RHYMES CONNECTED WITH SUPERSTITIONS.

The fairies, or, as they were popularly called, the *guid neibors*, were famous for their elopements with the wives of mortals. The miller of Alva is not the only injured husband whose case here calls for record. A neighbour of that person—the smith of Tullibody—was equally unfortunate; and had not, for anything I ever heard, the ultimate happiness of getting back his lost spouse. The case of the smith was attended, as the newspapers would say, with circumstances of peculiar aggravation. His spouse was taken away almost before his very eyes; and not only was his honour thus wounded in the tenderest point, but his feelings were also stung by a rhyme of exultation sung by the fairies, in which they reflected, in a most scandalous and ungenerous manner, upon his personal habits. The tale goes, that while he was busy at work at one end of the house, he heard the abductors, as they flew up the chimney at the other, singing with malicious glee—

'Deedle linkum dodie,
We've gotten drucken Davie's wife,
The smith of Tullibody!'

The fairies do not appear to have ever been successful in introducing the human race, by the above means, into their own country; at least it is well known that they were in the habit of frequently stealing away children from the cradles of mortal mothers, for the purpose of adopting them as their own offspring, nurturing them in Fairyland, and making them part of their own community. The heavy coil of humanity does not appear to have been thus ingrafted upon the light-bodied race, who could exhibit feats of rope-

taking them from her mouth in characters. Most of her speeches were about the Covenant.*

From lay lads in pulpit prattling,
Twice a-day rambling and rattling.
* * *

And concludes his litany—

From all the knock-down race of Knoxes
Good Lord deliver us!'

* Burnet's *Memoirs of the Dukes of Hamilton*, p. 83.

dancing upon the beams of the new moon, and feast, unseen, in thousands, under the blossom of the wild violet.* These adopted children, perhaps, remained amongst them only in the quality of friends, platonic lovers, or servants; and were permitted, after a few years of probation, to return to earth, in a fitter condition than formerly to enjoy its blessings. It ought not to be forgotten that, in cases of stealing children, one of their own unearthly brats was usually left in the cradle.

It was, till lately, believed by the ploughmen of Clydesdale, that if they repeated the rhyme,

> Fairy, fairy, bake me a bannock, and roast me a collop,
> And I'll gie ye a spurtle aff my gad end!

three several times, on turning their cattle at the terminations of ridges, they would find the said fare prepared for them on reaching the end of the fourth furrow.

The fairies are said to have been exceedingly sensitive upon the subject of their popular appellations. They considered the term 'fairy' disreputable; and are thought to have pointed out their approbation and disapprobation of the other phrases applied to them in the following verses:—

> Gin ye ca' me imp or elf,
> I rede ye look weel to yourself;
> Gin ye ca' me fairy,
> I'll work ye muckle tarrie;†
> Gin guid neibor ye ca' me,
> Then guid neibor I will be;

* 'It is still currently believed that he who has the courage to rush upon a fairy festival, and snatch from them their drinking-cup, or horn, shall find it prove to him a cornucopia of good fortune, if he can bear it in safety across a running stream. A goblet is still carefully preserved in Edenhall, Cumberland, which is supposed to have been seized at a banquet of the elves by one of the ancient family of Musgrave, or, as others say, by one of their domestics, in the manner above-described. The fairy train vanished, crying aloud—

> "If this glass do break or fall,
> Farewell the luck of Edenhall!"

'The goblet took a name from the prophecy, under which it is mentioned in the burlesque ballad commonly attributed to the Duke of Wharton, but in reality composed by Lloyd, one of his jovial companions. The duke, after taking a draught, had nearly terminated the "luck of Edenhall," had not the butler caught the cup in a napkin as it dropped from his Grace's hands. I understand it is not now subject to such risks; but the lees of wine are still apparent at the bottom.'—*Minst. Scot. Bord.* ii. 130.

† Trouble.

But gin ye ca' me seelie wicht,
I'll be your freend baith day and nicht.

Husbandmen used to avoid, with superstitious reverence, to till or destroy the little circlets of bright green grass which are believed to be the favourite ball-rooms of the fairies; for, according to the appropriate rhyme,

He wha tills the fairies' green,
Nae luck again shall hae;
And he wha spills the fairies' ring,
Betide him want and wae;
For weirdless days and weary nights
Are his till his deein' day!

Whereas, by the same authority,

He wha gaes by the fairy ring,
Nae dule nor pine shall see;
And he wha cleans the fairy ring,
An easy death shall dee.

There is an old adage—

Whare the scythe cuts, and the sock rives,
Hae done wi' fairies and bee-bykes!

Meaning, that the ploughing, or even the mowing, of the ground, tends to extirpate alike the earth-bee and the fairy. In various places the fairies are described as having been seen on some particular occasion to gather together and take a formal farewell of the district, when it had become, from agricultural changes, unfitted for their residence.

THE BROWNIES.

The brownie was a household spirit of a useful and familiar character. In former times, almost every farm-house in the south of Scotland was supposed to be haunted by one. He was understood to be a spirit of a somewhat grotesque figure, dwarfish in stature, but endowed with great personal strength. It was his humour to be unseen and idle during the day, or while the people of the house were astir, and only to exert himself while all the rest were asleep. It was customary for the mistress of the house to leave out work for him—such as the supper-dishes to be washed, or the churn to be prepared—and he never failed to have the whole done in the morning. This drudgery he performed gratuitously. He was a most disin-

terested spirit. To have offered him wages, or even to present him with an occasional boon, would have insured his anger, and perhaps caused him to abandon the establishment. Numerous stories are told of his resentment in cases of his being thus affronted. For instance, the goodman of a farm-house in the parish of Glendevon left out some clothes one night for the brownie, who was heard during the night to depart, saying, in a highly-offended tone,

'Gie brownie coat, gie brownie sark,
Ye'se get nae mair o' brownie's wark!'

