

Manx Folkways

A Gleaning of Writings

Number One

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Manx Folkways: A Gleaning of Writings



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Manx Folkways

A Gleaning of Writings

Number One

Edited
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Stephen Miller

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Isle of Mann

'Print-on-Demand'

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Introduction

This is the first number in a series of publications which have the intention of bringing together inaccessible material relating to Manx folkways both printed and in manuscript.

CHARLES ROPER

The first piece is a reprint of Chapter xxvii, "Isle of Man Superstitions," pp. 181–203, from Charles Roper, *Where the Birds Sing: A Selection of Rustic Sketches and Idylls of Common Life* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1894). Despite the "folksy" title, the chapter was written around material actually collected by the author. Roper appears to have spent his time on the Island largely in and around at Port St Mar judging from the places mentioned and succeeded in gathering a small but valuable corpus of material.

W.Y. EVANS WENTZ

The following piece is taken from W.Y. Evans Wentz, *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1911). Given the title of Wentz's work, it is not unsurprising that this piece focuses exclusively upon fairy legends. A facsimile reprint of *The Fairy Faith* appeared in 1981 (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press). Sophia Morrison contributed the introduction (pp. 117–20) to the section, "The Taking of Evidence. iv. In the Isle of Man."

SOPHIA MORRISON

Little of what Morrison collected appeared in print; sadly, little of what she did collect has survived even in manuscript. A number of her notebooks were passed to the German folklorist Charles Roeder and disappeared when his own collection was lost after his death in 1911. The piece here, "Manx Folk-Lore Notes," appeared in the *Isle of Man Times*, 18 June 1904, p. 4b–d. It was reprinted under the same title in *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, iv (1910), pp. 154–61.

STEPHEN MILLER

24th JUNE 1994

Isle of Man Superstitions

Charles Roper (1894)

[181] It does not matter where you go, you cannot get entirely away from superstition. It is bred in the bone, so to speak. There are many people who have no genius for getting below the mere surface of things, and they think there is nothing more than they can see. A visit to a country village, by one who has no sympathy with undeveloped intelligence or thralldom to old wives' fables, may not result in the hearing or seeing of anything, which pertains to the private life of its inhabitants. Rustics do not walk up and down proclaiming their belief in this and that. Witchcraft and folk-lore are taken too seriously to be made public. They are spoken of in private and in undertones, and unless you are capable of wheedling into the confidences of these simple folk, you will hear nothing at all of those mysteries which engross their minds and influence their actions.

A fair acquaintance with folk-lore superstitions, and a [182] kindly sympathy, will act as a magic passport anywhere. One thing leads to another, in witchcraft as in all else. A little well-expressed, though feigned, credulity, will invariably unlock the soul of a rustic; but there are other things to be done which cannot be taught, they must be found out by experience.

Everybody has heard that the Manx folk are superstitious. The guide books tell us something of their quaint fairy lore, and perhaps the average reader regards it as a thing of the past. In the island itself the guides invent or exaggerate many a legend, no doubt, just to meet the demand. If you go and ask an unsophisticated native whether he believes in fairies, with an expression of scornful disbelief all the time curling your lip, you will get a careful reply, which is as good as a negative. Go amongst the folk, however; try for the time being to become one of them, and in various ways their superstitions will become manifest. Of course, in Mona, as everywhere else, the grosser forms of superstition are disintegrating. Ignorance is vanishing like morning mist before the sun. Education has begotten a questioning, and the blind acceptance of tradition will one day be a thing of the past. At present, however, knowledge has not completed its work, and many quaint superstitions still abound.

There are still fishermen who obtain herbs from wise women in the north, bring them to their boats, stew them, and after sipping the decoction, sprinkle the rest over their [183] nets, for luck. On no account will they allow salt to pass from their own boat to

another, because luck would go with it. Many curious stories are related to illustrate this.

The wife of a fisherman told me that she, not being a native of the island, knew nothing of its superstitions when she married. One day she was making bread and when she had nearly completed her task, she found she had not enough salt. The children were at school, so she could not send them to buy some. With her hands and arms covered with dough! she ran to her neighbour's door, and asked her to lend her a little salt. The neighbour glared at her, and then banged to the door in her face. She could not understand such conduct, but on the following day, a sea captain who was lodging next door met her, and asked her what she meant by having the audacity to endeavour to steal away her neighbour's husband's luck? The reason why the neighbour would not lend her any salt, was because she was convinced that when the salt passed from one house to the other, luck would also pass from her husband's boat to that of his neighbour.

Another way of stealing luck away from a boat that is getting great catches, is to carry fire from it; and all sorts of cunning tricks are devised for this purpose. When a boat is going out fishing, no one dares to whistle, because the fairies would be displeased, and bad luck would follow.

Between the railway station and the harbour at Port St Mary is a huge slab of rock, standing upright in the middle [184] of a field. It is called the Giant's Quoting Stone. Report has it that two men, at different times, endeavoured to dig it up, but fell ill, and could not recover until the damage was made good.

Cows must be milked early in the morning, and a cross of the thorn tree, or the first shoe a mare ever wore, must be fastened over the shippon door, and then no witch, in any form, can enter. On May Day, may-flowers are tied in bunches to the cows' tails, and hung also over the doors. If you slip out early that morning into your neighbour's field, and sweep the dew off his grass into your apron, saying, meanwhile 'Come all to me, come all to me,' you will have plenty of milk during the coming year, but your neighbour will not. On May Day the witch is burnt with bonfires of heather, &c. If, however, fire is taken out of the house that day, bad luck will prevail in it for twelve months at least. If a cow goes sick,

dust swept off the road and sprinkled over its back will cure it. He who gets the first pail of water out of the well on May morning, will secure the fat of the water, and will have health and strength all the year. If you are facing the church when you hear the cuckoo for the first time, you will die before the year is out; but if you are walking on grass when you hear it, you will have good luck. As soon as you see a magpie you must put both feet on the ground and look east, or you will rue it. To break a looking-glass involves the penalty of being in trouble for seven years; but if it falls when nobody is near it, there will be death in the house within twelve months.

[185] A Wesleyan local preacher, coming home late one night from Colby, where he had been visiting his sweetheart, was passing at the four cross roads up Serby way, and trod upon forbidden ground, disturbing the fairies. He was seized with sudden pain in his hip, and nothing could cure him except sprinkling on the leg dust which had been scraped up in the very centre of the four roads.

To counteract the spell upon a child that is bewitched, you must sweep the floor, or gather the dust off your feet, and sprinkle that over it. If the person bewitched lives in a thatched house, he must pull nine straws out of the thatch over the door, and boil some water with them in it, together with nine needles, down to half its original volume, and then drink it. As the water boil, the needles will jump up and down, pricking the hearts of the people who wrought the harm. If on All-Hallows Eve you get an onion and stick nine pins into it, and then stand exactly between the two doors, back and front, of your house, and call upon the name of the person you wish to see, he will at once appear and walk past. There is another curious superstition to the effect that if you fire a cannon over a corpse lying at the bottom of the sea, it will at once rise to the surface, although it will sink again instantly, unless you seize hold of it.

One afternoon, I accompanied two fishermen who were bent on purchasing, out Cronkna way, some young willows with which to manufacture lobster 'pots.' As we journeyed along the road where the banks were high, one of the men [186] said to the other, 'I say, mate, look here; that's where them fairy twigs grew.' 'Yes,' was the reply; 'but there isn't any there this year.' I asked what they meant, and they said that two or three years previously they were carrying home some willows they had bought, when they espied some twigs, the name of which they did not know, growing at the top of the bank. One of them climbed up and cut them, and just then a wagon came up, and the driver gave both the men and their bundles a ride right home. That winter, with those twigs worked into the new 'pots,' they

caught more fish than ever before; and, therefore, they must have been fairy twigs. Rustics always seize hold of coincidences and work them up imaginatively, until they see in the events the miraculous and the supernatural.

An old man said to me one day, when I was hardy enough to argue with him, 'Do God still live?' 'Yes,' said I. 'Well, is he or is he not the same yesterday, to-day and for ever?' 'Certainly,' I replied; 'God is unchangeable.' 'Well,' continued he, triumphantly, 'where's the difficulty? There's that brewery at Rushen, down by Poolvash Bay. You see the state of ruin it's in Crumbling away. An eye-sore. No use to anybody. Would be best swept into the sea. When that was built some years ago—I remember it well—a local preacher named Adams, who died only a few years ago, and who was a great teetotal talker, walked all round it seven times, blowing loud blasts on a ram's horn, and calling on God to smite it that it should fall. Then he [187] prophesied that within so many years it would be in complete ruins, and his prophecy came true exactly to the year. But worn't the same thing done at Jericho? and isn't Jehovah the same yesterday, to-day and for ever? You read about witches and curses and such like in the Bible, and that's the word of God.'

Manx superstitions may be roughly divided and placed under such headings as Miraculous Cures, the Devil, Benshees, Fairies and Ghosts. Let me give samples of them all, and from them you can imagine what a collection of marvels is possible to a diligent and sympathetic student.

My informant's uncle, when a boy, had a bad sore on his leg. It quite crippled him, and defied all attempts to heal it. Many things were tried unsuccessfully. In the same bed with him there slept his brother. Owing to the sore he used to sleep so restlessly as to kick off the bedclothes, while his brother, frequently awakened by this behaviour, was sure he used to see their dead mother come into the room and replace the bed covering. One morning it was found that round the boy's leg, just where the sore was, a bandage was fastened. This bandage was a bit of black ribbon which the boy's mother wore round her neck when living, and it was recognised by persons who well remembered her. The boy's father would not allow this bandage to be removed; and, as a consequence, in a few weeks the sore was perfectly healed. Indeed, 'the lad became the squirrel of the family,' he was so quick on his legs.

