet, however, a thing of the past. Still is it a too common belief, not only of those from whose education and circumstances we do not expect a higher knowledge, but of those from whom we look for a truer appreciation of the character of our Heavenly Father. We still hear it sometimes preached to us from the pulpit; sometimes we read it in books written for the comfort and edification of bereaved parents, and sometimes we find it offered as justification of God's dealing with us, and as a subject for prayerful consideration and consolation in the house of mourning. That God, who is a jealous God, perceiving that the child was concentrating too great a share of our love and affection, removed it as a chastisement, which, for the time, is not joyous but grievous, as is all chastisement, but shall in the end, with God's blessing, bring us into a better frame of mind, and work out for us a more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. Such thoughts, such reading of God's purposes, and such statements are so common, that they are never thought of as being both superstitious and blasphemous. It is a striking illustration of how tenaciously superstitious notions and false views of God's character and providence cling to us, even when the light shines clear upon us both from His Word and works.

The next important event in life was *Marriage*. After courtship, which, by the way, was conducted mostly in the open-air in the evenings, and at the church

on Sabbath, when the "gude-will" of the girl's parents had been obtained, the first public act was the *booking*, or *putting in the cries*. This was done by the groom and *best man* going over, on a Friday evening, to Govan to the session-clerk there. On their return they repaired to the bride's house, in which were assembled a few young friends of both parties, and each received a glass out of the bride's bottle. This was termed the bottling. After the mill, or weaving factory, and other public works were begun, this ceremony of the bottling was changed; the bride took her friends and the groom his, upon any convenient night during the cries, and treated them separately. In those days it was the general custom to proclaim the banns on three successive Sundays, and on these Sundays it was unlucky for the bride or groom to attend the church. This probably originated from natural modesty, when there was only the Parish Church to go to, and young folks would naturally shrink from being present when their names were publicly proclaimed. During the time they stood in relation of bride and groom, every one entering the house of either, for the first time, was treated with a glass out of the bottle. Friends and acquaintances, indeed almost the entire village, brought presents to both parties of useful articles, such as bellows, toasters, poker and tongs, stoups, bowls, plates, &c., &c., the ordinary material for furnishing of their house. All that belonged to the groom was conveyed quietly to the house they intended to occupy, but the bride's providings and gifts were retained in her parent's house until the night before the marriage, when they were removed to the new home in a cart. This was termed the bride's

fitting. The best maid accompanied the cart, and personally arranged the house. One thing, on such occasions, regarded as essential to luck, and which formed a portion of the fitting, was a certain dish full of salt, which was the first article carried into the house, and a small quantity of its contents was sprinkled on the floor. We have no doubt that in this there is a survival of some very ancient form of heathen superstition. The house and furniture being put in order, the time for performing the ceremony of feet-washing arrived; both sexes joined in this, it being considered necessary that both bride and groom be subjected to the ceremony. The male portion met in the groom's house; the females met in the bride's father's. This was generally the occasion of much *rough* fun, which was, however, always conducted in the most friendly manner. If the morning of the marriage-day was bright, this was held to predict a prosperous and happy future. If dull, the reverse. At the appointed time those invited to the wedding repaired to the houses of their respective friends, bride or groom. As there were no cabs in these times, the young men went for and conducted the females to their respective places. The best man went to the bride's house, the best maid to the groom's house. In proceeding to the minister's house, which was either in Govan or Anderston, the bride's party were the first to start, followed shortly by the groom's party—each company being headed by the respective fathers—both companies arranging to arrive together at the minister's house, where the ceremony was performed. No sooner was the "Amen" said than the young men made a rush to obtain the first kiss from the newly-made wife. In

proceeding homewards, the order of the procession was, first, the two fathers, then the young man and wife, next the best man and maid, and after them as the company might themselves arrange, the whole party generally numbering from twelve to twenty couple. When about half-way home, generally at Finnieston if from Anderston, or the Ferry if from Govan, a few of the young men started on a race home. This was often a keen contest, and was termed running the *broose* or *braze*. The one who arrived first got a bottle and glass and returned to meet the wedding party, which meeting place was generally just as the procession was entering the village; the glass was passed round, and when the bottle was empty both it and the glass were thrown away. By this time a crowd had gathered, and every one who had a gun or pistol and powder kept firing as fast as they could. When the young man was at all popular, we have seen a row of anvils and 56lb. weights loaded with powder, and ranged on each side of the road, between which the wedding party had to pass, and these were fired off in succession, making a rude *feu-de-joie*. When the wedding party passed any public-house on their route, the landlord met them with his bottle and bun, as a welcome. In fact, on such occasions the whole village was in commotion. On arriving at the young couple's house, the bride's mother-in-law met the young wife at the door, and broke a cake, baked for the occasion, over her daughter-in-law's head, when there occurred a regular scramble amongst the young folks present to obtain pieces of the broken cake to dream over. This was the bride's-cake of those days, and was in many cases, with those in

poor circumstances, an oat bannock, baked with a little fresh butter or dripping. Those in better circumstances used a cake of shortbread. Her mother-in-law then led the new-made wife into the house, and placed in her hands the keys of the furniture, and sometimes also the broom and tongs, as symbols of mistresshood, and probably also of the transfer of the mother's care over her son into the hands of his wife. After this the whole company repaired to the house of either bride's or groom's parents, as might be previously arranged, in order to partake of supper. As they passed, the children now set up a shout for powder-money, and occasionally a handful of coppers was thrown amongst them. After supper there was almost invariably a ball, held in some public-house, each man contributing a share of the expense, except the young gudeman and the father-in-law. The parents, the young couple, and the best man and maid led off the first dance. The ball was continued till early morning, and then came the time to conduct the young folks home to their own house. There, the females went into the bedroom first, and put the young wife to bed; they retired, and the males saw the young man in bed, after which the whole company assembled in the room, the best man handing round the glass, each person drank to the young couple, and then all quietly retired. We should have mentioned that the bride took one of her stockings to bed with her, which she afterwards threw out amongst the assembled company, and the person who got it was, by that token, to be first married.

Next day the young pair, with the best man and

maid took a walk—generally into Glasgow—where they spent the day; this was called the *walking*. On Sunday the same four went to church in the forenoon—this was called the *kirking*—and in the afternoon they took a walk. The evening was spent in one of the parents' houses, and the day was closed by the good old custom of family worship, and a pious exhortation was delivered to the young man to begin with and continue this practice through life. With this fitting copestone was ended the marriage ceremony.

It was customary for the best man to buy the wedding ring and present it to the young wife on her wedding-day. The young husband presented the bride with a shawl, and, if his circumstances permitted, a silk dress. She in return gave him his wedding shirt, and his mother a dress cap.

While there was much that we now consider rude or vulgar in some of these practices, still the morals of the people were as pure then as they are now, when the very mention of such doings brings a blush to the cheek of young man and maid. Such is the power of custom.

Although there may not appear much that is superstitious in these practices, still they are connected with old rites and customs which have woven themselves into our everyday life. There was in those days, as there is still, a strong aversion to being married in May. Upwards of 1800 years ago, Ovid refers to this superstition as prevalent amongst the Romans, and as being old in his day. The Lemuria, or festival of the ghosts, held in May, is of great antiquity, and it was unlucky to marry in that month. The Church of Rome



christianized this, and connected it with Lent; but in the Protestant mind, despoiled of its religious uses, the superstition still holds, and the proverb is still repeated—

“Marry in May, rue for aye.”

We have made many inquiries respecting the origin of this superstition, and are inclined to the belief that it is the survival of the old superstition referred to by Ovid. With respect to the consequences supposed to result from such marriages, the vulgar idea varies. Some say those who marry in May shall be childless; others, that the first-born will be an idiot; and others, again, that the married life of the parties themselves will prove unhappy.