The brownie of the farm-house of Bodsbeck, in Ettrick, left his employment upwards of a century ago on a similar account. He had exerted himself so much in the farm-labour both in and out of doors, that Bodsbeck became the most prosperous farm in the district. He always took his meat as it pleased himself, usually in very moderate quantities, and of the most humble description. During a time of very hard labour, perhaps harvest, when a little better fare than ordinary might have been judged acceptable, the goodman took the liberty of leaving out a mess of bread and milk, thinking it but fair that at a time when some improvement, both in quantity and quality, was made upon the fare of the human servants, the useful brownie should obtain a share in the blessing. He, however, found his error, for the result was, that the brownie left the house for ever, exclaiming,

'Ca', brownie, ca',
A' the luck o' Bodsbeck away to Leithenha'.'

The luck of Bodsbeck accordingly departed with its brownie, and settled in the neighbouring farm-house, called Leithenhall, whither the brownie transferred his friendship and services.*

* 'A tradition is still current that a fairy, or brownie, assisted the people there [the old fortalice of Dolphiston, in Roxburghshire] in thrashing their corn in olden times, and that, in token of their gratitude for his services, an article of dress was placed for his acceptance in the scene of his nocturnal labours; but that he, hurt and offended at the very offer of remuneration of any sort, quitted the place for ever, and in doing so, is said to have uttered his regret in these lines—

"Sin' ye've gi'en me a harden ramp,*
Nae mair o' your corn I will tramp."'

—*New Statistical Account of Scotland, article Oxnam.*

* A coarse linen shirt.

The traditions of Forfarshire put the rhyme which follows into the mouth of a brownie, who, having been expelled by exorcisms from its favourite haunt, the old castle of Claypots, near Dundee, spouted, before departing, a somewhat satirical enumeration of the neighbouring localities:—

'The Ferry and the Ferry-well,
The Camp and the Camp-hill,
Balmossie and Balmossie Mill,
Burnside and Burn-hill,
The thin sowens o' Drumgeith,
The fair May o' Monifeith;
There's Gutterston and Wallackston,
Clay-pats I'll gie my malison;
Come I late, or come I air,
Balemie's board's aye bare.'

One of the principal characteristics of the brownie was his anxiety about the moral conduct of the household to which he was attached. He was a spirit very much inclined to prick up his ears at the first appearance of any impropriety in the manners of his fellow-servants. The least delinquency committed either in barn, or cow-house, or larder, he was sure to report to his master, whose interests he seemed to consider paramount to every other thing in this world, and from whom no bribe could induce him to conceal the offences which fell under his notice. The men, therefore, and not less the maids, of the establishment, usually regarded him with a mixture of fear, hatred, and respect; and though he might not often find occasion to do his duty as a spy, yet the firm belief that he would be relentless in doing so, provided that he did find occasion, had a salutary effect. A ludicrous instance of his zeal as guardian of the household morals is told in Peeblesshire. Two dairymaids, who were stinted in their food by a too frugal mistress, found themselves one day compelled by hunger to have recourse to the highly improper expedient of stealing a bowl of milk and a bannock, which they proceeded to devour, as they thought, in secret. They sat upon a form, with a space between, whereon they placed the bowl and the bread, and they took *bite and sip* alternately, each putting down the bowl upon the seat for a moment's space after taking a draught, and the other then taking it up in her hands, and treating herself in the same way.

They had no sooner commenced their mess, than the brownie came between the two, invisible, and whenever the bowl was set down upon the seat, took also a draught; by which means, as he devoured fully as much as both put together, the milk was speedily exhausted. The surprise of the famished girls at finding the bowl so soon empty was extreme, and they began to question each other very sharply upon the subject, with mutual suspicion of unfair play, when the brownie undeceived them by exclaiming, with malicious glee,

'Ha! ha! ha!
Brownie has't a'!'

WITCHES.

Certain articles were supposed to have a controlling power over witches.

Rowan-tree and red thread
Make the witches tyne* their sped.

Such is a saying prevalent over all Scotland: in the southern pastoral district thus enlarged and varied:—

Black luggie, lammer bead,
Rowan-tree, and red thread,
Put the witches to their speed!

David Ritchie, the deformed pauper of Manor, who sat to Scott for the Black Dwarf, never went anywhere without a piece of rowan-tree (mountain-ash) in his pocket. His garden, moreover, was full of these trees. The power of the rowan-tree, as a specific against witches, was universally acknowledged amongst the unenlightened in Scotland less than fifty years ago: the fact becomes curious, when we associate it with the following circumstances:—'Near Boitpoor, in Upper India,' says Bishop Heber, 'I passed a fine tree of the mimosa, with leaves at a little distance so much resembling those of the mountain-ash, that I was for a moment deceived, and asked if it did not bring fruit? They answered no; but that it was a very noble tree, being called the Imperial Tree, for its excellent properties: that it slept all night, and wakened and was alive all day, withdrawing its leaves if any one attempted to touch them. Above all, however, it was useful as a preservative against magic: a

* Tyne—that is, *lose*.

sprig worn in the turban, or suspended over the bed, was a perfect security against all spells, evil eye, &c. insomuch that the most formidable wizard would not, if he could help it, approach its shade. I was amused and surprised to find the superstition, which in England and Scotland attaches to the rowan-tree, here applied to a tree of nearly similar form. Which nation has been in this case the imitator? Or from what common centre are these common notions derived?'