[188] One day I entered into conversation with an old man, whom many of my readers would remember well were I to reveal his identity, although it is quite another side of his character with which they are acquainted. We were exchanging confidences, and he

said, 'I don't say as how I believe in witches, and I don't say as how I don't; but I'll tell you something 'at's true, and you can judge for yourself. There's my missus inside the house, and she'll tell you same as I do. Many years ago, when we'd been man and wife some time, the missus had a baby, and after two or three weeks she got so bad that the doctor gave her up. I called in another doctor, and the two of 'em were very attentive to her; but they said she was past cure. My friends kept saying to me: 'Why don't you go and consult Nan Waid, in St John's, the witch-killer?' but I said I didn't believe in that sort of thing. At last I thought to myself, thinks I, 'If the missus do die, and I ha' left a stone unturned, I shall never forgive myself as long as I live.' So I made up my mind to go.

'Well, I must tell you that about two years afore that, I was coming home from fishing late one night, and the road was lonely and dark. When I got to the cross roads, a sudden pain seized my arm and went down my side and down lea so I couldn't move scarcely. I could hardly reach home. From that time a pimple came on my arm where the pain was, and it grew and grew until it got as big as a cherry, and it was constantly running. You see, I was the only man in [189] our boat who could pull in the cod lines, nearly five miles of 'em; and the moving of my arm chafed the sore and made it warse. I plastered and poulticed and bathed it, all to no use.

'When I called to see Nan Waid and told her about the missus, she said she had an evil influence on her, and that she could remove it. So she gave me some herbs to make tea of for her, and then I asked her whether I could consult her about any thing else, and she said 'Yes, as many things as you like, though only one at a time.' So I came away. The missus sipped the herb tea, and began to get well. There she is—go you inside and look at her—strong and hearty, and she's brought up a big family since then.

'I went again to see Nan Waid, and then showed her my arm. She shook her head and said it was past all herbs, and that I was bewitched. Could I remember anything special about it? I told her about the pain striking me that dark night two years afore, and she said that was when the spell worked. She could counteract it; but herbs were no good at all.' Then he told me what she instructed him to do when he got home. He obeyed. The sore at once began to heal, and he had no trouble with his arm afterwards. Then, doubling his mighty fist—when a young man he was called 'big-bones,' because he was so strong—he shook it ominously, and said that after that there was no man who dare say anything against Nan Waid in his presence.

[190] Let me now give a few specimens of the quaint stories concerning the devil. Said a boatman to me one day, 'When my grandfather was a young man, he was a terrible cardplayer. He and his brother were in those days both engaged as servants in a large country residence, and they slept on the same floor. One night my grandfather had cheated at cards, and had won lots of money. Going home, he heard a strange noise, and so took to his heels. When he reached the door, he thought the devil was behind him, and in his hurry he did not remember whether he shut the door or not, but the devil followed him upstairs, anyhow. He heard chains clanking. He would have jumped from the window of his bedroom, but it was too high from the ground. He was undecided whether he should get into bed, or make a bolt for his brother's room. As soon as the devil reached the landing, the young man prayed to God, and then wrapped himself up in the bedclothes until the devil went away. In the morning his brother slid, 'I know what you were up to last night. I heard the devil.' He never played cards after that; and so impressed was he by his experience, that he would seriously threaten those who did.'

It is not very long since a Wesleyan local preacher told his congregation from the pulpit that he had seen the devil during the previous week. He had been attending a revival meeting some miles away. 'The spirit of the Lord was over the meeting,' and they had a rare grand time of it. He came away at its conclusion, 'feeling able to face anything.'

[191] It was a glorious moonlight night, and the narrow road was hedged in with gorse bushes. He hurried along because he knew his wife was waiting up for him at home. Ahead of him he saw the figure of a man. He determined to pass him and then have a run, but whichever side he attempted to pass on, the figure dodged to that side and thwarted him. Upon getting nearer to the figure, he perceived that it was really the devil, for there was his tail sticking out between the lappets of his coat, and curling up to his head. So the local preacher shouted out, 'I know who you are, Mr Devil. I'll tell you what I'll do if you don't get out of my way. I'll cut your tail off, and then they'll laugh at you pretty loud when you get back to hell amongst your crew.' This so frightened him, that he vanished instantly; but whether into the ground, or up into the air, or over the hedge, the man could not say.

Two men were walking along the road one day, when a jackdaw flew upon the shoulder of one of them, and the other caught it. They began to quarrel as to whom it really belonged. One said it was his because it alighted on his shoulder, the other said it was his because he caught it. They got from words to blows, and fought desperately. Meanwhile the

jackdaw escaped and flew upon the wall, where it looked on, as if enjoying the fight immensely. The men fought until one of them was actually killed, and then the jackdaw flew away. It was evident from this that the bird was really the devil in disguise, and that he had purposely set these men at loggerheads and fisticuffs.

[192] The next is a curious story, yet a little ingenuity will suffice to work out an these riddles, and see their full meaning. Up at Foxdale there are disused mines which in the old days yielded rich ore. The miners earned plenty of money, and Foxdale on pay days was like Pandemonium. It often went hard with the stranger who happened to be passing through the place. The men drank and gambled recklessly at the large hotel there. One night when some of the miners were playing cards together in a room at this hotel, a gentleman came into the bar and asked the landlady for a glass of water. She gave it to him; but whether he drank the water or threw it away she could not say, it disappeared so instantaneously. Then he asked if he might go and play cards with the rest? Having received permission, in he went and sat down. The men were glad of his company. They expected to win his money. At first he lost all round. Then he began to win, until he won more than he had previously lost. At last one of the men (they were all more or less the worse for drink) dropped a trump card on the floor. He stooped to pick it up, and his eyes wandering beneath the table, where he saw that the stranger had cloven hoofs instead of feet, and that they glared with a phosphorescent light. He thereupon denounced him as the devil, and when all the men jumped up, knocking over the table in their excitement, the devil disappeared with their money, and it was not known whether he went up the chimney or passed through the walls. the landlady certainly did not see him pass out by the bar.

[193] A man told me that when he was a boy and lived near the hotel, the devil and his imp; were seen between twelve and three in the morning, playing cards, on a 'three-cornered green' there. The devil himself invariably sat in the middle.

Many stories are told concerning Benshees, which are similar in some respects to the Irish Banshees. No doubt they have the same origin. In Mona the Benshee sometimes shrieks some weeks before a death; but only in certain families.

At the time I write this, there is a curious looking craft lying at anchor in the harbour of Port St Mary. It is called the 'Nancy Lee.' It is an iron steam-tug, almost round. If you get to the stern of it when the tide is out, it seems to be a double boat. This impression is produced by a large cavity in the stern, wherein the screw and rudder are situated. It is like

looking into a dark cave. Well, one day last summer, one of the young fellows stated with much concern that the previous night he had met a Benshee up Serby way. He was coming home alone, and this figure stood in the middle of the road. When he attempted to pass it grew bigger and bigger until it completely filled the road; and, said the affrighted youth, 'the only thing I can liken its horrible mouth to is the stern of the 'Nancy Lee.'

A lady of somewhat eccentric habits went to live in a cottage at Port St Mary. She slept during the day and did her work at night. Hers was a literary profession, and sometimes [194] she would walk down to the post-office with her letters in the dead of night. Very early one winter's morning a nervous young fellow was walking up the village in order to waken a fisherman who was to go out with him and his father, when he saw this lady, well muffled up, gliding noiselessly along the road; he crept tremblingly by the wall, on the other side of the road, and as soon as he had passed her he ran like mad as if a hundred devils were at his heels. He woke the fisherman who, from his window, noticed the pallor of the lad's face, and asked him what was the matter. 'I've met a Benshee,' he replied; and terror-stricken, he bolted off, making a detour of a mile or more to reach home. Next day it was bruited all over the place, and everybody felt nervous, until it reached the ears of the 'Benshee' herself, who went round the Port explaining matters.

A fisherman landing at Castletown and receiving his pay must needs spend a considerable portion of it for drink; so that when he started off home, some five or six miles away he was very far from being sober. As he journeyed along in the dead of night he observed a light shining very brightly. He went towards it and found it came from a strange house. He looked through the window and saw fiddling and dancing, and the ladies were the most beautiful he ever clapped eyes on. Finding his way to the door he opened it and walked in. As soon as he entered the ballroom a handsome young lady came and danced with him. She insisted upon his [195] dancing again and again, and as she was so fascinating he was easily persuaded. It was, however, hard work with his heavy boots on, and he naturally perspired freely. The lady gave him her dainty handkerchief with which to wipe his face, and then they sat down. This acted as a spell; in fact, it meant marriage, for the lady was a benshee. When he left the house she followed him home. When he went fishing she went too. She was invisible to everybody save her husband. Sometimes she would get in his way when he was fishing, and he would say, 'Get out of the way, woman. Go away and don't bother. You've tormented me long enough. I want to do so and so.' He used to speak in pure Manx, and sometimes he would even move another

sailor out of the way so that the benshee could sit down beside him; and yet nobody ever saw her save himself. When he was staying ashore the youths of the village used to go in their stockinged feet on tiptoe, to listen at the keyhole of the man's door, so as to hear his conversation with the benshee; and then they could hear her say, 'There's somebody listening at the keyhole,' and out of bed the man would jump and give chase to the intruders. Said an old man on Mull Hill to me, 'If there worn't a benshee in the house how could he know so! nobody was listening when they didn't make more noise than a shadow?' How, indeed! It does seem a most awkward thing to get hitched on to a benshee in this way. Though not a wicked creature herself, but 'nice, quiet-going,' still her alliance with mankind brings discomfort [196] and inconvenience, even if it brings luck. Nothing ever happened to the boat when this man was aboard, and the catches were always good.

'When I was a boy,' said a fisherman to me, 'my father kept a shop down by the quay. One night when he was putting up the shutters a beautiful woman came and touched him on the shoulder, saying 'You are mighty smart to-night.' He was alarmed, for he saw she was a benshee. In order to get through the work quickly he brought out three shutters at a time, and she touched him on the shoulder again, saying 'You mustn't be so clever.' He dare not say anything in reply, lest by so doing he might become entangled and spell-bound; so he rushed into the house and told his wife, who went out and completed the closing of the shop; whereupon the benshee disappeared with a 'whish' down the quay.'