The feet-washing, we believe, is a custom derived from our Scandinavian forefathers. With them, on the day before marriage, the bride, accompanied by her maiden friends, went and bathed—this was called the bride’s bath—and afterwards made merry with their friends. The washing of the groom’s feet is probably a more modern innovation. The origin of the custom of *running the broose* has been a puzzle to antiquarians. In olden times it was run on horseback. Brande mentions that in the “North of England four young men with horses waited outside the church doors; when the ceremony was over they first saluted the bride, then mounted and contended who should first carry home the good news, and he who first reached the goal obtained the prize which was ready waiting for him—a bowl of spiced broth. In Scotland a similar practice was common, the prize being a mess of brose; hence,

probably, the origin of the name, *Running the brose.*" There is a probability that this custom is also a survival of a custom of our Scandinavian ancestors. A Scandinavian warrior considered it beneath his dignity to court a lady's favour by gallantry and submission; he waited until she had plighted her troth to another, and was on her way to the marriage ceremony, then, having collected his followers, who were always ready for a fight, he fell upon the marriage *cortège* and carried away the bride. Now, we can easily imagine that, under such circumstances, great anxiety would exist in the minds of those friends who remained at home; hence, when the ceremony was rightly over, some of the friends of the parties ran back with the good news, or, probably, parties were appointed for this purpose, and the winner, or person who brought the glad news, was awarded a bowl of brose; and such brose as was made in those days was a very acceptable prize. The custom, being fraught with sport, it is not surprising it continued after the necessity for it had ceased to exist, the reward being changed from brose to something more congenial to the age, viz., a bottle of whisky, which was used, as stated, by the winner, who thus became their first-foot in their new relationship. The appointment and duties of best man have, we think, a similar origin; his duty was to protect the bride against such a raid, and hand her over to the groom, his friend, at the place of marriage. At the time we are speaking of, about sixty years back, in Partick the best man—not the father, as in England, and now, also, common custom in Scotland is—took the bride with him to the minister's house and handed her over to the groom. He

also took the sole charge of the ceremony, and it was his duty to keep the bridegroom from all expense after the supper till they parted on Sunday evening.

The breaking of the bottle and glass, after the wedding party had drank from the *broose's bottle*, is a very old custom. On the occasion of our city councillors meeting in the Town's House at the Cross, on a King's birth-day or other great occasion, to drink the King's health, having emptied their glasses they pitched them out of the window, as if, when used for such a purpose, it was not proper to use them again for anything common, and almost on all extra occasions of health-drinking the breaking of the glasses used was common among public bodies. The breaking of the cake over the bride's head as she enters her own house is certainly a very old Scotch custom; its origin and meaning we have not been able to trace. There may be in this the token of a wish that she may have and to spare. The collecting of the pieces and retaining of them by the young girls, for putting under the pillow to dream upon, in hopes that it may reveal to them their future husband, is a superstition still extant. When a younger sister or brother was married, it was the custom for those sisters or brothers who were older and unmarried to dance their first reel on their stocking soles, as if by this act they, as in the time of Ruth, willingly gave up the shoe or right to their younger relation.

The practice of scattering money at weddings is a very ancient custom among Eastern nations, having been in vogue upwards of 2000 years ago. Richardson, in his "Dissertation on the East," says—"Upon ordinary occasions it was usual to throw among the populace,

as the procession moved along, money, sweetmeats, flowers, and other articles, which the people caught in cloths made for such occasions, stretched in a particular manner upon frames. With regard to the money, however, there appears often to have been a motive of economy, or rather deception, which probably arose from the necessity of complying with a custom that might be ill-suited to the fortunes of some, and to the avarice of others, for we find that it was not uncommon to collect bad money, called *kelbs*, at a low price to throw away at nuptial processions." We are afraid that such a fraud practised on the populace in modern times would produce disagreeable results.

Captain Burt, in his "Letters from Scotland," mentions a custom as prevalent in the Highlands in his day (about 150 years ago). Almost the first work a young woman employed herself upon after marriage, was to spin the cloth for and make her dead-dress, which afterwards was laid carefully and sacredly past, in readiness for that day when it would require to be used. We do not think that young women in Partick sixty years ago spun their own linen for their dead-dresses; but old women, natives of the village, had prepared such things at a very early period of their married life, and considered it a sacred duty devolving upon all married women the preparing and having in readiness their own and their husband's dead-dresses, which were kept ironed and lying ready at the bottom of a drawer; and we have seen them brought out to air for a short time, during which a solemn quietness was maintained. Indeed, the want of such an article in the house as the dead-dress, when death occurred, was

considered a careless neglect of duty which the village gossip would severely censure. Now-a-days, such fore-hand preparations are not necessary, as all such things can be purchased ready-made.

*Death.*—Sixty years ago there was no doctor in the village. The first medical man who commenced practice in the town was John Neil. At the time we first remember him, he was keeping a school in a small house opposite the Old Power-loom Factory. He was then a student. After obtaining his diploma he married, and dwelt in the little slated house on the right hand side going down the Knowe, then considered a *gentle house*; but as prophets are not honoured in their own country, it was a considerable time before he gained the confidence of the native inhabitants. This confidence was more easily obtained by several kindly, observant, and experienced women, and, perhaps, the more easily because it was given gratis. We remember one such woman, whose warmth of heart, noble self-sacrificing spirit, long and large experience, aided by a power of quick perception, rendered her, on account of her sex, more useful, and little, if anything, less skilful in treatment of ordinary diseases, especially those of children, than a licensed medical practitioner. She was always ready at the call of need, and asked neither fee nor reward. We refer to Jenny Brown—known as Auntie Brown—the late Mrs. George Craig;—at that time married women were generally known by their maiden name. Whoever remembers Jenny will verify our remarks. She was a true heroine in humble life. In 1832, when cholera made its appearance, it claimed its second victim in the West of Scotland in Partick. This death

occurred on the Lade side—an eligible place at that time for such a thing. After a few hours another was seized, and a general panic took possession of all; the neighbours fled, and there was none to help. Jenny's family, at this time all well grown, objected to her risking herself, and for a time she wavered, but when she heard of the death, and that there was no one who would venture to go in and remove the corpse, nor attend to the one who was laid down in the same house, it was too much for her sensible and sensitive nature. "If nothing is done, who can be safe?" she said, and committing herself to the protection of her Master in heaven she went forth to help. A box was taken to the door of the house, and with her own hands, and the help of one or two men who mustered courage from her example, the corpse was confined and carried off to burial. Ere long the second followed, and for months the disease leaped as it were from house to house, but people began to take courage and use means. The Masons' Lodge was converted into an hospital, and Jenny Brown laboured in it and through the village during the whole visitation of the plague, and escaped *unscathed*. Amid the hurry and skurry of rapidly increasing trade and population, Jenny passed away unnoticed, remembered only by a very few; but her deeds went before her, and a crown was awaiting her with these words—"Well done, good and faithful servant, inasmuch as ye did it to one of these ye did it unto Me; enter into the joy of thy Lord."

When any person fell ill in the village, it was soon known throughout its length and breadth; and when a death occurred, it almost invariably happened that

some one had previously observed certain well-known warnings, presages of what had now come. Some one may have heard a dog howling and moaning on the night before the death. A sound like the ticking of a watch may have been heard in the house of the deceased for several nights before death. This last was a common warning, and none ever dreamed it had any connection with a small wood-moth tapping lovingly for its mate. Adult patients hearing this sound would sometimes hopelessly give themselves up to death, and many well-meaning persons instanced it as an evidence of the wonderful mercy of God, who thus vouchsafed a warning to mankind to prepare for their great change. One, again, may have seen the wraith of the departed a short time before the death. We have known several people who believed they had seen the wraith of dying persons. One instance will suffice. One evening after ten o'clock a certain young man, known to us, returning from his work in the Goat to his house in the Byres, met an old man he knew well, and who was also peculiar in his dress, for he was wont to wear knee-breeches and a red cowl on his head. The young man said, as he passed, "Good-night," but received no response, neither did he hear any sound of footsteps, and remembering that the old man was ill, fear seized upon the youth, and he took to his heels and ran home, but for some time was unable to speak from the effects of his fright. Next morning brought word that old *Sappie Young* had died at the time this young man had seen his wraith on the Knowe. The belief in wraiths was common throughout all Scotland. When Robin Gray's young

wife tells of having seen her old sweetheart coming to her, she says,—

“I thought it was his wraith, I could not think it he.”