Among the Highlanders of Scotland, the virtue of the rowan-tree is in the highest repute even at the present day. 'The mountain-ash is considered by them as the most propitious of trees; and in such fishing-boats as are rigged with sails, a pin of this wood for fastening the haulyard to has been held of indispensable necessity. Sprigs of the mountain-ash, in diseases of cattle, and when malt yields not a due proportion of spirits, are considered a sovereign remedy. An old medical man who lived at Lochawe-side turned this superstition to account. During the course of a long practice, he sold mountain-ash sprigs, accompanied with proper prescriptions, for such sums, that his son was reputed rich, and his grandson is now a landed proprietor.'—*A. C. in Literary and Statistical Magazine*, 1819.

A spindle o' bourtree,
A whorl o' caumstane,
Put them on the house-tap,
And it will spin its lane.

The bourtree is the alder. I have nothing to add to the statement made by the rhyme itself, except that I fear we shall have no new mechanic power from this device.

Witches were supposed to have the power of supplying themselves with milk from their neighbours' cattle by a very simple though insidious process. Procuring a small quantity of hair from the tail of every cow within her reach, the vile wretch twisted it up into a rope, on which she tied a knot for each cow. At this she tugged in the usual manner of milking a cow, pronouncing at the same time some unhallowed incantation, at which the milk would stream abundantly into her pail. The following is a verse said to have been used on such occasions, though it seems of larger application:—

Meares' milk, and deers' milk,
And every beast that bears milk,
Between St Johnston and Dundee,
Come a' to me, come a' to me.

It was believed that some cows of uncommon sagacity knew when this process was going on, and would give warning of it by lowing. An acute old woman could easily distinguish this low from any other, as it bore a peculiar expression of pain. The proper antidote was to lay a twig of rowan-tree, bound with a scarlet thread, across the threshold of the byre, or fix a stalk of clover, having four leaves, to the stall. To discover the witch, the goodman's breeks might be put upon the horns of the cow, one leg upon each horn, when, for certain, she being set loose, would run straight to the door of the guilty party.

According to a curious pamphlet, first printed in 1591, entitled *Newes from Scotland, Declaring the Damnable Life of Dr Fian*, the following was the dancing song of a large body of witches, who landed one night in a fleet of sieves and cockle-shells at a place near the church of North Berwick, where they held some unspeakable saturnalia:—

Cummer, go ye before; cummer, go ye!
Gif ye will not go before, cummer, let me!

The parish of Innerkip, in Renfrewshire, was famous for its witches. In 1662, the privy-council issued a commission to try a number of them; and several poor wretches were accordingly done to death 'conform to law.' A rhyme which still lingers in the district runs thus:—

In Innerkip the witches ride thick,
And in Dunrod they dwell;
The grittest loon amang them a'
Is auld Dunrod himsel'!

Dunrod is an estate in the parish of Innerkip, anciently belonging to a branch of the Lindsays. As Alexander Lindsay, the last of these lairds, sold the estate in 1619, the rhyme may be considered as not more recent than the early part of the seventeenth century.

MERMAIDS.

Mermaids, in Scottish superstition, were both beneficent and dangerous personages. One of celebrity in Galloway

would sometimes communicate useful knowledge to the people living along the rocky coast which she delighted to frequent. 'A charming young girl, whom consumption had brought to the brink of the grave, was lamented by her lover. In a vein of renovating sweetness, the good mermaid sung to him—

"Wad ye let the bonnie May die i' your hand,
And the mugwort flowering i' the land?"

He cropped and pressed the flower-tops, and administered the juice to his fair mistress, who arose and blessed the bestower for the return of health.'—*Cromek's Nithsdale and Galloway Song.*

There is a story in Renfrewshire which represents the maid of the sea in a similar kindly disposition towards afflicted humanity. The funeral of a young woman who had died of consumption was passing along the high-road, on the margin of the Firth of Clyde, above Port-Glasgow, when a mermaid raised her head from the water, and in slow admonitory tones uttered these words—

'If they wad drink nettles in March,
And eat muggons in May,
Sae mony braw maidens
Wadna gang to the clay.'

As may be readily surmised, muggons or mugwort (also called southernwood), and a decoction of nettles, form a favourite prescription for consumption amongst the common people.

The old house of Knockdolion stood near the water of Girvan, with a black stone at the end of it. A mermaid used to come from the water at night, and taking her seat upon this stone, would fall a-singing for hours, at the same time combing her long yellow hair. The lady of Knockdolion found that this serenade was an annoyance to her baby, and she thought proper to attempt getting quit of it, by causing the stone to be broken by her servants. The mermaid, coming next night, and finding her favourite seat gone, sang thus—

'Ye may think on your cradle—I'll think on my stane;
And there 'll never be an heir to Knockdolion again.'

Soon after, the cradle was found overturned, and the baby

dead under it. It is added that the family soon after became extinct. One can see a moral in such a tale—the selfishness of the lady calling for some punishment.