Belief in fairies is common enough. If a man has any special skill, it is explained by saying that the fairies associate with him. I know an exceedingly clever boatman who is so thoroughly conversant with the tides and currents that sometimes in a small boat he completely outpaces a larger one; and, moreover, being absolutely without fear, and cool-headed under any circumstances, he manipulates his boat very smartly in rough weather. He is aware that he is thought by his mates to have intercourse with fairies. Any man will volunteer to man a boat in the dirtiest weather ever seen if he is to coxswain her.

[197] 'When my mother lived at Foxdale,' said a very respectable woman who, like the rest, has not yet freed her mind from these superstitions, 'the women used to spin before their doors in the summer evenings, and as it got dusk the fairies would come and say 'It is time to go to bed.' Then when they went to bed and looked downstairs, they saw the fairies amusing themselves, and if they said 'We are looking at you,' they disappeared.' This same woman went to bed one night without fetching in water

from the well, for the weather was rough and stormy. She couldn't sleep. One thought ran through her head, that she ought to have got it in. A terrific thirst came over her, until she could resist it no longer, and getting up, she went to the well. It was surrounded by fairies, who said 'she ought to have got it in; she knew we should be thirsty to-night.' Upon returning into the house with the water, the thirst left her and she readily found sleep.

In the vicinity of South Burrule there lived a tailor who was very clever, and alas! very lazy. He could fiddle splendidly, and play any tune you wished for. He was fiddling away one day for coppers when he came to a house where there was a young child lying in the cradle, crying. It had a big nose, large front teeth, and features generally that gave it a somewhat repulsive look. As soon as he played a certain tune the child laughed. 'Mercy!' said its mother; 'that's the first time it's laughed since it was born.' The tailor asked her to go out of the room while he played another [198] tune. When they were alone he gave the fiddle to the child, who got out of the cradle on to the table, and played most wonderfully. When at last the tailor said 'Here she comes,' the child got back into the cradle and began to cry again. This fiddling tailor one day called at a farm, the inmates of which said they were poor and couldn't give him anything; but he said, 'You've got such and such things in the cupboard,' and so they had. It was said that he played with the fairy musicians at night, knew their tales and secrets, and, therefore, could always get whatever he wished for.

There was a farmhouse up Serby way which became for a time the haunt of fairies. Five or six little women and as many little men came to the barn at night and threshed corn with their flails. A portion of work was left for them every night, and in the morning it was completed. The best of crops always grew on that farm in those days, and although the previous tenant was sold up, owing to bad luck, this one was making money fast.

At last his wife said he ought to feed these little people. So he placed something nice in the barn every night, and upon watching, he saw them eating it with great relish. At that time he was engaging his servants at so much a year, and in addition, two suits of clothes, or flannel cloth and yarn for nothing. His wife thought he ought to serve the fairies in exactly the same way. So he deposited flannel in the barn, but it was not taken. Then he made it up into little [199] suits which he thought would fit them. They were taken away; but the next night they were brought back, and the fairies never came near the place again. They were insulted and frightened; evidently thinking that the farmer, in seeking to clothe them like men and women, wanted to capture

them. From that time the poor farmer's luck changed, and he gradually became as poor as his predecessor.

Some of the Manx ghost stories are very grim. For instance, one dark night, between the Level Inn, at Ballabeg, and Rushen Church, a lonely wayfarer was accosted by a spirit enveloped in a shroud. It wanted him to do it a kindness. The man said he was in a hurry, and could not stop to do anything that night. He then endeavoured to escape over the hedge, but the spirit pulled him back. Recognising the inevitable, the man asked, 'What will you have me do.' 'You must loosen the knot in the neck of my shroud,' it replied. Manx people take care to put no knots anywhere about the shroud, because if they do, they believe the spirits of the dead are bound to come back and haunt the earth. The man tried to loosen the knot with his fingers, but failed. Then he took out his knife with a view to cutting it, but it fell from his hand and he never saw it again. So he next seized hold of the knot with his teeth and loosened it that way; but he was so weakened with the effort that he was no use for anything afterwards as long as he lived. When he was asked any question concerning it, he cried bitterly, and said he could not bear to think of what he had had to do.

[200] I will next relate a tragic incident without, I trust, giving offence to, or hurting the feelings of, those living who have a special interest in the sad event. Some years ago a vessel came into Port St Mary, laden with grain, and bound for Ireland. There was a tremendous sea running and the weather was dreadfully squally. The captain was advised to shelter in port until the storm subsided; but he was a rough, daredevil sort of man and laughed his advisers to scorn. He swore he would be in Belfast or Hell the next morning. His crew were never short of money or tobacco; but he could not induce a Manx crew to serve him, because he was so cruel and uncouth. His home was at Port St Mary. He left his vessel, walked round by the harbour to his home, and ordered his wife to there and then put on her best clothes and accompany him to Belfast to see some friends. She would fain not have gone, but she dare not refuse. Down to the vessel they went together, and embarked. In the teeth of the storm the captain insisted upon starting on his perilous journey, amidst blinding snow showers and treacherous squalls. The boys ran up towards the limekilns to watch the vessel's progress. An old sailor, seeing the boat lurch, ejaculated, 'She's gone!' He knew by the way in which she righted that her cargo had shifted. She disappeared in the storm. It is supposed that she went down off Spanish Head. She was not seen to pass the Chickens, and never a corpse or stick of her was found. She must either have sunk to the bottom, and become effectually [201] entangled amongst the

weeds and rocks, or got caught by one of the terrific currents that run there, and drifted out to sea at the rate of six or eight miles an hour.

In the fall of that year, when the sad affair had been almost forgotten, a number of persons, who had known the captain and his wife intimately, were at various parts of the quay one calm moonlight night. They heard the splashing of oars, and they saw a boat, manned by four sailors, rowed up to the steps of the old breakwater. Then the captain and his wife, or their ghosts, were seen to come out of the street, walk down the harbour and round by the quay. They were talking together, and their voices were unmistakable. They went down the steps and entered the phantom boat, which was then rowed away out to sea. These men and women swore to the identity of the captain and his wife. However, they have not been seen there again.

A very intelligent man told me a story with which I may fitly conclude my illustrations of ghost-lore. He said that when he was a boy, an uncle of his, who was an inspector of the Bombay police, paid a visit to his home. One night his uncle was reading Scripture to the assembled family, when the candle went out mysteriously. It was a perfectly calm night, so that it wasn't the wind that blew it out. The boy got up and re-lit it. Soon, however, it went out again. Once more he re-lit it, and then shut the door. As they all knelt down to prayers, he saw consternation written on the faces [202] of his parents. When they rose from their knees, lo! the candle was out again. Nothing was said that night, but next morning his father and mother both mentioned the matter. They were perfectly sure they saw a woman dressed in white deliberately blow the candle out three times; 'but,' said my informant, 'young as I was, I had my own ideas about the matter, and I guessed there was a knot in the wick, which was so tight as to stop the rising of the fat.' I quite believe that for all these wonderful stories, explanations equally simple and commonplace are possible.

Not long ago, a well-known boatman, walking by the beach in the weird twilight, saw what he took to be a corpse, and rushed off, frightened out of his wits. His brother knew very well that what he saw was a barrow of mortar left standing in rather an unusual position by some workmen who were engaged in building operations; but the man could not be convinced that it was other than a corpse.

There are many superstitions which I cannot touch upon in this article. Manxmen believe in portents prophetic of coming events. The Port St Mary folk knew that such a war as the Franco-German was about to happen. Phantom ships and fairy lights are invariably followed by disaster of some kind. Then

some of the witch stories are marvellous concoctions of riotous fancy, together with the tales of haunted houses, headless horsemen, fiery phantom steeds, black dogs, white women, and blood-stained floors that cannot be scrubbed clean.

[203] To many of us these things are monstrously absurd; but they are the offspring of ignorance and fear, such as characterise primitive and unsophisticated peoples. Education is having its innings in the Isle of Man as elsewhere, and in the brighter light of knowledge all these superstitions are doomed to disappear.

The Fairy Faith in the Celtic Countries: Chapter IV, In the Isle of Man

W.Y. Evans Wentz (1911)

INTRODUCTION

[117] The Manx hierarchy of fairy beings people hills and glens, caves and rivers, mounds and roads; and their name is legion. Apparently there is not a place in the island but has its fairy legend. Sir Walter Scott said that the 'Isle of Man, beyond all other places in Britain, was a peculiar depository of the fairy-traditions, which, on the Island being conquered by the Norse, became in all probability chequered with those of Scandinavia, from a source peculiar and more direct than that by which they reached Scotland and Ireland.'

A good Manxman, however, does not speak of fairies—the word *ferish*, a corruption of the English, did not exist in the island one hundred and fifty years ago. He talks of 'The Little People' (*Mooinjér veggey*), or, in a more familiar mood, of 'Themselves', and of 'Little Boys' (*Gúuyn veggey*), or 'Little Fellas.' In contradistinction to mortals he calls them 'Middle World Men', for they are believed to dwell in a world of their own, being neither good enough for Heaven nor bad enough for Hell.

At the present moment almost all the older Manx peasants hold to this belief in fairies quite firmly, but with a certain dread of them; and, to my knowledge, two old ladies of the better class yet leave out cakes and water for the fairies every night. The following story, illustrative of the belief, was told to me by Bill Clarke:

'Once while I was fishing from a ledge of rocks that runs out into the sea at Lag-ny-Keilley, a dense grey mist began to approach the land, and I thought I had best make for home while the footpath above the rocks was visible. When getting my things together I heard what sounded like a lot of children coming out of school. I lifted my head, and behold ye, there was a fleet of fairy boats each side of the rock. Their riding-lights were shining like little stars, and I heard one of the *Little Fellas* shout, '*Hraaghyn boght as* [118] *earish broigh, skeddán dy líooar ec yn mooinjér seihll shob, cha nel veg ain*' (Poor times and dirty weather, and herring enough at the people of this world, nothing at us). Then they dropped off and went agate o' the flitters.'