It was also a common belief among the Jews and Persians, and doubtless this belief has descended from them. These believed that there attended on every person a spirit, or guardian angel, which could show itself in a visible form at pleasure, and even separate itself from the person and go to a distance. A beautiful instance of this belief is found in the Acts of the Apostles, when the young woman, instead of opening the door to Peter when he knocked, ran into the house and told that she saw Peter standing at the door. “They all said, it is his angel (wraith.)”

A knock heard at the bed-head, or in any part of the room where a sick person was lying, was regarded as an omen of death. One woman told me that on one occasion while she was tending a sick person a knock was heard at the door; when she opened there was no person there, but the patient died that evening. We were once present when a warning was given. There was no sickness in the house. A sharp knock was heard, as if upon the floor. No one was near the spot, and nothing had fallen to produce the sound. For a time there was surprise, and the mistress of the house declared it was a warning. Next day a letter was received bearing news from India of the death of her two brothers, about two months previously. The good lady had now no doubt that the knock was a warning. If so, it must have been for the letter. Our explanation of the knock was that, as the whole



furniture was new, it was caused by the shrinking of the wood, which often produces very loud cracking sounds. After death the corpse was laid out upon a board called the *strauchting brod*. This was provided by the joiner who had the making of the coffin. During the time the corpse lay in the house all domestic animals were removed. The reason for this was probably an old superstitious belief that if a dog or cat leaped over the corpse, and was not instantly killed, the Devil would get power over the body in some way, so that the spirit of the dead would get no rest until some counter-charm was done to lay the Devil's power. The mirror or looking-glass was covered with a cloth, and it was considered a want of sympathy with the dead to remove the covering or use the glass in the room with the corpse until after the burial. A plate containing salt was placed upon the breast of the corpse, ostensibly, at the time we write of, to prevent the body swelling, but at earlier periods it was a charm to prevent the Evil One from disturbing the body. In some parts of Scotland a plate containing earth was placed alongside the one containing salt, ostensibly as symbols—the earth representing the destruction of the body, the salt the heavenly destination of the soul; but this, we suspect, was only a christianized explanation of an old heathen superstitious practice which the Church could not, or did not, abolish. Until the burial it was customary to sit up all night with the corpse. This task was generally undertaken by young male and female friends, who volunteered to perform this act of kindness. In our day there were no unseemly revelries connected with the night-watchings, as was the practice

in Scotland in older times, or at the Irish wakes. There was generally given to each person a glass of spirits as the friends retired to bed, and a refreshment of tea was provided about midnight; in the morning, when the relatives of the deceased relieved the night-watchers, in time to allow them to resume their ordinary daily avocations, a little beer, or spirits, or tea was again given, but in no case do we remember of any great improprieties taking place. As the relatives were generally sleeping in the next apartment, this was a check against any unseemliness. Nevertheless, such occasions supplied a favourable opportunity for love-making. We can readily imagine that the affectation and flippancy of everyday-courtship would be removed by such solemnizing presences as solitude and death, and true affection would more easily assert its reality in two acting mutually in a work of kindness and charity, added to an occasional whisper expressive of the desire of the heart. Part of the evening was generally spent by one of the company reading aloud. When it grew later and more eerie, they took to telling stories, ghostly and superstitious all of them to a lesser or greater extent. In this way the superstitions of our forefathers were preserved and handed down from generation to generation. After the recital of these stories we have seen some of the party afraid to look behind them or go to the door alone. We have many times wondered that some of our writers for Christmas numbers of magazines did not adopt the wake as a framework for their stories, especially as the fashion now is to make these Christmas stories as ghostly as possible. In Partick many of these ghost stories appertained to the locality, and so were pecu-

liarily interesting to the villagers. Almost all who had died a violent death, or whose notions and conduct during life did not square with the notions of the villagers, were sure to have their memory perpetuated by the appearance of their ghost. The proverb, "There is no rest for the wicked," was literally applied in those days; hence many old people had seen such ghosts.

Burial generally took place on the fourth day after death. The particular forms and customs observed at funerals have already been given (pages 96, 101), and need not be repeated. Meantime, as illustrative of the manners in these days, we will narrate one or two of the less mysterious of the stories which we have heard from the lips of parties who were themselves the actors or sight-seers.

The name of Catherine Clark was familiar to every native in Partick fifty or sixty years ago. She was the daughter of a respectable tradesman, who dwelt in the village about a century back, but she was out at service. We do not remember hearing in whose house she served, but it was somewhere near to Kelvin Grove. This place is described in a poem by our friend Mr. James Lemon, thus:—

"Where Kelvin's lonely fairy-haunted stream  
Sweet murmurs on, like music in a dream,  
Amid the trees embowering all the Grove,  
The hallowed haunts of innocence and love,  
And e'en the scene of many a sad love tale,  
O'er which fond memory bids the bosom wail;  
There oft at eve, escaped from slaviah toil,  
I've fled the din——

And rested by the ancient Three-tree Well,  
 To hear my friend the woeful story tell,  
 How guilt, in Love's fond winning smiles arrayed,  
 Sweet unsuspecting innocence betrayed."

Catherine Clark being a lass of considerable attractions, she had many followers, one of whom was a young man who dwelt at a distance from the village; but farthest from her home, he was nearest her heart. Catherine, alas! was too confiding—

"Loving not wisely but too well,  
 One night when darkly gloomed the sky,  
 Without one star to greet the wand'ring eye,  
 They strayed as wont, nor did she ever dream  
 But that he was what he did ever seem."

Catherine left her home one night to meet her lover, but never returned. A few days after her body was found buried near a large tree which stood within a few yards of the Pea-Tree Well. This tree was afterwards known as *Catherine Clark's Tree*, and remained for many years an object of interest to the visitors to this far-famed well, and many a sympathizing lover carved his name in rude letters on its bark. But the tree was also an object of terror to those who had to pass it in dark and lonely nights, and many tales were told of people who had seen a young female form dressed in white, and stained with blood, standing at the tree foot. The story we are now about to relate records probably the last instance of Catherine being seen, for the tree was shortly afterwards removed, and with it all fear and interest centering in the name of Catherine Clark has died away. We give the incident as related by the person himself:—

“ In 1823, M. B. of Garroch gave a party on Hallowe'en, and Jean, who was then serving there, and to whom I was engaged, urged me to be present that evening, which I was, and left a little before ‘the wee short hour ayont the twal.’ The night was a dark one, with occasional wild gusts of wind and heavy showers, accompanied with lightning. On leaving, I purposed taking the nearest road home, which was across the wooden bridge and through the Pea-Tree Well Wood. Jean remonstrated, and, among other reasons, urged the loneliness of the way, and the current report of things *no canny* having been seen and heard in the wood. But this only strengthened my resolution to go home by that path—for, would it not be regarded as proof of my courage and superiority to such superstitious beliefs?—so, after bidding Jean good-night, I took my course, but had not proceeded far when, in spite of every effort at resistance, my memory persisted in calling up foolish tales of ‘goblins, ghosts, and fairies,’ and though I both whistled and sang, I found these had no power to charm away my eeriness. After crossing the bridge and entering the wood, the rushing of the river, the roaring of the wind, and the rustling of the leaves unnerved me with fear; still, with rapid steps, and looking neither to the right nor left, I walked on, crossed the deep water-rut, and felt not a little relieved when I reached the open cart road; but I had not proceeded far when, about twenty yards in advance, a human skull, vividly illuminated, seemed to spring from the earth, right at the foot of Catherine Clark’s Tree. The eyes were glazed and motionless, the nose was a corrupted hole, and the mouth wore a ghastly grin. I could distinctly perceive a horrid gash in the throat, towards which a shadow-hand kept pointing. Although previously I had been nearly overmastered with the power of mere imagination, I became comparatively cool in presence of the reality. To turn was to run the risk of being

laughed at by the company; so, with cautious steps, and repeating, as I advanced, I believe audibly, the 23rd Psalm, I perceived a tremulous motion in the eyes and mouth. I had reached to within five yards, and was about to make a circuit to pass by. At this moment came a gust of wind, bringing with it a cloud of leaves, accompanied with a flash of lightning, and in an instant all was dark. The suddenness of the change was irresistible. I fled, and forgetting the water-rut or ditch, fell into it. I got home, stupefied and feverish, without my hat, and with my clothes spoiled. It was ten days after before I could resume my work, but I kept the cause of my fright and illness a secret. Next Hallowe'en Jean and I were in our own house with a few friends, and, talking over the old popular belief of the witches, ghosts, &c., having extra license on that evening, I for the first time related the above incident, when, to my no small relief, one of the company said that on the same night I saw the ghost he had hollowed out a turnip, made a face upon it, put into it a lighted candle, and fixed it on Catherine Clark's Tree, to frighten some of the female workers at the Kirklee."