The young Laird of Lorntie, in Forfarshire, was one evening returning from a hunting excursion, attended by a single servant and two greyhounds, when, in passing a solitary lake, which lies about three miles south from Lorntie, and was in those times closely surrounded with natural wood, his ears were suddenly assailed by the shrieks of a female apparently drowning. Being of a fearless character, he instantly spurred his horse forward to the side of the lake, and there saw a beautiful female struggling with the water, and, as it seemed to him, just in the act of sinking. 'Help, help, Lorntie!' she exclaimed. 'Help, Lorntie—help, Lor——', and the waters seemed to choke the last sounds of her voice as they gurgled in her throat. The laird, unable to resist the impulse of humanity, rushed into the lake, and was about to grasp the long yellow locks of the lady, which lay like hanks of gold upon the water, when he was suddenly seized behind, and forced out of the lake by his servant, who, farther-sighted than his master, perceived the whole affair to be the feint of a water-spirit. 'Bide, Lorntie—bide a blink!' cried the faithful creature, as the laird was about to dash him to the earth; 'that wauling madam was nae other, God sauf us! than the mermaid.' Lorntie instantly acknowledged the truth of this asseveration, which, as he was preparing to mount his horse, was confirmed by the mermaid raising herself half out of the water, and exclaiming, in a voice of fiendish disappointment and ferocity—

'Lorntie, Lorntie,
Were it na your man,
I had gart your heart's bluid
Skirl in my pan.'

THE LAIRD O' CO'.

In the days of yore, the proprietors of Colzean, in Ayrshire (ancestors of the Marquis of Ailsa), were known in that country by the title of *Lairds o' Co'*, a name bestowed on Colzean from some co's (or coves) in the rock underneath the castle.

One morning, a very little boy, carrying a small wooden

can, addressed the laird near the castle gate, begging for a little ale for his mother, who was sick: the laird directed him to go to the butler and get his can filled; so away he went as ordered. The butler had a barrel of ale on tap, but about half full, out of which he proceeded to fill the boy's can; but to his extreme surprise he emptied the cask, and still the little can was not nearly full. The butler was unwilling to broach another barrel; but the little fellow insisted on the fulfilment of the laird's order, and a reference was made to him by the butler, who stated the miraculously large capacity of the tiny can, and received instant orders to fill it if all the ale in the cellar would suffice. Obedient to this command, he broached another cask, but had scarcely drawn a drop, when the can was full, and the dwarf departed with expressions of gratitude.

Some years afterwards, the laird, being at the wars in Flanders, was taken prisoner, and for some reason or other (probably as a spy) condemned to die a felon's death. The night prior to the day appointed for his execution, being confined in a dungeon strongly barricaded, the doors suddenly flew open, and the dwarf reappeared, saying,

'Laird o' Co',
Rise an' go'—

a summons too welcome to require repetition.

On emerging from prison, the boy caused him to mount on his shoulders, and in a short time set him down at his own gate, on the very spot where they had first met, saying,

'Ae guid turn deserves anither—
Tak ye that for bein' sae kind to my auld mither,'

and vanished.*

SHORT-HOGGERS OF WHITTINGHAME.

It is supposed to be not yet a century since the good people of Whittinghame got happily quit of a ghost, which, in the shape of an 'unchristened wean,' had annoyed them for many years. An unnatural mother having murdered her child at a large tree, not far from the village, the ghost of the deceased was afterwards seen, on dark nights, running in a distracted manner between the said tree and the church-

* The above story appeared some years ago in the *Kaleidoscope*, a Liverpool periodical publication.

yard, and was occasionally heard crying. The villagers believe that it was obliged thus to take the air, and bewail itself, on account of wanting a *name*—no anonymous person, it seems, being able to get a proper footing in the other world. Nobody durst speak to the unhappy little spirit, from a superstitious dread of dying immediately after; and, to all appearance, the village of Whittinghame was destined to be haunted till the end of time, for want of an exorcist. At length it fortunately happened that a drunkard, one night on reeling home, encountered the spirit, and, being fearless in the strength of John Barleycorn, did not hesitate to address it in the same familiar style as if it had been one of his own flesh-and-blood fellow-toppers. 'How's a' wi' ye this morning, Short-Hoggers?' cried the courageous villager; when the ghost immediately ran away, joyfully exclaiming—

'Oh, weel's me noo, I've gotten a name;
They ca' me Short-Hoggers o' Whittinghame!'

And since that time, it has never been either seen or heard of. The name which the drunkard applied to it denotes that the ghost wore *short stockings without feet*—a probable supposition, considering the long series of years during which it had walked. My informant received this story, with the rhyme, from the lips of an old woman of Whittinghame, who had *seen* the ghost.

GRAHAM OF MORPHIE.

The old family of the Grahams of Morphie was in former times very powerful, but at length they sunk in fortune, and finally the original male line became extinct. Among the old women of the Mearns, their decay is attributed to a supernatural cause. When one of the lairds, say they, built the old castle, he secured the assistance of the water-kelpy or river-horse, by the accredited means of throwing a pair of branks over his head. He then compelled the robust spirit to carry prodigious loads of stones for the building, and did not relieve him till the whole was finished. The poor kelpy was glad of his deliverance, but at the same time felt himself so galled with the hard labour, that on being permitted to escape from the branks, and just before he disappeared in the water, he turned about, and expressed,

in the following words, at once his own grievances and the destiny of his taskmaster's family :—

'Sair back and sair banes,
Drivin' the Laird o' Morphie's stanes !
The Laird o' Morphie 'll never thrive
As lang's the kelpy is alive !'