'Willy-the-Fairy,' as he is called, who lives at Rhenass, says he often hears the fairies singing and playing up the Glen o' nights. I have heard him sing

airs which he said he had thus learned from the *Little People*.

Again, there is a belief that at Keeill Moirrey (Mary's Church), near Glen Meay, a little old woman in a red cloak is sometimes seen coming over the mountain towards the keeill, ringing a bell, just about the hour when church service begins. Keeill Moirrey is one of the early little Celtic cells, probably of the sixth century, of which nothing remains but the foundations.

And the following prayer, surviving to our own epoch, is most interesting. It shows, in fact, pure paganism; and we may judge from it that the ancient Manx people regarded Manannan, the great Tuatha De Danann god, in his true nature, as a spiritual being, a Lord of the Sea, and as belonging to the complex fairy hierarchy. This prayer was given to me by a Manxwoman nearly one hundred years old, who is still living. She said it had been used by her grandfather, and that her father prayed the same prayer—substituting St Patrick's name for Manannan's:

*Manannan beg mac y Leirr, fer vannee yn Ellan,
Bannee shin as nyn maatey, mie goll magh
As cheet stiagh ny share lesh bio as marroo 'sy vaatey*

Little Manannan son of Leirr, who blest our Island,
Bless us and our boat, well going out
And better coming in with living and dead [fish] in
the boat

It seems to me that no one of the various theories so far advanced accounts in itself for the Fairy-Faith. There is [119] always a missing factor, an unknown quantity which has yet to be discovered. No doubt the Pygmy Theory explains a good deal. In some countries a tradition has been handed down of the times when there were races of diminutive men in existence—beings so small that their tiny hands could have used the flint arrow-heads and scrapers which are like toys to us. No such tradition exists at the present day in the Isle of Man, but one might have filtered down from the far-off ages and become innate in the folk-memory, and now, unknown to the Manx peasant, may possibly suggest to his mind the troops of *Little People* in the shadowy glen or on the lonely mountain-side. Again, the rustling of the leaves or the sigh of the wind may be heard by the peasant as strange and mysterious voices, or the

trembling shadow of a bush may appear to him as an unearthly being. Natural facts, explainable by modern science, may easily remain dark mysteries to those who live quiet lives close to Nature, far from sophisticated towns, and whose few years of schooling have left the depths of their being undisturbed, only, as it were, ruffling the shallows.

But this is not enough. Even let it be granted that nine out of every ten cases of experiences with fairies can be analysed and explained away—there remains the tenth. In this tenth case one is obliged to admit that there is something at work which we do not understand, some force in play which, as yet, we know not. In spite of ourselves we feel ‘There’s Powers that’s in.’ These Powers are not necessarily what the superstitious call ‘supernatural.’ We realize now that there is nothing supernatural—that what used to be so called is simply something that we do not understand at present. Our forefathers would have thought the telephone, the x-rays, and wireless telegraphy things ‘supernatural.’ It is more than possible that our descendants may make discoveries equally marvellous in the realms both of mind and matter, and that many things, which nowadays seem to the materialistically-minded the creations of credulous fancy, may in the future be understood and recognized as part of the one great scheme of things. [120] Some persons are certainly more susceptible than others to these unknown forces. Most people know reliable instances of telepathy and presentiment amongst their acquaintances. It seems not at all contrary to reason that both matter and mind, in knowledge of which we have not gone so very far after all, may exist in forms as yet entirely unknown to us. After all, beings with bodies and personalities different from our own may well inhabit the unseen world around us: the Fairy Hound, white as driven snow, may show himself at times among his mundane companions; *Fenodyree* may do the farm-work for those whom he favours; the *Little People* may sing and dance o’ nights in Colby Glen. Let us not say it is ‘impossible.’

SOPHIA MORRISON
Peel, Isle of Man
SEPTEMBER 1910

ON THE SLOPES OF SOUTH BARRULE

I was introduced to the ways and nature of Manx fairies in what is probably the most fairy-haunted part of the isle—the southern slopes of South Barrule, the mountain on whose summit Manannan is said to have had his stronghold, and whence he worked his magic, hiding the kingdom in dense fog whenever he beheld in the distance the coming of an enemy’s ship or fleet. And from a representative of

the older generation, Mrs Samuel Leece, who lives at Ballamodda, a pleasant village under the shadow of South Barrule, I heard the first story:

Baby and Table Moved by Fairies. ‘I have been told of *their* (the fairies’) taking babies, though I can’t be sure it is true. But this did happen to my own mother in this parish of Kirk Patrick about eighty years since: She was in bed with her baby, but wide awake, when she felt the baby pulled off her arm and heard the rush of *them*. Then she mentioned the Almighty’s name, and, as *they* were hurrying away, a little table alongside the bed went round about the floor twenty times. Nobody was in the room with my mother, and she always allowed it was the *little fellows*.’

MANX TALES IN A SNOW-BOUND FARM-HOUSE

[121] When our interesting conversation was over, Mrs Leece directed me to her son’s farm-house, where her husband, Mr Samuel Leece, then happened to be; and going there through the snow-drifts, I found him with his son and the family within. The day was just the right sort to stir Manx memories, and it was not long before the best of stories about the ‘little people’ were being told in the most natural way, and to the great delight of the children. The grandfather, who is eighty-six years of age, sat by the open fire smoking; and he prepared the way for the stories (three of which we record) by telling about a ghost seen by himself and his father, and by the announcement that ‘the fairies are thought to be spirits.’

Under ‘Fairy’ Control. ‘About fifty years ago,’ said Mr T. Leece, the son, ‘Paul Taggart, my wife’s uncle, a tailor by trade, had for an apprentice, Humphrey Keggan, a young man eighteen or nineteen years of age; and it often happened that while the two of them would be returning home at nightfall, the apprentice would suddenly disappear from the side of the tailor, and even in the midst of a conversation, as soon as they had crossed the burn in the field down there (indicating an adjoining field). And Taggart could not see nor hear Humphrey go. The next morning Humphrey would come back, but so worn out that he could not work, and he always declared that *little men* had come to him in crowds, and used him as a horse, and that with them he had travelled all night across fields and over hedges.’ The wife of the narrator substantiated this strange psychological story by adding: ‘This is true, because I know my Uncle Paul too well to doubt what he says.’ And she then related the two following stories:

Heifer Killed by Fairy Woman’s Touch. ‘Aunt Jane was coming down the road on the other side of South Barrule when she saw a strange woman’ (who Mr T. Leece suggested was a witch) ‘appear in the middle

of the gorse and walk right over the gorse and heather in a place where [122] no person could walk. Then she observed the woman go up to a heifer and put her hand on it; and within a few days that heifer was dead.'

The Fairy Dog. 'This used to happen about one hundred years ago, as my mother has told me: Where my grandfather John Watterson was reared, just over near Kerroo Kiel (Narrow Quarter), all the family were sometimes sitting in the house of a cold winter night, and my great grandmother and her daughters at their wheels spinning, when a little white dog would suddenly appear in the room. Then every one there would have to drop their work and prepare for *the company* to come in: they would put down a fire and leave fresh water for *them*, and hurry off upstairs to bed. They could hear *them* come, but could never see them, only the dog. The dog was a fairy dog, and a sure sign of their coming.'

TESTIMONY OF A HERB-DOCTOR AND SEER

At Ballasalla I was fortunate enough to meet one of the most interesting of its older inhabitants, John Davies, a Celtic medicine-man, who can cure most obstinate maladies in men or animals with secret herbs, and who knows very much about witchcraft and the charms against it. 'Witches are as common as ducks walking barefooted,' he said, using the duck simile, which is a popular Manx one; and he cited two particular instances from his own experience. But for us it is more important to know that John Davies is also an able seer. The son of a weaver, he was born in County Down, Ireland, seventy-eight years ago; but in earliest boyhood he came with his people to the Isle of Man, and grew up in the country near Ramsay, and so thoroughly has he identified himself with the island and its lore, and even with its ancient language, that for our purposes he may well be considered a Manxman. His testimony about Manx fairies is as follows:

Actual Fairies Described. 'I am only a poor ignorant man; when I was married I couldn't say the word 'matrimony' in the right way. But one does not have to be educated to see fairies, and I have seen them many a time. [123] I have seen them with the naked eye as numerous as I have seen scholars coming out of Ballasalla school; and I have been seeing them since I was eighteen to twenty years of age. The last one I saw was in Kirk Michael. Before education came into the island more people could see the fairies; now very few people can see them. But *they* (the fairies) are as thick on the Isle of Man as ever *they* were. *They* throng the air, and darken Heaven, and rule this lower world. It is only twenty-one miles from this world up to the first heaven. There are as many kinds of fairies as populations in our world. I

have seen some who were about two and a half feet high; and some who were as big as we are. I think very many such fairies as these last are the lost souls of the people who died before the Flood. At the Flood all the world was drowned; but the Spirit which God breathed into Adam will never be drowned, or burned, and it is as much in the sea as on the land. Others of the fairies are evil spirits: our Saviour drove a legion of devils into a herd of swine; the swine were choked, but not the devils. You can't drown devils; it is spirits they are, and just like a shadow on the wall.' I here asked about the personal aspects of most fairies of human size, and my friend said: '*They* appear to me in the same dress as in the days when they lived here on earth; the spirit itself is only what God blew into Adam as the breath of life.'

It seems to me that, on the whole, John Davies has had genuine visions, but that whatever he may have seen has been very much coloured in interpretation by his devout knowledge of the Christian Bible, and by his social environment, as is self-evident.

TESTIMONY OF A BALLASALLA MANXWOMAN

A well-informed Manxwoman, of Ballasalla, who lives in the ancient stone house wherein she was born, and in which before her lived her grandparents, offers this testimony:

Concerning Fairies. 'I've heard a good deal of talk [124] about fairies, but never believed in them myself; the old people thought them the ghosts of the dead or some such things. They were like people who had gone before (that is, dead). If there came a strange sudden knock or noises, or if a tree took a sudden shaking when there was no wind, people used to make out it was caused by the fairies. On the 11th of May we used to gather mountain-ash (*Cuirn*) with red berries on it, and make crosses out of its sprigs, and put them over the doors, so that the fairies would not come in. My father always saw that this was done; he said we could have no luck during the year if we forgot to do it.'

