

# Manx Notes 41 (2005)

“ISLE OF MAN FOLK LORE”

A.C. IN *NOTES & QUERIES* (1852)

A young person from Castletown tells me as follows:

A woman walking over Barrule met two fairy armies going to battle, which was to begin on the ringing of a bell; she pulled the bell, and in consequence both armies attacked her, and kept her prisoner for three years, when she escaped.

A little girl, walking over a bridge, was offered by three little men (one after the other) a farthing, which she persevered in refusing; knowing that, if accepted, she would have been carried off.

A labouring man, passing by a house which is said to be haunted by soldiers, saw a soldier from Castletown sitting on a stile; and, on going up to tell him that the bugle had sounded, the soldier vanished into air, and the man saw a ball of fire before him all the way home.

A white lady walked through a room one evening when the doors were bolted and barred, and could not be found anywhere; a murder was once committed in a room of this house, and, although the boards have been moved, blood will come again.

At Peel, a witch with a basin of water said that the herring fleet would never return; every ship was lost, and she was put in a barrel with spikes and rolled down the hill, the grass never having grown since; “and I saw the mark all down.”

[314b] Women are turned into hares, and can only be shot with a silver sixpence.

A white lady was seen every night after dark; and one night, when all were in bed, a servant heard a knock at the door, put her head out of [the] window, and saw a little doll hop round the house and knock three times; she was so frightened that she could not get her head in, till others pulled her. The house was then suddenly illuminated, and, when quite dark again, the bed clothes pulled off.

The fairies are seen to hop from trees; a man took one home for a doll, and became very ill; but on the advice of a woman, he returned it where found, and then quite recovered.

Fairies change children; a woman had one for eighteen years, and could not make it walk or speak. A woman, shearing corn, laid her child down; a man saw a fairy come and change it: the fairy-child screamed, and the woman, going to take it up, was prevented by the man. The fairy seeing that no one touched it, returned the woman's child.

People are pulled off horses by black dogs. Three stone coffins were lately dug up, and the place not since haunted.

Our woman servant told me that her father (who used to drink), and others, chased a black dog, which kept howling and screaming round the town, up as far as the gallows post; but did not dare go beyond, and came back as fast as they could.

A tradesman told me that lying on a sofa at an inn, a white lady whispered and told him where some money was to be found; he fell off the sofa, was ill for six months, and has been lame ever since. The owner of the house would give him half if he tells; but he will not tell, or the white lady would haunt him.

They say that fairies are the fallen angels.

A.C.

**Source:** A. C.—. “Isle of Man Folk Lore.” *Notes & Queries* v (1852): 341.



W.J. Thoms first coined the word “folk-lore” (in a letter to *The Athenaeum* in 1846) and the periodical of which he was the editor, *Notes & Queries*, became a forum for the contribution of pieces such as the above. More often than not, the contributor makes but a singular entry in the bibliography. Such pieces, however short, are valuable as they are based on direct observation and often contain detail not recorded in other more fuller accounts. In this particular case, the material is drawn from a single informant.

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