SUPERSTITIOUS STORIES REGARDING THE BUILDING OF CERTAIN ANCIENT STRUCTURES.

'The Scottish vulgar, without having any very defined notion of their attributes, believe in the existence of an intermediate class of spirits residing in the air or in the waters; to whose agency they ascribe floods, storms, and all such phenomena as their own philosophy cannot readily explain. They are supposed to interfere in the affairs of mortals, sometimes with a malevolent purpose, and sometimes with milder views. . . . When the workmen were engaged in erecting the ancient church of Old Deer in Aberdeenshire, upon a small hill called Bissau, they were surprised to find that the work was impeded by supernatural obstacles. At length the Spirit of the River was heard to say—

"It is not here, it is not here,
That ye shall build the church of Deer;
But on Taptillery,
Where many a corpse shall lie."

The site of the edifice was accordingly transferred to Taptillery, an eminence at some distance from the place where the building had been commenced.'—*Notes to Lay of Last Minstrel.*

The superstition here alluded to is general over Scotland. In Lanarkshire, they relate that, in building Mauldslie Castle in a former situation, the work was regularly razed every night, till, a watch being set, a voice was heard to enunciate from the foundations—

'Big the house where it should be,
Big it on Maul's Lee.'

To which spot the building was accordingly transferred.

Near Carnwath stands Cowthally, Cowdaily, or Quodaily Castle, an early residence of the noble family of Somerville. The first Somerville, as tradition reports, came from France, and dispossessed the former proprietor of

Cowthally, some of whose vassals he subjected to his authority, though, it appears, without succeeding in attaching them very faithfully to his interests. Somerville demolished the outer walls of the castle, and a good part of the castle itself, before he could make himself master of it; and he afterwards saw fit to rebuild it in a different place. But against this design he found circumstances in strong opposition. As the country people say, 'what of the wall he got built during the day, was regularly *dung down* at night.' Suspecting the fidelity of his watchmen, he undertook to wake the castle in person. It would appear that this had no effect in saving the building; for who should come to demolish it but the Evil One himself, with four or five of his principal servants, who, without heeding Somerville's expostulations, or even his active resistance, fell to and undid the work of the day, chanting all the while, in unearthly articulation, the following rhyme:—

'Tween the Rae Hill and Loriburnshaw,
There ye'll find Cowdaily wa',
And the foundations laid on ern.'

It is added that, in compliance with this hint, Somerville was obliged to rebuild the castle of Cowdaily on its original foundations, which were of iron. Rational persons telling this story, express a shrewd suspicion that some of the vassals of the former lord personated the demons; and that, while the French watchmen were thereby terrified out of their wits, the Scottish men, whom Somerville had pressed into his service, considered the whole transaction as a piece of good sport, and connived at it out of secret enmity to their new master.

A somewhat similar tale is told regarding the castle of Melgund, in Forfarshire, the ancient and now ruined seat of a branch of the family of Maule. The situation of this building is remarkably low, and perhaps it is to this circumstance, setting the wits of the vulgar to account for it, that we are to ascribe the existence of the legend. It is said that the site originally chosen was a spot upon a neighbouring hill, but that, as the work was proceeding there, the labours of the builders were regularly undone every night, till at length, on a watch being set, a voice was heard to exclaim—

'Big it in a bog,
Whare 'twill neither shake nor shog.'

The order was obeyed; and behold the castle standing in the morass accordingly! It is of course easy to conceive reasons in human prudence for adopting this situation, as being the more defensible.

A similar example of the agency of this class of spirits is cited with respect to the church of Fordoun, in Kincardineshire. The recently-existing structure was of great antiquity, though not perhaps what the monks represented it—namely, the chapel of Palladius, the early Christian missionary. The country people say that the site originally chosen for the building was the top of the Knock Hill, about a mile north-east from the village. After, as in the former case, the walls had been for some time regularly undone every night by unseen spirits, a voice was heard to cry—

'Gang farther down,
To Fordoun's town.'

It is added that the new site was chosen by the throwing at random of a mason's hammer.

We now cross the Border, and find the same superstition. The church of Rochdale, in Yorkshire, stands on a height. 'The materials laid for the building on the spot fixed upon by Gamel the Saxon thane, are said to have been removed by supernatural agency. This Gamel, it appears, held two ludis—Recedham or Rochdale—under Edward the Confessor. . . . The necessary preparations were made; the banks of the river groaned under the huge beams and massy stones; and all seemed to promise a speedy and successful termination. But there were those—not the less powerful because invisible to eyes of flesh and blood—who did not approve of the site, having resolved that the edifice should raise its head on the neighbouring hill. Accordingly, in one night all was transferred to its summit. The spectacle was beheld in the morning with universal dismay! But the lord was not a man to be easily foiled: at his command the materials were brought down to their former station. A watch was set; and now all appeared safe. In the morning, however, the ground was once more bare! Another attempt was rewarded by another failure. The

spirits had conquered. One who knew more about them than he should have done made his appearance; and after detailing what he chose of the doings of the spirits, presented to the lord a massy ring, bearing an inscription to this purport—

> The Norman shall rule on the Saxon's hall,
> And the stranger shall rule o'er England's weal;
> Through castle and hall, by night and by day,
> The stranger shall thrive for ever and aye;
> But in Racheds above the rest,
> The stranger shall thrive the best!