The explanation was a great relief to us who were listening.

The mystery involved in the following story, which we ourselves were enabled to tell, remains unexplained; but had it been sought for earnestly, under the conviction that it arose from natural, not spiritual causes, the solution would have been found:—My grandfather, when a boy, had gone on a visit to some relations in the country. They lived in an old house which was said to be haunted, as after dark strange noises were heard at times throughout the house; and although they had

gone into the room whence the noise was heard to proceed, nothing could be seen, but the noise would then remove to another apartment. One night when my grandfather was there the noise became troublesome, and some of the inmates, lamp in hand, resolved to search out the cause. In this search my grandfather took an active part, "hunting the deil," as he termed it. On the stair landing there was standing up against the wall a fishing-rod, tied; and, as he passed, shouting his hunting cry, the fishing-rod fell without anyone having touched it, and in its fall cut off the first *lith* or joint of his little finger, clean as if done with a knife. The bit cut off could not be found, and from that time the ghost never more troubled that house. Such is the story grandfather told when we inquired the reason why the nail and first joint of his little finger were wanting.

Having now described the customs and superstitions connected with these three great events—Birth, Marriage, and Death—we will proceed to notice some other prevalent general beliefs which influenced considerably the social condition of the villagers. There was a strong, almost universal, belief in the doctrine of Fairies and Brownies, but no definite opinion obtained as to the extent of their action, whether of good or evil purport, towards the human race. They seem to have been regarded as actuated by much the same nature as human beings—some having a bias to good, others to evil. At one time we find them represented as wicked and malicious, glorying in mischief; at another time, as beneficent. Fairies were represented as little creatures dressed in green, who, meeting in certain spots, enjoyed

themselves in dancing and other amusements. We knew an old woman who said she had seen them on a moonlight evening thus enjoying themselves in the orchard on the side of the Kelvin, but they vanished whenever she showed herself. They evinced an extreme fondness for pretty children (as already referred to), and even youths they wiled away, who were never heard of again. The Brownie was looked upon as a kindly-disposed being, often attaching itself to a family, to which it brought luck, helping virtuous and ill-used people by doing their work during the night; and what was peculiar, they would never accept any recompense, their labour being entirely a labour of love. One old woman told me she had often left her rock full of lint of an evening, and in the morning found it all spun into beautiful yarn; and a neighbour of hers, a servant in a farm-house, whose daily work was more than she could well get through, often found, when she rose in the morning, her house cleaned, and everything looking like a new *preen*. Feeling desirous to show her gratitude for such kindness, she one night left for the Brownie a basin of sowens and milk, but neither were touched, and the offended Brownie never returned. Several of our old friends received benefits from the Brownies, who seem to have been acquainted with almost every kind of occupation, but they chiefly exercised themselves in household work. Great care was taken in speaking of these beings; for if any one should speak evil of either Brownie or Fairy, the person so doing was in danger, for there was a detective police of unseen listeners who bore the tidings to the maligned, whose little bulk could hold a great revenge.



Another superstition existed in Partick, and had a firm hold of the popular mind. This was a belief in the power of *glamour*. Certain persons gifted with this faculty were believed to have a power of deceiving the senses, especially the sense of sight, and caused those over whom they threw this power to believe and see whatever the operator might choose that they should see and believe. Sir Walter Scott, in the following beautiful lines, described the recognized capacity of this glamour power:—

“ It had much of glamour might,  
 Could make a lady seem a knight,  
 The cobwebs on a dungeon wall  
 Seem tapestry in lordly hall;  
 A nutahell seem a gilded barge,  
 A sheeling seem a palace large,  
 And youth seem age, and age seem youth—  
 All was delusion, naught was truth.”

In the old ballad of “Johnny Faa,” Johnny is represented as exercising this power over the Countess Cassillis:—

“ And she came tripping down the stairs,  
 With a’ her maids before her,  
 And soon as he saw her weel-faur’d face  
 He coost the glamour o’er her.”

The possessor of a four-leaved clover was completely protected against this power, and many times, when a boy, have we searched for this clover leaf, which, by the way, was also held sacred by the Druids, who kept such leaves probably for a similar purpose. A story was told in the village of a man who came to exhibit the wonderful strength of a cock, which could draw behind

his leg a large log of wood. Many went to see this wonderful performance, and were astonished; but a native of the village who witnessed the performance, and had in his possession a four-leaved clover, saw the animal walking through the yard with a long straw attached to its leg by a thread. During the summer of 1871, on a hillside in Arran, we came upon a group of young ladies searching for the charmed leaves, and our heart warmed with sympathy. We wished we could have joined in their search with the same childlike faith we once had; but our faith in such matters has long ago given place to cold scepticism. Let not the reader, however, laugh contemptuously at this belief in *glamour*, supposing it dead and gone with the silly past. It is a common failing in all ages to ascribe phenomena not understood to some occult or spiritual cause. Mankind have always been prone to "jump at conclusions." Only a gifted few have at any time been able to hold their judgment in suspense, and humbly say, "We do not know." In this present boastfully critical, intelligent, and enlightened age there are phenomena exhibited, chiefly among the wealthy and educated classes, which, because they cannot be explained by known physical laws, have been hastily and unhesitatingly ascribed to spiritual influences and *glamour*, under the new name of Mesmerism. The Home exhibitions have been attributed by writers in a leading scientific periodical to an occult influence which that gentleman is supposed to exercise over his audience, causing them to believe whatever he wishes. We cannot discern any difference between believing the so-called facts of Mr. Home and Mrs. Guppy flying bodily through the

air, and the old belief in witches riding through the air on a broomstick—only, our modern sibyls do not require the broomstick, which is certainly an advance on the old faith. Why don't some of our philosophers, who have ascribed the whole to glamour, procure a four-leaved clover, and expose the trick? The belief in the efficacy of the four-leaved clover is as old as that in glamour; and while the power of the one is acknowledged, it would not be inconsistent to try the effect of the other. The possession of such a leaf had other charms if found and possessed secretly; it prevented madness, or being drafted for military service, so that it is no wonder the searching for a four-leaved clover in early morning, when no one was in sight, was practised. We remember there were one or two old women in Partick who were regarded as witches, and, in consequence, their movements were carefully and suspiciously watched. They were frequently seen wandering in the fields at unusually early hours during the summer months, which was considered evidence of "uncanny" propensities. George M'Gregor, farmer, Bunhouse, one day brought home from market a fine horse. One of his servants in the evening led it to the water to drink. On his way he passed Mrs. S., one of the old women we have referred to, who remarked upon the beauty of the horse, and requested the servant to give her a few hairs from its tail, which he roughly refused, probably for this reason, that a few horse hairs plaited in a certain way was believed to endow the possessor with a dread mysterious power. Whatever may have been the reason, the carter, on entering the stable the next morning, found the horse lying dead. On the incident of the previous night being

related to his master, George, in the heat of his vexation, declared that had the same request been made to him by that woman, he would have given her every hair in its tail. The general opinion in the village was that the refusal of the hairs was the cause of the horse's death, and so strong ran the feeling against the old woman that we believe had she dwelt in a cottage alone, and not in a land with other families, her house would have been burned about her. Many other stories of Mrs. S. were current in attestation of her witch-power, sufficient, had she lived a century earlier, to have brought her to the stake. We may mention that Mrs. S. was a decent woman, and had borne a large family, who were at this time married respectably, but she had a peculiar temper, and was somewhat *outré* in manner, which her neighbours did not approve of, and consequently the *fama*.