TESTIMONY GIVEN IN A JOINERS SHOP

George Gelling, of Ballasalla, a joiner, has a local reputation for knowing much about the fairies, and so I called on him at his workshop. This is what he told me:

Seeing the Fairies. 'I was making a coffin here in the shop, and, after tea, my apprentice was late returning; he was out by the hedge just over there looking at a crowd of *little people* kicking and dancing. One of them came up and asked him what he was looking at; and this made him run back to the shop. When he described what he had seen, I told

him they were nothing but fairies.’

Hearing Fairy Music. ‘Up by the abbey on two different occasions I have heard the fairies. They were playing tunes not of this world, and on each occasion I listened for nearly an hour.’

Mickleby and the Fairy Woman. ‘A man named Mickleby was coming from Derbyhaven at night, when by a certain [125] stream he met two ladies. He saluted them, and then walked along with them to Ballahick Farm. There he saw a house lit up, and they took him into it to a dance. As he danced, he happened to wipe away his sweat with a part of the dress of one of the two strange women who was his partner. After this adventure, whenever Mickleby was lying abed at night, the woman with whom he danced would appear standing beside his bed. And the only way to drive her away was to throw over her head and Mickleby a linen sheet which had never been bleached.’

Nature of Fairies. ‘The fairies are spirits. I think they are in this country yet: A man below here forgot his cow, and at a late hour went to look for her, and saw that crowds of fairies like little boys were with him. [St] Paul said that spirits are thick in the air, if only we could see them; and we call spirits fairies. I think the old people here in the island thought of fairies in the same way.’

The Fairies’ Revenge. William Oates now happened to come into the workshop, and being as much interested in the subject under discussion as ourselves, offered various stories, of which the following is a type: ‘A man named Watterson, who used often to see the fairies in his house at Colby playing in the moonlight, on one occasion heard them coming just as he was going to bed. So he went out to the spring to get fresh water for them; and coming into the house put the can down on the floor, saying, ‘Now, little beggars, drink away.’ And at that (an insult to the fairies) the water was suddenly thrown upon him.’

A VICARS TESTIMONY

When I called on the Revd J.M. Spicer, vicar of Malew parish, at his home near Castletown, he told me this very curious story:

The Taking of Mrs K—. ‘The belief in fairies is quite a living thing here yet. For example, old Mrs K—, about a year ago, told me that on one occasion, when her daughter had been in Castletown during the day, she went out to the road at nightfall to see if her daughter was yet [126] in sight, whereupon a whole crowd of fairies suddenly surrounded her, and began taking her off toward South Barrule Mountain; and,

she added, ‘I couldn’t get away from *them* until I had called my son.’

A CANONS TESTIMONY

I am greatly indebted to the Revd Canon Kewley, of Arbory, for the valuable testimony which follows, and especially for his kindness in allowing me to record what is one of the clearest examples of a collective hallucination I have heard about as occurring in the fairy-haunted regions of Celtic countries:

A Collective Hallucination. ‘A good many things can be explained as natural phenomena, but there are some things which I think cannot be. For example, my sister and myself and our coachman, and apparently the horse, saw the same phenomenon at the same moment: one evening we were driving along an avenue in this parish when the avenue seemed to be blocked by a great crowd of people, like a funeral procession; and the crowd was so dense that we could not see through it. The throng was about thirty to forty yards away. When we approached, it melted away, and no person was anywhere in sight.’

The Manx Fairy-Faith. ‘Among the old people of this parish there is still a belief in fairies. About eighteen years ago, I buried a man, a staunch Methodist, who said he once saw the road full of fairies in the form of little black pigs, and that when he addressed them, ‘In the name of God what are ye?’ they immediately vanished. He was certain they were the fairies. Other old people speak of the fairies as the *little folk*. The tradition is that the fairies once inhabited this island, but were banished for evil-doing. The elder-tree, in Manx *tramman*, is supposed to be inhabited by fairies. Through accident, one night a woman ran into such a tree, and was immediately stricken with a terrible swelling which her neighbours declared came from disturbing the fairies in the tree. This was on the borders of Arbory parish.’

[127] The Canon favours the hypothesis that in much of the folk-belief concerning fairies and Fairyland there is present an instinct, as seen among all peoples, for communion with the other world, and that this instinct shows itself in another form in the Christian doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

FAIRY TALES ON CHRISTMASS DAY

The next morning, Christmas morning, I called at the picturesque roadside home of Mrs Dinah Moore a Manxwoman living near Glen Meay; and she contributed the best single collection of Manx folk-legends I discovered on the island. The day was bright and frosty, and much snow still remained in

the shaded nooks and hollows, so that a seat before the cheerful fire in Mrs Moore's cottage was very comfortable; and with most work suspended for the ancient day of festivities in honour of the Sun, re-born after its death at the hands of the Powers of Darkness, all conditions were favourable for hearing about fairies, and this may explain why such important results were obtained.

Fairy Deceit. 'I heard of a man and wife who had no children. One night the man was out on horseback and heard a little baby crying beside the road. He got off his horse to get the baby, and, taking it home, went to give it to his wife, and it was only a block of wood. And then the old fairies were outside yelling at the man: '*Eash un oie, s'cheap t'ou mollit!*' (Age one night, how easily thou art deceived!).'

A Midwife's Strange Experience. 'A strange man took a nurse to a place where a baby boy was born. After the birth, the man set out on a table two cakes, one of them broken and the other one whole, and said to the nurse: 'Eat, eat; but don't eat of the cake which is broken nor of the cake which is whole.' And the nurse said: 'What in the name of the Lord am I going to eat?' 'At that all the fairies in the house disappeared; and the nurse was left out on a mountain-side alone.'

A Fairy-Baking. 'At night the fairies came into a house in Glen Rushen to bake. The family had put no water out [128] for them; and a beggar-man who had been left lodging on the sofa downstairs heard the fairies say, 'We have no water, so we'll take blood out of the toe of the servant who forgot our water.' And from the girl's blood they mixed their dough. Then they baked their cakes, ate most of them, and poked pieces up under the thatched roof. The next day the servant-girl fell ill, and was ill until the old beggar-man returned to the house and cured her with a bit of the cake which he took from under the thatch.'

A Changeling Musician. 'A family at Dalby had a poor idiot baby, and when it was twenty years old it still sat by the fire just like a child. A tailor came to the house to work on a day when all the folks were out cutting corn, and the idiot was left with him. The tailor began to whistle as he sat on the table sewing, and the little idiot sitting by the fire said to him: 'If you'll not tell anybody when they come in, I'll dance that tune for you.' So the little fellow began to dance, and he could step it out splendidly. Then he said to the tailor: 'If you'll not tell anybody when they come in, I'll play the fiddle for you.' And the tailor and the idiot spent a very enjoyable afternoon together. But before the family came in from the fields, the poor idiot, as usual, was sitting in a chair by the fire, a big baby who couldn't hardly talk. When the mother

came in she happened to say to the tailor, 'You've a fine chap here,' referring to the idiot. 'Yes, indeed,' said the tailor, 'we've had a very fine afternoon together; but I think we had better make a good fire and put him on it.' 'Oh!' cried the mother, 'the poor child could never even walk.' 'Ah, but he can dance and play the fiddle, too,' replied the tailor. And the fire was made; but when the idiot saw that they were for putting him on it he pulled from his pocket a ball, and this ball went rolling on ahead of him, and he, going after it, was never seen again.' After this strange story was finished I asked Mrs Moore where she had heard it, and she said: 'I have heard this story ever since I was a girl. I knew the house and family, and so did my mother. The family's name was Cubbon.'

The 'Fenodyree's' or 'Phynnodderee's' Disgust. [129] 'During snowy weather, like this, the Fenodyree would gather in the sheep at night; and during the harvest season would do the threshing when all the family were abed. One time, however, just over here at Gordon Farm, the farmer saw him, and he was naked; and so the farmer put out a new suit of clothes for him. The Fenodyree came at night, and looking at the clothes with great disgust at the idea of wearing such things, said:

*Bayrn da'n chione, doogh da'n chione,
Cooat da'n dreeym, doogh da'n dreeym,
Breechyn da'n toin, doogh da'n toin,
Agh my she lhiat Gordon mooar,
Cha nee lhiat Glion reagh Rushen.*

Cap for the head, alas! poor head,
Coat for the back, alas! poor back,
Breeches for the breech, alas! poor breech
But if big Gordon [farm] is thine,
Thine is not the merry Glen of Rushen.

And off he went to Glen Rushen for good.'

TESTIMONY FROM THE KEEPER OF PEEL CASTLE

From Mrs Moore's house I walked on to Peel, where I was fortunate in meeting, in his own home, Mr William Cashen, the well-known keeper of the famous old Peel Castle, within whose yet solid battlements stands the one true round tower outside of Ireland. I heard first of all about the fairy dog—the *Moddey Doo* (Manx for Black Dog)—which haunts the castle; and then Mr Cashen related to me the following anecdotes and tales about Manx fairies:

Prayer against the Fairies. 'My father's and grandfather's idea was that the fairies tumbled out of the battlements of Heaven, falling earthward for three days and three nights as thick as hail; and that one third of them fell into [130] the sea, one third on

the land, and one third remained in the air, in which places they will remain till the Day of Judgement. The old Manx people always believed that this fall of the fairies was due to the first sin, pride; and here is their prayer against the fairies: '*Jee saue mee voish cloan ny moyrn*' (God preserve me from the children of pride [or ambition]).'