In accordance with this ratiocination runs the old and now nearly obsolete remark, that "strangers prosper, but natives are unfortunate."—*England in the Nineteenth Century, quoting Roby's Traditions of Lancashire.*

The existence of legends bearing so near a resemblance in distant parts of the country, and applicable to different objects, affords curious matter of speculation.

A CHARM AGAINST RATS AND MICE.

When these creatures become superabundant in a house of the humbler class, a writ of ejectment, in the following form, is served upon them, by being stuck up legibly written on the wall:—

> Ratton and mouse,
> Lea' the puir woman's house;
> Gang awa owre bye to 'e mill,
> And there ane and a' ye'll get your fill.

A correspondent says, 'I have seen the writ served on them, but cannot tell the result.'

This exorcism reminds me of a French peasant custom, which a correspondent tells me he has witnessed in the district of Solozné, in the department of Loiret. It is called the Fête of the Brandons or Torches, and occurs on the first Sunday in Lent. The peasant boys and girls run about the fields all that night, with lighted torches, very often made of the dry stalks of *Verbascum thapsus*, smeared with grease or tar, singing—

> Sortez, sortez, d'ici mulots,*
> On je rais vous brûler les crocs

* Shrew-mice.

Quittez, quittez ces bles ;
Allez, vous trouverez,
Dans la cave du curè,
Plus à boire qu'a manger.

At the same time they pull all the plants of the *nielle*, or corn-cockle (*Agrostemnia githago*), which they can find. When they return home, they have *crêpes* (a kind of pancake) for supper. This fête is kept all over Touraine, and in parts of Poitou. My correspondent regards it as the remains of an old Pagan feast of Ceres.

RHYME ON JOHNSTON OF WARRISTON.

Johnston of Warriston rose from the bar to high employments under the Estates and Commonwealth; but after the Restoration, fell under the vengeance of the new government. He was executed in Edinburgh July 22, 1663. Lamont, a contemporary chronicler, has the following notice regarding that event:—'Before, and at his death, there was a report noised abroad, said to be uttered by the midwife at his birth, thus—

Full moon, high sea,
Great man shalt thou be,
But ill death shalt thou die.'

MISCELLANEOUS FREITS.

There is a charm used by the dairymaids of Clydesdale, to induce refractory or bewitched cows to give their milk—

Bonnie ladye, let down your milk,
And I'll gie you a gown o' silk;
A gown o' silk, and a ball o' twine—
Bonnie ladye, your milk's no mine.

In Scotland, it is accounted fortunate to be seated when we first see the swallow in spring, to be walking when we first hear the cuckoo, and to see, for the first time in the year, a foal going before the eyes of its dam—

Gang an' hear the gowk yell,
Sit an' see the swallow flee,
See the foal before its mither's e'e,
'Twill be a thriving year wi' thee.*

* In the Highlands, it is reckoned lucky to see a foal, calf, or lamb, for the first time, with the head towards the observer.

Throughout all Scotland, as in England, it is a belief that the number of magpies seen at a time denotes various degrees of good and evil fortune—

One's sorrow—two's mirth—
Three's a wedding—four's death;
Five a blessing—six hell—
Seven the de'il's ain sel'!

A philosopher, rather unexpectedly, assigns a rational foundation for at least the first part of this quatrain:—'I have no doubt that the augury of the ancients was a good deal founded upon observation of the instinct of birds. There are many superstitions of the vulgar owing to the same source. For anglers in spring it is always unlucky to see single magpies; but two may always be regarded as a favourable omen: and the reason is, that in cold and stormy weather one magpie alone leaves the nest in search of food, the other remaining sitting upon the eggs or the young ones; but when two go out together, it is only when the weather is mild and warm, and favourable for fishing.'—*Sir Humphry Davy, Salmonia.*

Colours are connected by Scottish superstition with the strangely-mingled texture of human life:—

Blue
Is love true.

Green
Is love deen [done].

Yellow's forsaken, and green's forsworn,
But blue and red ought to be worn.

Also—

Blue is beauty, red's a taiken [token],
Green's grief, and yellow's forsaken.

Yellow was a despised colour in the middle ages, and formed the dress of slaves and bankrupts—hence the yellow breeches still worn by the boys of Christ's Hospital. It is rather strange that green, the most natural and agreeable of all colours, should have been connected by superstition with calamity and sorrow. It was thought very ominous to be married in a dress of this hue—

They that marry in green,
Their sorrow is soon seen.

To this day, in the north of Scotland, no young woman would wear such attire on her wedding day. A correspondent states as follows:—'An old lady of my acquaintance used seriously to warn young females against being married in green, for she attributed her own misfortunes solely to having approached the altar of Hymen in a gown of that colour, which she had worn against the advice of her seniors, all of whom recommended blue as the lucky colour.' Probably the saying respecting a lady married before her elder sisters, 'that she has given them green stockings,' is connected with this notion.

In Scotland, as in England, there are prepossessions with regard to the weather at bridals and funerals—

If the day be foul
That the bride gangs hame,
Alack and alace
But she'd lived her lane!
If the day be fair
That the bride gangs hame,
Baith pleasure and peace
Afore her are gane!