Another instance of witchcraft occurred as illustrating the general belief in such power. A newly-married wife took a sudden fit of mental derangement, which was at once attributed to witchcraft or an evil eye. The Rev. Dr. M. was sent for to pray for her; but as soon as he began to pray the woman set up the most hideous screams, so that he was obliged to stop, and advise medical aid. This conduct on the part of the woman was believed to be a strong confirmation that her trouble was the result of evil influences. In such a case neighbours came to visit the poor woman, among whom were some who were suspected as being the cause of her bewitchment. While in, a friend of the woman privately cut a small piece of cloth from the short-gown or other portion of the dress of these parties and put it into the fire, which was considered an effective

means of taking away the power they possessed over the afflicted woman, who shortly after recovered.

Another belief which lingered long in the minds of many, and was common in Partick sixty years ago, was that witches, or it might be any who had entered into a compact with the deil, had power given them to inflict any evil they might choose upon another person. But for this end it was requisite that those witches or compact-makers must have in their possession some article belonging to the person they desired to harm, and by subjecting this article to the treatment they wished its owner to suffer, the owner thereby would be caused to feel in his or her person the pain thus signified. For example, if the witch should nip, prick with a pin, or beat the article with a stick, the party to whom the article belonged would feel nipped, pricked, or beaten. Again, it was supposed that if a witch, or one who had made a compact, formed an image and dressed it in whole or part with any article of clothing belonging to the party whom she desired to punish, she could thus cause pain and disease to the party at will by her treatment of the image. This is doubtless a very old superstition. In the eleventh century some Jews were accused of causing the death of a certain bishop by having modelled a wax image of him, baptizing it, and then slowly melting it before the fire. In the reign of Henry VI., among other friends of Duke Humphrey, the Duke of Gloucester and Dame Eleanor were arrested. "Roger Bolingbroke, a man expert in nygromancy, and a woman called Marjory Jourdemain, surnamed the Witch of Eye, to whose charge it was laid that these persons did, at the request of the

Duchesse of Gloucester, devyse an ymage of waxe lyke unto the King, the whych ymage they delt so wyth that by thyr Devyllysh sorcerye they intended to bring the King out of lyfe, for the which reason they were convyct and adjudged to die."—*Fulgan's Chronicle*.

Allan Ramsay refers to the same belief in his "Gentle Shepherd."—

" Unsonsy picture oft she makes  
Of any one she hates, and gaur expire,  
Wi' slow and racking pain, afore the fire,  
Stuck fu' o' prins the deviliah picture melt,  
The pain by folk they represent is felt."

May not the custom, still practised, of burning effigies be a survival of this superstition. We have a dim recollection of witnessing the burning in effigy of Kirkman Finlay, which caused a great sensation in the village. A large fire was kindled at the head of the Kilbrae, and the image of a man, life-size, well dressed, was brought to mock trial and condemned. A light was then put to the image, and it was carried blazing through the village, followed by a large crowd, not merely of boys, but of full-grown and even aged men. The figure was then carried back, and pitched into the fire, which rapidly consumed it, amid the loud cheers and execrations of the crowd.

Of the power which the witch was believed to possess, we give the following verse from John Bale, in the sixteenth century:—

" Theyr wells I can up drye,  
Cause trees and herbes to dye,  
And alee all pulterye,  
When as men doth me move ;

I can make stoles to daunce,  
 And earthen pottes to prauce,  
 That none shall them enhaunce,  
 And do but cast my glove."

In the time of which we write Partick more nearly resembled the country than the town, and the prevailing habits and ideas of the village were those of rural life. Certain of their superstitious beliefs were associated with trees and flowers. We remember the prevalence of *bourtrees*, which invariably formed some portion of a hedge enclosing a garden, and generally at the entrance to the garden stood a rowan-tree. This is still a common practice in country towns throughout Scotland. When very young, I remember being warned against breaking branches from the bourtrees bushes which grew around my grandfather's garden, ostensibly to prevent me poisoning myself, but more probably from other and superstitious reasons. The Elder was regarded as a favourite tree of the elves or fairies, and any one cutting it down was held to run the risk of their resentment, while those who possessed and protected it secured their favour. This is a widely-spread superstition throughout the greater part of Europe. In some places those who wish to prune such a tree say first, "Elder! Elder! may I cut thy branches?" If no rebuke be heard, they spit thrice and proceed. In ancient times, according to Montanus, the Elder formed portion of the fuel used in the burning of human bodies; and at a date within living memory, the driver of a hearse had his whip handle made of Elder wood. It is in consequence of these beliefs that still in country places old useless Elder bushes are not

cut down, and that we, when boys, were warned against cutting any branches from the bourtree bushes round grandfather's garden.

The rowan-tree or mountain ash was also regarded as a lucky tree, its protecting influence being chiefly exercised over cattle; and branches of this tree were often placed over the byre-door or in the milk-house to prevent the power of an evil eye; and a churn staff made of the rowan-tree was believed to assist the formation of butter, and was a potent charm against witchcraft and the black art. Thunder and lightning, it was said, never harmed the rowan-tree, nor injured cattle feeding in a field where such a tree was growing. Some of these ideas still prevail in many districts in Scotland. In the North Highlands we have seen a rowan-tree trained over a byre-door, and also branching over the farm-yard gate through which the cattle passed in and out. Joseph Train, in his poetical description of some Highland superstitions, refers to this of the rowan-tree:—

“Lest witches should obtain the power  
Of Hawkie's milk in evil hour,  
She winds a red thread round her horn,  
And milks through row'n-tree night and morn.”

This superstition about the rowan-tree can be traced back to very early times, and probably is connected with a legend of the Norse god Thor, who is said to have once saved himself from drowning by catching hold of the branch of a rowan-tree. The Scandinavians always inserted a piece of this wood in the prow of their ships as a protection against thunder, for Thor, the God of Thunder, would not direct his bolt against



the tree that had saved his life. It is said that the Druids also held this tree sacred, and it is frequently found near their stone monuments. It is probable that the practice of these superstitious rites and the belief in them is a survival of ancient tree-worship, which once prevailed over a great part of the world. The Rev. F. W. Farrar says respecting this—"Tree-worship may be traced from the interior of Africa, not only in Egypt and Arabia, but also onward uninterruptedly into Palestine and Syria, Assyria, Persia, India, Thibet, Siam, the Philippine Islands, China, Japan, and Siberia. Also westward into Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and other countries, and in most of the countries here named it obtains in the present day, combined as it has been in other parts with various forms of idolatry," and, we would add, with Christianity.

We find here a suitable opportunity to relate a good story we heard in the Highlands. An old woman, who kept a few cows, was once in sore distress of mind because she believed that some of her ill-wishing neighbours had cast an evil eye upon her cows, in consequence of which their milk in a very short time *blinked* (turned sour), and churn as she might she could obtain no butter. Every ancient and time-honoured remedy had failed; she had placed branches of rowan-tree round the cows when milking them, bourtree and rowan-tree had been hung round the byre, but no good came for all her efforts. At last, in her extremity, she applied to the parish minister. He, wise man, patiently listened to her complaint with apparent sympathy. At length he said, "I'll tell you how I think you'll succeed in driving away the evil eye. It seems to me that it

has not been cast on your cows, but on your dishes. Gang hame and tak' a' the dishes down to the burn, and let them lie for a while in the running stream, and then rub them weel wi' a clean clout, and then tak' them hame and pour boiling water upon and in them, and then set them aside to dry. Boiling water is what the evil eye cannot stand; sca'd it out, and ye'll get butter." A few weeks after, old Janet called on the minister and thanked him for his cure, remarking that she had never seen anything so wonderful.