A Man's Two Wives. 'A Ballaleece woman was captured by the fairies; and, soon afterwards, her husband took a new wife, thinking the first one gone for ever. But not long after the marriage, one night the first wife appeared to her former husband and said to him, and the second wife overheard her: 'You'll sweep the barn clean, and mind there is not one straw left on the floor. Then stand by the door, and at a certain hour a company of people on horseback will ride in, and you lay hold of that bridle of the horse I am on, and don't let it go.' He followed the directions carefully, but was unable to hold the horse: the second wife had put some straw on the barn floor under a bushel.'

Sounds of Infinity. 'On Dalby Mountain, this side of Cronk-yn-Irree-Laa the old Manx people used to put their ears to the earth to hear the Sounds of Infinity (*Sheean-ny-Feaynid*), which were sounds like murmurs. They thought these sounds came from beings in space; for in their belief all space is filled with invisible beings.'

TO THE MEMORY OF A MANX SCHOLAR

Since the following testimony was written down, its author, the late Mr John Nelson, of Ramsey, has passed out of our realm of life into the realm invisible. He was one of the few Manxmen who knew the Manx language really well, and the ancient traditions which it has preserved [131] both orally and in books. In his kindly manner and with fervent loyalty toward all things Celtic, he gave me leave, during December 1909, to publish for the first time the interesting matter which follows; and, with reverence, we here place it on record to his memory:

A Blinding by Fairies. 'My grandfather, William Nelson, was coming home from the herring fishing late at night, on the road near Jurby, when he saw in a pea-field, across a hedge, a great crowd of *little fellows* in red coats dancing and making music. And as he looked, an old woman from among them came up to him and spat in his eyes, saying: 'You'll never see us again'; and I am told that he was blind afterwards till the day of his death. He was certainly blind for fourteen years before his death, for I often had to lead him around; but, of course, I am unable to say of my own knowledge that he became blind immediately after his strange experience, or if not until later in life; but as a young man he certainly had

good sight, and it was believed that the fairies destroyed it.'

The Fairy Tune. 'William Cain, of Glen Helen (formerly Rhenass), was going home in the evening across the mountains near Brook's Park, when he heard music down below in a glen, and saw there a great glass house like a palace, all lit up. He stopped to listen, and when he had the new tune he went home to practise it on his fiddle; and recently he played the same fairy tune at Miss Sophia Morrison's Manx entertainment in Peel.'

Manannan the Magician. Mr Nelson told a story about a *Buggane* or *Fenodyree*, such as we already have, and explained the *Glashtin* as a water-bull, supposed to be a goblin half cow and half horse, and then offered this tradition about Manannan: 'It is said that Manannan was a great magician, and that he used to place on the sea pea-shells, held open with sticks and with sticks for masts standing up in them, and then so magnify them that enemies beheld them as a strong fleet, and would not approach the island. Another tradition is that Manannan on his three legs (the Manx coat of arms) could travel from one end to [132] the other of his isle with wonderful swiftness, moving like a wheel.'

TESTIMONY OF A FARMER AND FISHERMAN

From the north of the island I returned to Peel, where I had arranged to meet new witnesses, and the first one of these is James Caugherty, a farmer and fisherman, born in Kirk Patrick fifty-eight years ago, who testified (in part) as follows:

Churn Worked by Fairies. 'Close by Glen Cam (Winding Glen), when I was a boy, our family often used to hear the empty churn working in the churn-house, when no person was near it, and they would say, 'Oh, it's the *little fellows*.'

A Remarkable Changeling Story. 'Forty to fifty years ago, between St John's and Foxdale, a boy, with whom I often played, came to our house at nightfall to borrow some candles, and while he was on his way home across the hills he suddenly saw a little boy and a little woman coming after him. If he ran, they ran, and all the time they gained on him. Upon reaching home he was speechless, his hands were altered (turned awry), and his feet also, and his fingernails had grown long in a minute. He remained that way a week. My father went to the boy's mother and told her it wasn't Robby at all that she saw; and when my father was for taking the tongs and burning the boy with a piece of glowing turf [as a changeling test], the boy screamed awfully. Then my father persuaded the mother to send a messenger to a doctor in the north near Ramsey 'doing charms', to see if she

couldn't get Robby back. As the messenger was returning, the mother stepped out of the house to relieve him, and when she went into the house again her own Robby was there. As soon as Robby came to himself all right, he said a little woman and a little boy had followed him, and that [133] just as he got home he was conscious of being taken away by them, but he didn't know where they came from nor where they took him. He was unable to tell more than this. Robby is alive yet, so far as I know; he is Robert Christian, of Douglas.'

EVIDENCE FROM A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF KEYS

Mr T.C. Kermode, of Peel, member of the House of Keys, the Lower House of the Manx Parliament, very kindly dictated for my use the following statement concerning fairies which he himself has seen:

Reality of Fairies. 'There is much belief here in the island that there actually are fairies; and I consider such belief based on an actual fact in nature, because of my own strange experience. About forty years ago, one October night, I and another young man were going to a kind of Manx harvest-home at Cronk-a-Voddy. On the Glen Helen road, just at the Beary Farm, as we walked along talking, my friend happened to look across the river (a small brook), and said: 'Oh look, there are the fairies. Did you ever see them?' I looked across the river and saw a circle of supernatural light, which I have now come to regard as the 'astral light' or the light of Nature, as it is called by mystics, and in which spirits become visible. The spot where the light appeared was a flat space surrounded on the sides away from the river by banks formed by low hills; and into this space and the circle of light, from the surrounding sides apparently, I saw come in twos and threes a great crowd of little beings smaller than Tom Thumb and his wife. All of them, who appeared like soldiers, were dressed in red. They moved back and forth amid the circle of light, as they formed into order like troops drilling. I advised getting nearer to them, but my friend said, 'No, I'm going to the party.' Then after we had looked at them a few minutes my friend struck the roadside wall with a stick and shouted, and we lost the vision and the light vanished.'

The Manx Fairy-Faith. 'I have much evidence from old Manx people, who are entirely reliable and God-fearing, that [134] they have seen the fairies hunting with hounds and horses, and on the sea in ships, and under other conditions, and that they have heard their music. They consider the fairies a complete nation or world in themselves, distinct from our world, but having habits and instincts like ours. Social organization among them is said to be similar

to that among men, and they have their soldiers and commanders. Where the fairies actually exist the old people cannot tell, but they certainly believe that they can be seen here on earth.'

TESTIMONY FROM A PAST
PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER

Mr J.H. Kelly, Past Provincial Grand Master of the Isle of Man District of Oddfellows, a resident of Douglas, offers the following account of a curious psychical experience of his own, and attributes it to fairies:

A Strange Experience with Fairies. 'Twelve to thirteen years ago, on a clear moonlight night, about twelve o'clock, I left Laxey; and when about five miles from Douglas, at Ballagawne School, I heard talking, and was suddenly conscious of being in the midst of an invisible throng. As this strange feeling came over me, I saw coming up the road four figures as real to look upon as human beings, and of medium size, though I am certain they were not human. When these four, who seemed to be connected with the invisible throng, came out of the Garwick road into the main road, I passed into a by-road leading down to a very peaceful glen called Garwick Glen; and I still had the same feeling that invisible beings were with me, and this continued for a mile. There was no fear or emotion or excitement, but perfect calm on my part. I followed the by-road; and when I began to mount a hill there was a sudden and strange quietness, and a sense of isolation came over me, as though the joy and peace of my life had departed with the invisible throng. From different personal experiences like this one, I am firmly of the opinion and belief that the fairies exist. One cannot say that they are wholly physical or wholly spiritual, but the impression left upon my mind [135] is that they are an absolutely real order of beings not human.'

NOTES

¹ 'Willy-the-Fairy,' otherwise known as William Cain, is the musician referred to by the late Mr John Nelon (p.131). The latter's statement that William Cain played one of the fairy tunes at one of our Manx entertainments in Peel is perfectly correct.' (SOPHIA MORRISON)

² This is the Mid-World of Irish seers, who would be inclined to follow the Manx custom and call the fairies 'the People of the Middle World.'

³ May 11 = in Manx *Oie Voaldyn*, 'May Day Eve.' On this evening the fairies were supposed to be peculiarly active. To propitiate them and to ward off the influence of evil spirits, and witches, who were also active at this time, green leaves or boughs and *sumark* or primrose flowers were strewn on the threshold, and branches of the *cuirn* or mountain ash made into small crosses without the aid of a knife, which was on no account to be used (steel or iron in any form being taboo to fairies and spirits), and stuck over the doors of the dwelling-houses and cow-houses. Cows were further protected from the same influences by having the *Bollan-feaill-Eoin* ('John's

Feast Wort') placed in their stalls. This was also one of the occasions on which no one would give fire away, and on which fires were and are still lit on the hills to drive away the fairies.' (SOPHIA MORRISON)

⁴ I am wholly indebted to Miss Morrison for these Manx verses and their translation, which I have substituted for Mrs Moore's English rendering. Miss Morrison, after my return to Oxford, saw Mrs Moore and took them down from her, a task I was not well fitted to do when the tale was told.

⁵ It has been suggested, and no doubt correctly, that the murmuring sounds heard on Dalby Mountain are due to the action of sea-waves, close at hand, washing over shifting masses of pebbles on the rock-bound shore. Though this be the true explanation of the phenomenon itself, it only proves the attribution of cause to be wrong, and not the underlying animistic conception of spiritual beings.

⁶ In this mythological role, Manannan is apparently a Sun God or else the Sun itself; and the Manx coat of arms, which is connected with him, being a Sun symbol, suggests to us now ages long prior to history, when the Isle of Man was a Sacred Isle dedicated to the cult of the Supreme God of Light and Life, and when all who dwelt thereon were regarded as the Children of the Sun.