Happy the bride that the sun shines on,
And happy the corpse that the rain rains on.

Moral qualities are connected with the colour of the eyes—

Gray-eyed, greedy;
Brown-eyed, needy;
Black-eyed, never blin',
Till it shame a' its kin.

May, as is well known, is held an unlucky month for marriages, and this superstition likewise existed among the Romans. The Scottish peasant says—

Of the marriages in May,
The bairns die o' decay.

(The editor happens to be a living proof of the contrary.) With this is connected a proverb, 'May birds are aye cheeping.'

The young women in Galloway, when they first see the

new moon,* sally out of doors, and pull a handful of grass, saying—

> New mune, true mune, tell me if you can
> Gif I hae here a hair like the hair o' my guidman.

The grass is then brought into the house, where it is carefully searched, and if a hair be found amongst it, which is generally the case, the colour of that hair determines that of the future husband's.

The young women of the Lowlands, on first observing the new moon, exclaim as follows:—

> New mune, true mune,
> Tell unto me,
> If [naming her favourite lover] my true love,
> He will marry me.
> If he marry me in haste,
> Let me see his bonnie face;
> If he marry me betide,
> Let me see his bonnie side;
> Gin he marry na me ava',
> Turn his back and gae awa'.

They expect in their dreams that night to see their lover under one or another of the conditions enumerated. It is curious to find that the same custom exists in a distant English county.†

Among the many superstitious rites of Halloween, *knotting the garter* holds a distinguished place. It is performed, like the preceding freits, by young females, as a divination to discover their future partners in life. The left leg garter is taken, and three knots are tied on it. During the time of knotting, the person must not speak to any one, other-

* It is well known to be a prevalent custom, or *freit*, on first seeing the new moon, to turn money in the pocket.

† In Berkshire, at the first appearance of a new moon, maidens go into the fields, and while they look at it, say—

> New moon, new moon, I hail thee!
> By all the virtue in thy body,
> Grant this night that I may see
> He who my true lover is to be.

They then return home, firmly believing that, before morning, their future husband will appear to them in their dreams.—*Hone's Year-Book*, p. 254.

wise the charm will prove abortive. She repeats the following rhyme upon tying each knot:—

This knot, this knot, this knot I knit,
To see the thing I ne'er saw yet—
To see my love in his array,
And what he walks in every day;
And what his occupation be,
This night I in my sleep may see.
And if my love be clad in green,
His love for me is well seen;
And if my love is clad in gray,
His love for me is far away;
But if my love be clad in blue,
His love for me is very true. *

After all the knots are tied, she puts the garter below her pillow, and sleeps on it; and it is believed that her future husband will appear to her in a dream in his usual dress and appearance. The colour of his clothes will denote whether the marriage is to prove fortunate or not.

RHYMES CONNECTED WITH HEALING.

The rhymes used in healing by Agnes Simpson, a 'wise woman' who dwelt at Keith, in Lothian, and was tried in 1591 for witchcraft, have been preserved in the records of the Court of Justiciary. At the examination of this woman, in presence of the king, the following particulars, amongst others, were brought out:—

'Being sent for to Edmonstone to decide by her supernatural skill whether the lady of the house should recover from an illness or not—for women of her order appear in that age to have been as regularly called to the bedsides of the sick as physicians—she told the attendants that she could give them the required information that evening after supper, appointing them to meet her in the garden. She then passed to the garden, and, as was her custom in such cases, uttered a metrical prayer, which, according to her own confession, she had learned from her father, and which enabled her to determine whether the patient would

[* Variation—

And if his livery I am to wear,
And if his bairns I am to bear,
Blithe and merry may he be,
And may his face be turned to me!]

be cured or not; as, if she said it with one breath, the result was to be life, but if otherwise, death. This prayer was as follows:—

"I trow [trust] in Almighty God, that wrought
Baith heaven and earth, and all of nought;
In his dear son, Christ Jesu,
In that comely Lord I trow,
Was gotten by the Haly Ghaist,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Stapped to heaven, that all weil than,
And sits at his Father's richt hand.
He bade us come and heir to dome
Baith quick and deid to him convene.
I trow also in the Haly Ghaist;
In haly kirk my hope is maist,
That haly ship where hallowers wins
To ask forgiveness of their sins,
And syne to rise in flesh and bane,
The lip that never mair has gane.
Thou says, Lord, loved may he be,
That formed and made mankind of me.
Thou coft [bought] me on the haly cross,
Thou lent me body, saul, and voce,
And ordanet me to heavenly bliss;
Wherefore I thank ye, Lord, of this.
That all your hallowers loved be,
To pray to them that pray to me.
And keep me fra that fellon fae,
And from the sin that saul would slay.
Thou, Lord, for thy bitter passion in,
To keep me from sin and warldly shame,
And endless damnation. Grant me the joy never
will be gane,
Sweet Christ Jesus. Amen."