Fairies and elves were believed to have a preference to farm-houses, and had great influence for good or evil over the whole proceedings of the farm. For their favourites they performed many acts of kindness—their cows to yield more milk, their milk to yield more cream and more butter, their cattle to be prolific, and their land more than usually productive. Of course the tables were turned against those whom they disliked; in fact, it was believed that what they took from the one they gave to the other. There were certain persons who were in the service of the *foul thief* who got possession of the black art, and who could exercise a similar power. In Partick it was widely believed that persons having the black art could cause the milk of cows belonging to one farmer to be transferred to the cows belonging to another. This process was termed *milking the tether*. Highlanders were, in particular, considered to be gifted with the black art, and I have heard several instances where it was held as good as proven that this power had been exercised to the loss of many a worthy cowfeeder. My paternal grandfather, who prided himself in being

free from all superstitious beliefs, related a case of the exercise of the black art which came under his own observation when a boy. A farmer in the district where my grandfather resided had in his service a young lad acting as herd-boy. This young Celt was in the habit of telling fortunes, and showing young lads and lasses their future wives and husbands; and from his success in these matters it was believed that he was possessed with the secret of the black art. He had been upwards of two years in the farmer's service, and it was noticed that from the time the boy had come a wonderful prosperity had attended his master, which prosperity was held in great measure to have been brought about by the boy. One winter, however, the cows on the farm yielded very little milk, so that there was great scarcity on the farm. In this emergency the boy proposed to bring the milk from the cows of the neighbouring farmer. This proposition was received by the mistress of the farm with great fear, which soon took possession of all the household, and the master in consequence paid the boy his wages in full, besides giving him a present, to induce him to leave his service in good friendship and go home, which he did, to the relief of all the servants. My grandfather, in telling this, had no doubt but the proposition of the boy was to *milk the tether*—transfer the milk by the black art.

Besides those who had possession of the black art, or who had sold themselves to the *foul fiend*, there was a belief that certain persons could foretell the fortune of others. We do not refer to spaewives, or the ordinary process of *spacing fortunes*, which superstition prevails as much

now, and is as common in Glasgow at the present among a certain class of females, as it was in Partick fifty years ago. The fortune-telling we refer to was looked upon as a gift given to persons who were deficient in some of the senses, more especially deaf and dumb persons. We remember one who came about the village as late as 1835. He visited the village regularly, and was universally believed to possess the gift of foresight. Theological opinions compelled the people to refuse him the name of prophet, but, nevertheless, he held somewhat of the rank, with many of the gifts of a prophet. He carried with him a slate and a piece of chalk, by the use of which inquiries were made and answers given, and he often wrote down certain occurrences and predictions without being asked. He did not beg from door to door; in fact, he did not formally beg at all. When he visited the village he only went to certain houses, and entered as a friend—one time in one house, and again in another—and anxious inquirers came to him, as it was soon known through the neighbourhood that the Dummy was come. He would look round the company, and detecting any strange faces would write down their initials, and frequently the whole name in full, of the strangers. He wrote the names of friends at a distance, and foretold when those present would receive letters or hear about them, and whether such news would be good or bad; he disclosed the whereabouts and circumstances of sailor lads and absent lovers; he detected thieves and foretold deaths; in fact, he was an uncommonly good soothsayer. He wrote of a girl that was on the eve of being married to a tradesman, that she would not be married to him, but would get a husband who would

keep her counting money, which was fulfilled, as she did not get the tradesman, but married a shopkeeper, and she served behind the counter. He often volunteered information about parties not present, and seldom failed in startling the people by the knowledge he displayed. A stranger visiting a house where he was visiting, the Dummy drew a coffin, and then pointed to the stranger, a young woman. She died a few weeks after. In another house, where the husband was seriously ill, the Dummy told them that the man would recover, and that his wife would die before him, which she did not long after. This Dummy was well known throughout a wide district, and wherever he went he was implicitly believed in. As we have stated, he never asked alms, but few people would allow him to depart unserved. We know of a penny being borrowed to give him rather than let him leave the house unserved. Some persons ventured to hint that the Dummy's spiritual gift was cunning, but such scoffers were quickly put down by the answer, "Where God, in His providence, is pleased to withhold one gift, He generally adds others higher and better."

Evil wishes were looked upon as not only morally wicked but as practically dangerous, especially when the wish was upon themselves, as it often was fulfilled, which proved anything but agreeable to rash-spoken wishers. Many illustrations were produced in proof of this evil, such as the well-known tradition of the pig-faced lady. A special case occurred in Partick about ninety years ago. A married woman, *enceinte* for the first time, having words with her husband, wished she would never give birth to her child. She was taken at her

word. She lived for several years in delicate health, but no child was ever born. Different narrators give slightly different versions of the story. By some it was stated that during certain periods she appeared as if near her confinement, and at other times as *jimp* as a young girl. According to some accounts, she lived only a few years; according to others, as long as thirty years, after making her rash wish. It was also reported that after her death some medical men, whose curiosity had been excited by the peculiarity of the case, made a *post-mortem* examination, and having secured the baby, carried it away with them and placed it in the College Museum.

A simple half-witted female in the village had what was called a misfortune. She laid the blame upon a young man in the neighbourhood, who denied it, and on being summoned before the kirk-session swore that the baby was not his. As he did so, the poor woman wished that his right hand would forget its cunning. In less than a year after some disease came into his hand, so that he was ever after unfit to use it. We remember him going about selling tea, and hearing the people remarking how poor Meg's wish had been so completely fulfilled.

The superstitious beliefs connected with birds and insects were numerous. Handed down from sire to son, they were early instilled into the youthful mind. While some birds and insects were held in great honour, others were as much despised and hated, and, when opportunity offered, killed. The robin is an example of the former class. Few boys would *herry* a robin's nest. Possibly this partiality may have been generated by the story of

"The Babes in the Wood." Certainly the story strengthened, if it did not originate, the kindly feelings with which this bird was regarded. The *yite* or *yeldring* (yellow-hammer) is an example of the latter class. The nests of these birds were remorselessly herried, and their young often cruelly tortured and killed. The robin, it was said, had a drop of God's blood in its veins, whereas the *yite*, and we have also heard it said of the swallow, had a drop of the devil's; yet it was held to be a lucky omen when a swallow built her nest on a house, and it was considered a daring of Providence for a tenant or proprietor to tear down such a nest.

To be the possessor of a hen with the abnormal gift of crowing like a cock boded evil to the whole house. It turned out evil for the hen also, for it was quickly made to pay the penalty of its masculine assumption with its life, or was quietly sold. This superstition has found expression in the proverb—"Whistling maids and crawling hens are no canny about a house."

Seeing magpies before breakfast indicated good or evil fortune according to the number, up to four, seen together. The interpretation of these omens in Partick was expressed in the following couplet:—

"One bodes grief, two is death.  
Three's a wedding, four's a birth."

Chambers, in his "Scottish Rhymes," has it thus—

"One's joy, two's grief,  
Three's a wedding, four's a birth."

When a cock happened to crow in a morning with its

head in at the house door it was held to be token of a visit that day from a stranger; and so firm was the faith in this portent that it was followed by works, for the house was immediately *rede-up* for reception. A few months ago we visited an old friend in the country, and were met with the following salutation:—"Come awa; I knew we would have visitors to-day, for the cock crowed this morning twice o'er with his head in at the door."

Superstitious beliefs connected with birds, their species, their manner of flight, whether to the right or left, their cries and alightings, existed at a very early date, and are found prevailing among all the various races of men.

If a cat happened to die in a house, it was regarded by the villagers as a very unlucky event. Grimalkin, when sickness overtook her, was dismissed the house, and lodged in the coal cellar. This may be a survival from the ancient Egyptians, who held a somewhat similar belief; but the death of a cat was regarded by them as a great misfortune, the household upon such an event going into mourning by shaving off their eyebrows, and otherwise indicating their sorrow, or it may have arisen from the common belief of the frequent assumption by witches of the cat form. A hare crossing a road in the morning in front of anyone going to their work or travelling on business boded ill luck during the day, or for the particular business in hand.