Manx Folklore Notes
Sophia Morrison (1904)

A PROPHECY FULFILLED

In the smuggling days of old, one of the Radcliffes of Gordon, the heir, was engaged in the trade. In one of his journeys to Ireland he married a beautiful Irish Papist, and brought her home to Gordon. His family strongly disapproved of the bride on the account of her religion. Soon after the wedding, Radcliffe's boat foundered at sea, and he and all his crew were drowned. When the news reached Gordon, his brother built a one-roomed hut down near the cliffs, as far away from the house as possible and drove the widow out of Gordon to live in it. Tradition says that when she was turned out of her husband's house, she went down upon her knees in a field behind it, and as she looked down on the house below, she prayed that never an heir might ever inherit it, and that the house might be divided against itself. It is said that she lived for many years in this hut, supporting herself by field labour till she died. The foundations of the hut may still be traced in the field, which is known to this day as 'Magher-yn-thie-Paabish'—Field of the Papist's House.

Her prophecy came literally true in every sense, the latter part being fulfilled in our own day. About twenty years ago, after a lawsuit, the house itself was divided equally in two by a wall which runs in a straight line from the centre of the front door to the back wall, and from garret to ground floor. On Glen Meay beach there is a cave, said to have been used by Radcliffe for storing the smuggled goods. On its walls, the letters H.R., in a circle, with the date 1677 below, may be seen scratched on the rocks. These initials are believed to be Henry Radcliffe's cut there by himself before his last voyage.

YN DOOINNEY-VERREY

Yn Dooinney-Verrey, 'The Man of the Sea,' Merman, is said to be fond of crabs. An old man in Dalby was one day, down on the shore looking for crabs. He got a great number. He saw a merman there before him on the same errand, who had not succeeded in getting any. The merman sang out to him, '*Cur partan dou Juan*' ('Give me a crab, John'). The old man shouted back, '*Cred t'ou cur son eh?*' ('What wilt thou give for it?'). 'I'll tell you your fortune,' said the merman. On this Juan threw him a couple of crabs, and the merman chimed out to him as he sank into the sea, '*Chould as vees oo bio er y thalloo, cha be oo dy bragh baiht er y cheayn*' ('So long as you live on the

land, you will never be drowned in the sea').

THE TARROO-USHTEY OF BALLALOUGH

It is said that a *tarroo-ushtey*, a fabulous water-bull, lived until recent times in the curragh below Ballalough. Old people thereabout tell how they often heard it bellow in the dead hours of night. The last authenticated appearance was about thirty years ago. One night two lads, after stealing some apples out of some gardens of Patrick-road, made a bee-line for Ballalough to shorten their way home. When they came to Cronk Leannag, or, as now pronounced, Lammag, something big and clumsy, roaring so as to shake the ground, with 'eyes the size of cups, lit up as if by candles,' came out of the Curragh at the foot of the Cronk, and made for them, At once they knew that the thing might be the *tarroo-ushtey* of Ballalough; so they dropped their apples and fled for their lives to the highroad, close at hand. As they reached Ballalough Gate, the thing gave an awful bellow and plunged into the swamp.

BUTCHERAGHT (WITCHCRAFT)

Some years ago a man came to ask us what he should do about an old woman who lodged in a room in his house. He said 'she was an oul' butch, with the evil eye arer,' and that he wanted to get rid of her, but she would not give up possession of her room. He gave us a long list of the ills that had happened to him and he since she had come under his roof. He said, too, 'Nobody knows but ourselves what we have had to put up with the oul cuss, and the harrim she had done us. I tell ye, she'll get give or six jugs of wather of an ev'ren in the room arer, and she'll fill the bathermos' part of seven or eight basins of wather urrov them, and she's going and puttin' the basins on the table, and a-lavin' them all night, and in the mornin' she'll throw the wather all away. I've been toul that ones that does things erf that sort are agate of butcheraghey and afther no good at all, at all—the dirty devil! But I'll fix her though. Me wife wouldn't take res' till she swept the dust in front of her door and threw it overra'; but tit! it didn't do a birra good. Mine will be a bether cure, they are tellin' me. I'm goin' in her room, and I'll pass the time of day, and I'll say, 'God bless your hear,' and then om goin' to say, 'God bless your eyes,' and then om goin' to tell her to do no more harrim to me and mine quhile we live in the same house, or quhile we live apart, and that'll put a stop to her thricks, they tell me. By jing!

the lek of yandher one, its burnt she out to be; its scand'lus urrov massy that the lek is livin' in a Christian country. A'm that frecken of her, I tell ye, that the coul' sweat comes out on me, quhen I see her agate o' the wather jugs, and, to look arrer, you'd think butther wouldn' melt in her mouth, the oul' creep! And the terrible nice she can be to the pazen quhen he puts a sight on her. Sure, don't we hear her ol' 'en sayin' low to herself quhen she's cruetchin' over the fire, quhen anybody crosses her, 'Bad scan to them! They'll be sorry for this yet.' And didn' she say it to me daughter the mornin' she let the milk cart go by without gerrin' the oul' witch's milk, and the gel hes'n hed a day's health aver since. It's time altogether the dirt of a thing was shifted, I tell ye. We've all taken fear of her, and I've come to ask you, mistress vogh, quahat 'll do aburr it.'

There are many stories told of the occult powers of Nan Wade, and old charmer who lived at Poortown, near Peel, for example:

'I remember a young man walking from the South one Sunday morning to see Nan. He called at our house to take a rest on his way home. You see it would never do for a body to call at a house on the way going to one that gives charms. You must go straight without hindering, or the charm wouldn't be of a bit of good. The young man told us that his sister was witched, and his ones had sent him to Nan's for a charm. Nan told him, he said, the girl was to get the liver of a pullet, and stick it all over with pins, and put it on the pan on the fire. He told us some months after that his sister did this when he went home, and, as the liver was frying on the fire, they heard an awful scream outside, and there was the witch a-burning, with the pins sticking, red hot, in her liver. His sister got as well as every again after that, he told us.'

'I remember being brought to Nan's once when I was very young, because I was what they called 'donsay,' delicate. I was very much frightened. I had heard that Nan was a witch, and could do what she liked with people. Silver was given by the woman who took me to her, and Nan covered it with salt, and threw the salt into a saucer containing something like *pinjean* (junket). She then rubbed her forefinger on the earthen floor just under where I stood, and, dipping it into the saucer, crossed my forehead, chin, palms of the hands, and tip of the tongue with her wet forefinger, muttering low in Manx to herself all the time. I think this crossing was repeated three times, more than once, anyhow. Before she began the charm everybody in the room was turned out, just leaving myself—a trembling mite—and her together, and I was strictly enjoined not to utter a word during its performance. When she had finished she threw the contents of the saucer over the turfs burning on

the *chiollagh*.'

'I remember one day we could not get the churning done at all at all, and we were clean bet working at it; so we sent to Nan's about it. She said, 'Someone has cast an evil eye on it, and I'll tell you how to find her out. Take the tongs and shove them half way, head first, into the fire, and, when they are red hot, put them down the churn, and you'll soon find out who has done the jeel (damage). Well, to make a long story short, this was done, and, behold ye, all at once we heard a running the street, and in came a neighbour woman, panting with the breath just out of her. 'Huh, huh, huh,' she was going. I thought I would run in and tell you that some of your washing has blown off the hedge into the road.' The butter came with us all right after that, Aw, Nan was a terrible clever woman and only sixpence she was asking.'

'We had a horse once that took sick, all coming out in a sweat, and wouldn't eat nothing. It was like a thing witched. So himself went to Nan's to see if he could get a cure. 'Go your ways to the cross of four roads,' she said to him, 'and get some of the dust there, and throw it over the base, and then cover the craythur well up,' she said. Well, he done this, and in the morning the beast was better.'

'Nan Wade was brought, years ago, to cure my mother, who suffered from rheumatism. When Nan came she asked for a piece of butter fresh from the churn, and a plate. The butter was given to her on a plate. She drew a short cutty-knife out of her pocket, and divided the butter with it into three pieces, wiping the knife under her left foot after each division, and muttering a charm in Manx while so doing. This was reaped twice—three times altogether. Then she produced a small parcel of finely chopped herbs, and ordered my mother to pour boiling water over them, and wash herself well in it, and then to be sure to throw the water away at midnight in a running stream.'

'A woman went to Nan Wade's once for some herbs for her ailing child. When Nan went to get them, the very first herb 'lifted' had a dead insect upon it. So she at once went back to the woman and said, 'I have got no herbs for you. Go home and look to her; she won't be long with you.' The child died very soon after this. A woman of about 45, sister to the child that died, told me this story.'

Herb charmers never speak of 'picking' herbs, but always say 'lift,' and the herb must be lifted with a charm. Each sick person must have the herb 'lifted' specially for him, and for him only; the one lifting will not serve two persons, for then neither would benefit. The full name of the person, with the disease

which the herb is intended to cure, must be said when it is lifted, and three, six, seven, or nine pieces of it picked from different places. Nine different pieces of the herb are thought be the most potent; then seven, six is good; and three will also serve if it is scarce and no more can be obtained; but the herb will do no good if picked in less or greater quantities than the above, or if all pieces are lifted from the one root. An herb lifter can foretell from the plants as they are lifted whether the person who is to use them will get better or not, and if the sickness will be long or short.

LEGEND OF SLANE LUSS

If any one gets a cut in the harvest field from a scythe or sickle, he at once chews a mouthful of ribwort plantain, *slane luss* ('heal herb'), and plaisters it over the cut, which stops the bleeding. It was said that the virtue of the plant was discovered in the following way. A carriage and tarroo deyill, two beetles who are, as everyone knows, sworn enemies—'*myr y tarroo deyill as charrage*' is a saying of two who cannot agree—had a battle royal on the Dalby highroad. Onlookers observed that when the carriage was sore beset and almost worsted, he would run to nibble off this herb by the roadside, and run back like a giant refreshed eager for the fray. This way repeated time after time, till one of the spectators removed the plaintain root, curious to see what result it would have. When the carriage returned again, and found no slane luss, he turned on his back and died.