'Having stopped in the course of this long prayer, she despaired of the lady's life. However, she called upon the devil, by the name of Elpha, to come to speak to her. He presently appeared climbing over the garden wall, in the shape of a large dog; and he came so near her, that, getting afraid, she charged him, by the law that he lived on, to keep at a certain distance. She then asked if the lady would live, to which he only answered that "her days were gane." He in his turn asked where the young gentle-

women, daughters to Lady Edmonstone, were at present. She answered that she expected soon to see them in the garden. "Ane of them," said he, "will be in peril: I wish to have her." On her answering that it should not be so with her consent, he "departed frae her," says the indictment, "yowling;" and from that time till after supper he remained in the draw-well. After supper, the young ladies walked out into the garden to learn the result of Mrs Simpson's inquiries, on which the devil came out of the well, and seizing the skirts of one of them (probably a married one, as she is called Lady Torsonce), drew her violently towards the pit from which he had emerged; and, it is added, that if Simpson and the other ladies had not exerted themselves to hold her back, he would have succeeded in his wishes. Finding himself disappointed of his prey, he "passit away thairefter with ane yowle." The object of his ravenous passions fainted, and was carried home: she lay in a frenzy for three or four days, and continued sick and cripple for as many months. And it was remarked that, whenever the wise wife of Keith was with her, she was well; but on her going away, all the dangerous symptoms returned. In the meantime, it is to be supposed, the old lady died.'—*Life of James VI.* 2 vols. 1830.

Mrs Simpson's prayer, while immediately engaged in healing the sick, was as follows:—

'All kynds of ill that ever may be,
In Christ's name I conjure ye.
I conjure ye, baith mair and less,
By all the vertues of the messe,
And rycht sa with the naillis sa,
That nailed Jesus and not ma,
And rycht sa by the samen bluid,
That reekit owre the ruthful rude,
Furth of the flesh and of the bane,
And in the eard and in the stane,
I conjure ye in God's name.'

In the trial of Bartie Paterson in 1607, we have the following charm for the cure of cattle:—

I charge thee for arrowshot,
For doorshot, for wombshot,
For eyeshot, for tongueshot,
For livershot, for lungshot,

For heartshot, all the maist,
In the name of the Father, Son, and Haly Ghaist,
To wend out of flesh and bane
Into sack and stane;
In the name of the Father, Son, and Haly Ghaist. Amen.

In the Perth kirk-session register, under 1632, a husband and wife confess to occasionally using the following 'holy words' for healing:—

Thir sairs are risen through God's wark,
And must be laid through God's help;
The mother Mary and her dear Son,
Lay thir sairs that are begun.

'The herb vervain, revered by the Druids, was reckoned a powerful charm by the common people; and the author recollects a popular rhyme, supposed to be addressed to a young woman by the devil, who attempted to seduce her in the shape of a handsome young man—

Gin you wish to be leman mine,
Leave off the St John's wort and the vervine.

By his repugnance to these sacred plants, his mistress discovered the cloven foot.'*—*Minst. Scot. Border.*

Superstitious observances still flourish unaffected in Shetland. To quote from the minister of the parish of Sandsting and Aithsting, in the *New Statistical Account of Scotland:*—'These are practised chiefly in attempting to cure diseases in man and beast, or in taking away the "profits" of their neighbours' cows; that is, in appropriating, by certain charms, to their own dairy, the milk and butter which should have replenished that of their neighbour. I shall subjoin a few specimens.

* The power of this herb is acknowledged in Sweden, where it is called *Fuga Demonum.* In Ireland, country doctors and old women pulled it for medicinal purposes, with an invocation in the name of the three persons of the Trinity. In England, the following rhyme was used on the same occasion:—

Hail be thou, holy herb,
Growing on the ground,
All in Mount Calvary
First wert thou found.
Thou art good for many a sore,
And healest many a wound;
In the name of sweet Jesus
I take thee from the ground.

'*Wresting Thread.*—When a person has received a sprain, it is customary to apply to an individual practised in casting the "wresting thread." This is a thread spun from black wool, on which are cast nine knots, and tied round a sprained leg or arm. During the time the operator is putting the thread round the affected limb, he says, but in such a tone of voice as not to be heard by the bystanders, nor even by the person operated upon—

The Lord rade,
And the foal slade;
He lighted,
And he righted.
Set joint to joint,
Bone to bone,
And sinew to sinew.
Heal in the Holy Ghost's name!*

'*Ringworm.*—The person afflicted with ringworm takes a little ashes between the forefinger and thumb, three successive mornings, and before having taken any food, and holding the ashes to the part affected, says—

Ringworm! ringworm red!
Never mayest thou either spread or speed;
But aye grow less and less,
And die away among the ase [ashes].

At the same time throwing the little ashes held between the forefinger and thumb into the fire.

'*Burn.*—To cure a burn, the following words are used:—

Here come I to cure a burnt sore;
If the dead knew what the living endure,
The burnt sore would burn no more.

[* This incantation seems founded on some legend of Christ's life; it occurs in witch trials of the early part of the seventeenth century, and the following is perhaps a comparatively correct version of it:—

Our Lord rade,
His foal's foot slade;
Down he lighted,
His foal's foot righted.
Bone to bone,
Sinew to sinew,
Blood to blood,
Flesh to flesh.
Heal in name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

It is worthy of remark, that by means of the former version of the rhyme, as presented in a former edition of this work, Jacob Grimm has been enabled to explain a German charm of the tenth century.]

The operator, after having repeated the above, blows his breath three times upon the burnt place. The above is recorded to have been communicated to a daughter who had been burned by the spirit of her deceased mother.'

In Galloway, the district of Scotland most remote from Shetland, and mainly occupied by people of different origin, the rhyme for the ringworm is nearly the same as the above:—

Ringwood, ringwood roun',
I wish ye may neither spread nor spring,
But aye grow less and less,
Till ye fa' i' 'e ase and burn.