Black beetles were considered very lucky about a house. My mother would not permit us to kill one; but as she did not personally relish their presence, we were allowed to sweep or carry them out with the tongs. None of us would venture to touch one with the hand,



Youngsters had a saying that the day following the one on which a *clock* was killed would be wet.

Spiders were held in great detestation, and were generally very roughly dislodged and swept out, but it was considered unlucky to kill one of them. There is an English proverb which says—

“ If you wish to live and thrive,  
Let the spider run alive.”

This carefulness over the life of a spider is probably the result of an old legend, which affirmed that a spider wove its web over the place where the baby Christ was hid, thus preserving his life by screening him from sight of those who sought to kill him. Many similar stories are related of spiders having saved the lives of notable persons, by weaving webs over their hiding-places.

The common white butterfly was a favourite with children, but the red and dark-winged moths, commonly known in Partick, and, we believe, throughout Scotland, as *witch butterflies*, were held in aversion, as it was believed that evil would result to whoever chanced to kill one.

A small variety of beetle, with a beautiful bronze-coloured back, known by children in Partick as a *gooldie*, was held in great favour, and regarded with affection by children, who were pleased to allow it to run upon their hands and clothes, whereas, if a larger species of beetle chanced to get upon them, they would run away screaming. To possess a *gooldie* was considered lucky.

The ladybird, with its scarlet coat spotted with black,

was a great favourite: no one would kill it, and children were eager to catch it, and delighted in watching it gracefully spreading its wings for flight while they repeated the rhyme—

“Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home,  
Your house is on fire and your children at home.”

Or,

“Lady, Lady Landers, fly away to Flanders.”

Grown girls had a different rhyme, with a spice of divination in it—

“Fly away east, or fly away west,  
And show me where lives the one I like best.”

There were a number of other things, and arrangements of circumstances, which were regarded as more or less lucky. On sight of the first plough seen in the season, or the first seen when travelling on particular business, it was considered a lucky omen when the horses' heads were turned in the direction of the observer—unlucky when the reverse was the case. Ill luck followed if the first person met in the morning was plain-soled. A soot-flake hanging on the grate bars boded a visit from a stranger, and a stem of tea-leaf floating in a cup of tea portended the same. If the stem was soft the visitor would be a female, if hard, a male. When the new moon was first seen, if at the time the observing parties happened to have money in their hands, it was considered lucky, for by that token they would not find themselves in straits for cash while that moon lasted; and persons having warts on their bodies, if, at the moment of catching sight of the new moon, they took a

small portion of earth from under their right foot, and having moistened it into a paste with their spittle, applied it to the wart, wrapping it about with cloth, and allowing it to remain on untouched till that moon was out, would thereby, it was believed, rid themselves of such excrescences. Those who, on first seeing the new moon, stood and bowed themselves thrice and kissed their hand to it, would, it was said, find something before that moon had run its course. It is pretty evident that we have here a survival of moon-worship, which we find prevailed among the Druids, but was not original with them, for such form of worship existed at the earliest times of which we have any tradition. We find Job referring to the very same form which we have here described :—"If I beheld the sun walking in brightness, and the moon, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, and my mouth hath kissed my hand, that were an iniquity to be punished by the judge."

The fasting spittle was believed to possess great curative power. Warts were removable by bathing them with this every morning for a specified number of days. Sore eyes in children were curable by moistening them every morning with the mother's fasting spittle, and it was a common practice with mothers upon awaking in the morning to bathe their babies' eyes thus, as a preventive, when there was no necessity to apply it as a cure. Excrescences on the skin were subjected to the same treatment. This is also a gray-haired superstition. Maimonides states that the Jews were expressly forbidden by their traditionary laws to put fasting spittle on the eyes on the Sabbath-day. It may have been the breakage of this law which caused the Pharisees to be

so bitter against Christ for making clay with his spittle, and anointing the eyes of the blind man therewith on the Sabbath-day. By both Greeks and Romans the fasting spittle was regarded as a charm against fascination, and infants were rubbed with it to protect them from the blighting influence of an evil eye.\* We never heard that fasting spittle was employed for this purpose in Partick, but we think it probable that what did exist in Partick was an offspring of this more ancient belief. Spittle is a fluid having a soft emolient action, which may render it more agreeable and effective when put upon weak eyes of children to moisten and soften them than water, but this would be as effective after as before breaking the fast.

The power of fascination was a belief in Partick. If any of the villagers saw any one looking upon a child for a length of time, with a fixed steadfast gaze, those interested in the child were possessed with the fear that it was being fascinated, and they would at once remove the child, mentally repeating some short form of prayer; but it did not require that the child should be gazed upon in this fashion to exert a fascinating power, neither was the power confined to children, but youths, and even adults, were often put under it. If, for example, any person, especially a youth, was found musing in a "*brown*

\* We take the following from Professor Conington's Satires of A. Persius Flaccus:—

"Look here! A grandmother, or a superstitious aunt, has taken baby from his cradle, and is charming his forehead and his slaving lips against mischief by the joint action of her middle finger and her purifying spittle, for she knows right well how to check the evil eye."

*study,*" with his eyes fixed upon the fire, it was believed that he was under the power of some unseen fascinating spell, and that thoughts were being suggested by a familiar or evil spirit, which, if followed, would lead the youth to harm. An anxious parent or friend observing this musing attitude would, without speaking, lift the piece of coal or wood which generally filled the centre of the grate, and, turning it right over, say, while doing so, "Gude preserve us frae a' skaith." This was considered not only to break the spell, but caused the evil intended to revert upon the party exercising the power. When a boy, this form of disenchantment was frequently performed upon ourselves, and we have seen it done for others. When any neighbour suffered harm immediately after this operation had been performed, it gave rise to suspicions, especially when such neighbours happened to be on bad terms with the family of the operator at the time, as it pointed them out as the guilty persons, and it also tended to confirm the belief in the efficacy of the operation. This form of dispelling a fascinating charm may have had its origin in fire-worship, as it evidently appeals to the fire-god for protection.

There was another common superstition connected with fire. In burning caking coal in a grate there sometimes occurred a slight explosion, throwing out a small cinder of the apparently fused coal upon the hearth or floor. When this occurred the cinder was carefully searched for, examined, and its shape noted—according to the shape did it bode good or evil to the party sitting in the direction in which it was expelled. If it struck any one the signal was certain. It might be considered to represent a coffin, which was a very bad

omen, or a cradle, which was a good omen. Whatever the imagination of the party fancied its shape to represent, by this was the coming evil or good indicated. I have seen one of these cinders cause much depression of spirits in a family, especially when any of its members were unwell, and the shape of the cinder was considered to be that of a coffin; and, if thrown out in their direction, it was looked upon as a warning of the approaching dissolution of the sick one.

There was also the well-known and still existing belief in the virtue of an old horse-shoe. To find one upon the road was considered very lucky. It was carefully preserved, and nailed upon the back of the door of a byre or stable, and often of the dwelling-house, in which situation it was considered a sure preservative against every evil influence. This is no local superstition. We have seen in several beer-shops in London a horse-shoe nailed on the first step of the door, and we listened one evening to a long and serious discussion on the subject in the parlour of a celebrated beer-house in that city. The question was whether the shoe ought to be nailed above, below, or behind the door; and some of the same gentlemen, for they were not working-men, felt we insulted their judgment when, in the course of conversation, we mentioned that there were hills in Scotland whose tops were sometimes above the clouds. This occurred not above twenty-five years ago.