SIGNS

A belief prevails that a death is often preceded by the appearance of a shadowy phantom funeral. The following incident happened to a man in 1896. His house is one in a row of which the end one has its gable to the highroad. One evening in December he went to the corner house, as was his custom, to look up and down the road before turning in for the night. While standing there he heard a faint noise in the distance, and waited to see what was coming. The noise became louder and louder, and sounded like the tramping of a multitude coming down the road. It passed him after a while, as he said to himself, 'with a noise like a strong win' in the sails of a boat.' He saw nothing, but felt so jinged in (wedged) by a packed crowd, steadily moving in the one direction, that he had to clutch and cling desperately to the corner of the house to keep himself from being carried off his feet. When it had all passed by him, he was so 'covered with sweat and shaken by fear' that he could barely retrace the few steps to his own house. Some neighbours sitting the kitchen with his wife, exclaimed at his ghastly look when he entered, and asked him what was amiss. He himself thought it was a sign of the near death of his daughter, who

was home from service at the time, dangerously ill. He did not wish to alarm his wife about their daughter, and, as she did not know Manx, and the neighbours did, he told in Manx what he passed by, and what he feared it foretold. Those in the house had heard nothing. A week from that day the largest funeral that was ever known to pass that road went by. The 'big man' of the neighbourhood, in whose house the daughter had been at service, had died suddenly, without any illness, and it was the sign of his funeral that was heard. This story is told by the man himself, and corroborated by the neighbours who were in his house at the time, and spoke to him in Manx.

'Three years ago (1900) I was living in half of a house. The woman in the other end had a child who was ailing. In going upstairs, when you reached the top of the first flight, you saw on the right hand three more steps which led up to the little one's room. Well! As I was going me ways upstairs to bed one night, without thinking of anything in particular, as I got near to the top of the stairs, a bright light flashed in my eyes as it passed by just like a streak of lightning, and I saw it stick in the shape of a big star to the panel of the little one's door. I was that frightened that I turned tail and cleaned out of the house to Mrs —, next door. I asked her what she thought it might be, or could mean; she only shook her head. Himself said to me to say nothing about it to them living in the house with me, and that I would know the meaning of it soon enough, likely within the next four-and-twenty hours. The one in the house with me thought the child was mending, but she took a turn that night for the worse, and died next day at the going out of the tide. It was the child's sign I had seen, and I pray I may never see another.'

If a funeral goes from the house to the churchyard in a straggling manner, it is a sure sign that another from the same house will soon follow it.

Warnings of an approaching death are also given by some such signs as the singing of children in the street, or the crowing of a cock by night, or the appearance of a corpse light.

Said a woman to me the other day, when some children, just out of school, ran past us singing, 'I hate to hear children psalming up and down the street, for it is sign you are sure to hear of a death soon.'

If a robin or a wren flies into a room and out again, that is a sign of death.

If you shiver involuntarily it is sign that some one is walking over your future grave.

The crowing of a hen gives a warning of death; so does the tick of the 'death-watch' (a small beetle, *anobium tessellatum*).

It is said that if a knife is dropped, it is a sign that a woman will call at the house that day; if a fork, a man may be expected. If there is a 'stranger on the bar,' collie hanging to a fire-bar, you may know when to expect the visitor by clapping your hands before the fire, for, if the 'stranger' flies off the bar at the first clap, he will come to see you that day, and so on. If it happens to be a particularly fat-looking black smut, it is the person you are sure to have.

AS TOLD BY A LOCAL

The tell me there is a lil' oul' grey man on a donkey taken' on the road about Ballaleece Bridge. I've never seen him myself, but I've been toul' abourr'im by them that hev—good-livin' people, too, they war.

Did I ever tell you about the woman I seen in the Patrick road? No! Well, one night last winther (1902) I was up at Patrick preachin'. It was a clar, moonlight night. As I was going' on me ways home it begun to get dark. An' all of a slap I seen by my side the shadder of a person, a woman who had died sudden a pazel of years afore, and was buried up there. An' the shadder kept by my side, step by step, an' the night grew darker and darker as we stept along; an' it was ter'ble darkness—I wasn't able to pick me steps. Quhen we came to Knockaloe Gate, to the lil' cottage there quhere the woman had lived before she came to an end, I was in a thick cloud of blackness. But as soon as aver the cottage was passed by I was in bright moonshine again, ev'rything as clear as day, an' the road before me an' behind me lek a ribbon I met a man a bit further down comin' up, and he said he hedn't seen a cloud on the moon on the night.

Freckened? Norra birra me. They don't come to frecken people. If it was to frecken people they come, they would come in their shrouds; but it's allis their wearin' clothes the'er seen in, jus' as when alive. I believe meself the're sent for a good purpose. Some may have buried a birra money, and want to show, quhere it is; others hev something on their minds maybe, an' they can't res' till it's tol'.

I mind me brother's wife tellin' me that quhen she was a lump of a gel she was livin' out with her gran'father in Glen Rushen. The memory that the oul' man hed lef' him forra bit afore he died. The night the day the gran'father was gerrin' buried, she heard the door open, an' she was in bed with Johnny Mylrea's wife; they was sisters. Then she heard some noise in the scraas (strips of sod laid on the rafter under the thatch) above her, above her head. Then she went to look in the mornin', and she found a

purse in, with money in—how much I couldn't tell. She got up cryin' in the mornin', and she said, 'If gran'da didn' know quhere the money was quhen he was alive, he knew quhen he was dead.'

Aw, deed! It's true enough, for she was a very good-livin' woman—quhen she toul' me, goin' to class as strict as strict.

You know —? He was married to a daughter of this woman. He lived at a house at Foxdale, and the neighbours were makin' out they were seein' a light in the house. Well, he said there was some of their lil' ones see a light in one night too, in the kitchen. Well, his father went to purra bed in the parlour end one day, an' there wasn't room in for headway lek, and he sunk a bir'ra the poses (bedposts) in the moul'. An', behol' ye, there was a lil brass box, in the moul' full of sov'rins. But it came to the right enough people, for the man that hid them was killed underground, an' the woman's uncle. They naver seen a light afterwards.

I heard Tommy — tellin' that he fell on a woman that was killed on the mountains, and she was in her wearin' clothes. Tommy said his wife had gone into Castletown, for to ger'ra few things for the lil' shop arrer in the village, an' it were gerrin' late, and no sign of her comin' at all; so he went his ways in the 'lil ev'ren' (twilight) to meet her. On the mountains he seen a woman takin' the road afore him, and quhen he got up to her he spoke to her, as if it was to me or you, he said. He thought he ought to know the woman, he said, but when they came to the place quhere the woman had been killed, Jemmy was lef' by himself. Norra sight of a body could be seen, high or low, an' there warn't shelter round to hide a mouse. Jemmy said he was that taken a-back you wouldn't believe it. Jemmy said he was that taken a-back you wouldn't believe it. Then, all of a slap, he knew what he had been walkin' and talkin' with—the very woman that had been killed on the spot quhere this one had lef' him. Some years afore this woman war comin' across the mountains with the husband. He was a lil gaffer on the mines, an' something came between them, and he struck her dead. If Jemmy had as't her in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost quhat was her business with him, she would hev toul' him right enough. But Jemmy said he spoke to her as if it was to me or you, for she was that natural lek, he said, that he naver gev it a though that she was a ghoss.

Ye see, ye mus' use Scriptur to ghoses to make them tell you quhat they are comin' affther. It's me that knows it.

FAIRY FISHERMEN

A farmer went down to Laxey to bug his stock of herrings. On the beach he saw a group of fishermen busy with their nets. Coming up to them he saw no herrings. 'Hough! poor men, you've caught nothing for all your night's work,' he said to them. One replied, 'No, none of our fleet got anything last night; but the boats of this world care coming now with nice fishing.' Then, though they were on the open beach in bright sunshine, men and nets vanished, and the farmer knew that he had been speaking to some of the 'middle-world men.' Fairies are believed to dwell in a world of their own, called the 'middle world,' for it is said that they are fallen angels, and that they are neither good enough for heaven, nor bad enough for hell.

BABY-SNATCHING

It is said that babies are the only mortal things that fairies covet. There are many stories similar to the following told of fairies stealing, or trying to steal, babies:

A woman lay awake in bed one midnight, with her week-old baby in her arms. By the bedside stood a round table, on which was a jug of water. The woman saw the bedroom door open, and two very old, tiny women came swiftly in toward the bed. They tried to take the baby out of her arms, one saying to the other, '*Gowee! Gowee!*' ('Take her! Take her!'), and the other little body answering, as she tugged the baby by the heel, '*Cha jargym! Cha jargym!*' ('I cannot! I cannot!') In the struggle the water jug upset over the bed, and the frightened mother cried out, '*Jee jean myghin orrym!*' ('God have mercy on me') Immediately both little old women disappeared. The informant said that she had seen the marks on the baby's heel made by the fairy fingers. They were quite clearly printed, though at the time the baby had become an old woman.

FAIRIES WASHING

'Me father foun' a fairy's lil cap once quhen we were livin' out in Glen Rushen. He had been down at the river—it was only a step an' a jump, as the sayin' is from the house, and he heard the fairies agate o' their washin'; they were goin' at it like dus, he said. He wasn' seein' any of themselves at it, but he hard the go of them, he said. He was hearin' the clap of the wet things quhen they were shakin' them out to be put on the gorse bushes, and he even seein' the bushes shake quhen the clothes were gettin' spread on them. Then he seen a lil cap hove on one of the bushes, an' picks it up and brings it home with him. Me mawther said it was quite a lil one, just the spit of what the childher was all wearin' in them days, an'

the nice it was made, I've hard her say, you wouldn' believe. She knew it was a fairy's one, she said, for there wasn' a child in the Glen with a lil enough head to wear it. So she made me father go and purrit back on the place he took it from, for if he didn't, she said, there wouldn't be res' in the house on the night, for the fairies would be afther it, an' hard to tell what they would do. Aw, bless ye, the story is throe enough. I wasn' in then, but my father and mother has toul' me it many a time, and how the cap was in the house at them.

SMELL OF FAIRIES

An old beggar man who came to Peel every Saturday with a basket to gather scraps of food, used to say that he could always know where the fairies had been in the night by the peculiar smell left behind them. He said it was a sort of sour smell, something like what you was smelling in a deep gill on a summer day.