There were also means of inquiring into different matters by following certain formulæ. We give one—*Ordeal of the Key*.—This was an operation requiring some degree of moral courage on the part of those

interested, and it was therefore not very often resorted to, being generally believed to be an appeal to the devil. It was performed for the purpose either of finding out a suspected thief, or of ascertaining if a lover was in real earnest and was the ordained future husband. The formulæ were as follow:—A key and a Bible were produced, the key to be so much longer than the Bible that when put into it the head and handle should project. When the inquiry was about the faithfulness of a lover the key was placed in the Bible at Ruth i. 16, on the words, "Entreat me not to leave thee; where thou goest I will go," &c., which was then closed, and tied by a piece of tape. Two persons, sitting opposite each other, held out the forefingers of their right hands, and the person consulting the oracle suspended the Bible between the two hands, by resting the key on the points of the two fingers. No one spoke except the young sweetheart, who in a trembling voice repeated the verses just referred to, naming her lover, thus— "Entreat me not to leave thee (John); for where thou goest," &c. If the answer was favourable, in less than five minutes the key began to move off the fingers of the parties holding it, and fell to the ground. If the parties holding the key and the Bible were steady, the movement of the key was certain; and that is probably the reason it was seldom resorted to, as there was a belief and an apparent evidence of the presence of some unseen power causing the movement of the key and Bible. Hence there was great fear, and occasionally some of the parties engaged in or witnessing the operations fainted. For the detection of a thief the key was placed in the Bible at the 50th Psalm. When the

Bible was suspended on the fingers, the person from whom the article was stolen repeated the name of the suspected thief, and spoke or read the 18th verse of the above Psalm—"When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him," &c. If the Bible turned, then the person named was believed to have been the thief. The cause of the Bible turning is explainable by pulsations; indeed, if the operators hold their fingers immovable in the first position, they cannot prevent the pulsations of the fingers from moving the key.

There were other means of divining, some of which had lost their more serious aspect, and, so far as we remember, were not practiced by grown-up people. One of these we may call "stick divining." When a number of boys met and were in doubt as to what they would amuse themselves with, or in what direction they would go, or if, in a game, one of their number had hid himself and they could not find him, a stick was placed as nearly perpendicular as it could be held and the hand suddenly removed, and the direction in which the stick fell settled the question. Sometimes the stick was thrown twirling into the air, and then the direction in which the head or thick end of the stick lay indicated the course to be taken. This may seem a trifling matter, but at the present day there are nations employing these very means for determining the most important concerns of life. The New Zealand sorcerer uses sticks for divining, throwing them into the air, and finding his decisions by the direction in which they lie. Even in such a serious matter as sickness or bodily injuries, the position of the fallen sticks, or certain stick, directs the way to seek a doctor. Similar devices were practiced ages ago



in the old world, the responses being taken from the fallen position of staves (divining rods). There was yet another mode of stick divination. When a matter was to be determined between two parties, such, for example, as which side in the game should have the first stroke of the ball at "shinty." One player threw the stick or shinty to one of his opponents, who caught it in his hand, then each alternately grasped it hand over hand, and he who got the last hold was the successful party. Such is said by some of our scholars to have been the mode of divining practiced in ancient times, and referred to by the prophet Hosea in these words, "Their staff declareth unto them." However, this may also have reference to the Magian form of divining. "The priests carried with them a bundle of willow wands. When divining, they untie and lay them out upon the ground, and then gather them, repeating certain words by which they are supposed to be consulted. The wands were of different lengths, and the number of wands in the bundle varied, being 3, 5, 7, 9, &c., but in every case there was an odd number"—probably originating the saying common to this day, "There is luck in odd numbers."

A curious belief respecting suicides prevailed in the village among the old people, no doubt originating in the difficulty of harmonizing the doctrine of God's predetermination with man's free-will. As the length of every person's life is fixed by God, there is consequently an appointed time for all to die, which no one can pass, and, allowing Nature her course, all must live up to; but man, possessing a free-will, may by his own determination and wickedness commit suicide, and so interfere with the course of Nature and shorten the

period of his life. But it has been found, by those who had examined into the matter, that the body of the suicide is mysteriously preserved from decomposition until that day arrives on which they would have died by the appointment of God. And that this belief was not confined to Partick, we may mention that about forty years ago we were walking along the banks of the canal to the north of the city in company with several ordinarily intelligent men, when one of them pointed out a quiet spot where he affirmed the real *Bob Dragon* was buried. *Bob*, he said, committed suicide, but his friends knowing that, in consequence of this act, his property according to law was forfeited to the Crown, secretly interred him in this out-of-the-way place, and got another corpse, which they laid in the coffin in his own house; but several years after this, some persons, in digging about this quiet spot on the banks of the canal, discovered the body of the true Bob, with his throat cut, lying there as fresh as the day on which the act was done; but Bob's relations getting wind of this discovery, gave the discoverers a few pounds to rebury the body and keep the matter quiet. If this story, told in full faith, was not an entire myth, the body thus found may have been that of the victim of some foul murder of recent date. Not many years ago we heard a native of Arran maintaining the same belief, and advancing instances in proof, which, however, all rested on hearsay.

The following were also common ideas in the village, and some of which still exist. Rocking a cradle when the baby is out of it was very unlucky. It gave the infant a sore head, and was a sign that it would die before the cradle could be dispensed with.

A stray dog following any one on the street without their having enticed it was very lucky. Success would attend the errand on which such persons were travelling.

A child born with a caul—a thin membrane covering the head of some children at birth—would, if spared till it became an adult, prove a notable person, generally in a worthy way; but if its notoriety came by evil conduct, its wickedness would be unusually great. The possession of a caul was held to be a protection against evil; masters of vessels carried them on their voyages, as they were said to prevent shipwreck. Cauls were frequently advertised for.

To spill salt when handing it to any one was unlucky, and denoted an impending quarrel between the parties; but if the person spilling it carefully lifted it up with the blade of a knife and cast it over his shoulder all evil was prevented.

To present a knife or pair of scissors to any person, and refuse to take something in return, cut all friendship between the parties.

If the ear tingled, it denoted that some one was speaking about you—if the right ear, the speech was favourable to you; if the left ear, the reverse. In this latter case, if you bit your little finger you caused the parties speaking ill of you to bite their tongue.

If, in a social gathering, a bachelor or maid were placed inadvertently between a married couple, they would get married within a year.

A person overturning his chair when rising denoted that he had been speaking untruths.

To steal a chestnut or potato and wear it was a preventive against rheumatism.

To feel a cold tremor along the spine denoted that some person was treading on your future grave, and that it would not be long before you lay in it.

A person speaking aloud by himself denoted that he would die a violent death.

Many of these have their origin in certain observed facts, wrongly and ignorantly reasoned upon and applied. We have heard many of them, with considerable variation, apparently as the different parties fancied they had observed the fulfilment of the thing indicated.

We think it unnecessary to enter into the general belief in the truth and meaning of dreams, which often perplexed the dreamers; indeed, we can hardly decide how far a belief in dreams may be said to be superstitious. At the present day there are many intelligent, highly cultivated people who believe that dreams do sometimes declare truths, but the belief is unpopular amongst that class, and, consequently, is held more secretly than in earlier days; amongst them, however, there is a decided leaning to a literal interpretation, whereas in former days the figurative interpretation was universal. Sixty years ago the formula for reading dreams was contained in a popular chapbook, no doubt still in circulation. But there were also some who were expert dream-readers, whose services were in request when an unusually impressive dream was experienced. Generally the reader of the dream was acquainted more or less with the family matters of the dreamer, and the interpretation had relation to some known circumstance likely to be present to the mind of the client. When a person dreamed that their teeth were loose or falling out, it indicated the sickness or death of some near rela-

tion. To dream that the body was covered with vermin was indicative of coming wealth, or good luck in some way. To dream of fire was the herald of unexpected news. As was to be expected, there were many startling fulfilments of these interpretations, which were treasured up and quoted in vindication of the truth of the interpretations applied to them. Many such dreams, whose interpretations were wonderfully fulfilled, have been related to us by persons whose word we would not for a moment doubt; but our limited knowledge of psychological science does not enable us to offer any explanation of them, though we believe they contained nothing which a more intimate knowledge of such a science would not explain.