

## Manx Notes 290 (2017)

“MISS MORRISON AT THE WHEEL” (3)

“A BUGGANE STORY”

(1901)

A good while ago, Glenmay Waterfall (or perhaps, more properly, its vicinity) was the abode of a *buggane*, to which the villagers gave the name of “Buggane y Spoot,” that is “the buggane of the spout or waterfall.”

I am not so well acquainted with the history of bugganes as to know whether they were generally of a gentle or vicious disposition, or whether some of the species partook of one, and some of the other, of these characteristics, and perhaps they may have had a combination of both qualities, and in this respect have been not much unlike the human race.

However, it appears that this particular buggane did not approve of people baking their bread after sunset.

The reason why, I must leave to some other chronicler to tell. This peculiar aversion on the part of the buggane is given as a reason for his behaviour as recounted in the following story.

Just above Glenmay Waterfall, on the crest of the hill, is situated a farmhouse.

A distance of only a hundred yards or so intervened between this house and the ravine or canon through which flows the Glenmay stream.

In this house lived Farmer Paul and his good wife. As was customary with the crofters in these times, after the corn was sown and the potatoes planted, Paul went to the “herrings” for a few weeks in the summer, and was very often successful in bringing home a few pounds as well as getting a “stock” of herrings, which would supply the house until the next herring season.

These results of the herring fishing supplemented the product of the farm and enabled Paul and his family to live in comfort, if not in luxury.

On the day upon which the following event took place, Paul was away fishing, and Paul’s wife had been busy all day attending to the cows, pigs, poultry, and all the other jobs which were always to be done in connection with her little farm.

Sunset found her tasks unfinished. At least she would have to bake some barley bread for the use of the household on the morrow. Knowing that it was considered unsafe to bake after sunset, she bolted the door for fear the buggane might put in an appearance, and then, proceeding with her work, and humming a snatch of an old Manx song, she soon forgot her fears, as she deftly manipulated the barley dough.

How little did she think that at the same time the “Buggane y Spoot” was outside plotting how he might get hold of her. Just as she was cutting off a piece of dough to make another cake, a great cry from without arrested her attention.

Someone was calling out to her that the cattle had broken into the haggart.

Just as she was—with knife in hand—she rushed out.

But no sooner had she unlocked the door and stepped on to the street, than she was confronted by the buggane himself.

Grasping hold of her strong homespun apron, he swung her over his shoulder, and made with lull speed for the precipice overhanging the waterfall.

All this so quickly, that by the time she recovered from the first, shock of her terror, she could plainly hear the booming of the cataract as it tumbled over the rocks into the deep, dark pool below.

There was not a second to lose, and with admirable presence of mind, a quick slash of the knife, which she still held in her hand, severed the band of her apron, and she fell to the ground, just as the buggane had reached the brink of the precipice.

Released from his burden so unexpectedly, he dashed with terrible impetus and imprecations, over the rocks and into the darkness.

Breathless, Paul's wife arrived at her home, sincerely thankful for her miraculous deliverance. It is needless to add that she never again committed the imprudence of baking alter sunset.

Of how it fared with the buggane, we have no authentic account. I have heard it said that the villagers found the rocks all smeared with blood where the buggane had struck in his fall.

I have my doubts, however, that this is an addition to the original story, which has been added in later years.

Certain it is that since this occurrence, nothing more has been seen nor heard of the buggane in the neighbourhood.

“A Buggane Story: Result of Baking after Sunset.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 6 April 1901: 2d.

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This piece from the *Isle of Man Examiner* for 1901 is unsigned, but it is likely to have been authored by Sophia Morrison given that a reworked version of the tale appears in *Manx Fairy Tales* (1911) under the title of “The Buggane of Glen Meay Waterfall.”

STEPHEN MILLER, 2017

#### MANX FAIRY TALES (1911)

##### THE BUGGANE OF GLEN MEAY WATERFALL

[8] There was once a woman living near Glen Meay, and she was the wife of a decent, quiet, striving man of the place. There was no one but herself and the man, and they had a nice little cottage and owned a bit of a croft on which they grazed a cow and a few sheep and grew enough potatoes to do them the winter out; and the man had a yawl and went fishing when things were slack on land. But for all that

they were not comfortable, for work as hard as the man might at his farming and his fishing, he was kept as poor as Lazarus by a lazy wife.

For the woman was fonder of lying a-bed in the morning than sitting at her milking stool; indeed the neighbours had it to say [9] that she wore out more blankets than shoes. Many a day her man would be going out early as hungry as a hawk, without a bite or a sup in him. One morning when he came in from work for his breakfast there was no fire—his wife was never up. Well my poor man had nothing for it but to get his own breakfast ready and go back to his work. When he came in for dinner it happened as it had happened for breakfast.

“Bad luck to her laziness,” he thought; “this is coul comfort for a poor man, but I’ll play a trick on her for it.”

And with that he fetched a *bart* of straw and bunged the two windows of his house. Then he went back to his work.

The sun had not yet set when he came home in the evening. His wife was lying in bed waiting for day.

“Aw, woman,” he shouted, “make haste an’ get up to see the sun rise in the wes’.”

Up jumped the wife and ran to the door just as the sun was going down, and the sight terrified her. The whole sky looked like fire, and she thought that the end of [10] the world had come. But next morning it all happened as it happened before, and himself said to her:

“Kirry, it’s the *Buggane*, sure enough, that’ll be having thee one of these days if thou don’t mend thy ways!”

“What Buggane?” said she.

“Ax me no questions,” said he, “an’ I’ll tell thee no lies. But it’s the big black, hairy fellow that lies under the Spooyt Vooar that I’m meanin’.”

“Aw, houl yer tongue, man; thou don’t frecken me wi’ thy Bugganes,” shouted the woman.

In the evening the man left the house to go out to the fishing. As soon as he had gone the woman took a notion in her head to bake, as she had only the heel o’ the loaf left for breakfast. Now, Themselves can’t stand lazy ways, and baking after sunset is the one thing they won’t abide. She who does so will meet their revenge—something is sure to be taken by them, but seldom worse than some of the live stock. Well, the woman set to work to bake some barley [11] bread and flour cake. First, she went out to get gorse to put under the griddle, slipping the bolt on the door as she came in, that none of the neighbours would catch her and cry shame on her for baking after sunset. She got some meal out of the barrel and put it on the round table, and put salt and water on it, and then she kneaded the meal and clapped a cake out a s thin as sixpence with her hands. But she was only a middling poor baker, one of the sort that has to use a knife to make the cake of a right round. She had turned the cake twice, and taken it off, and brushed the griddle with a white goose wing ready for the next cake which she was busy cutting round with her knife. Just at that

moment there was heard the sound of something heavy lumbering up to the door. After a few seconds SOMETHING fumbled at the sneg of the door, then SOMETHING knocked high up on the door, and a voice like the thick, gruff voice of a giant was heard saying, "Open, open for me." She made no answer. Again there was a loud knock and a big hoarse [12] voice was heard which cried: "Woman of the house, open for me." Then the door burst open and behold ye, what should she see but a great, big ugly beast of a Buggane rushing in mad with rage. Without as much as a "By your leave," he made one grab at her, and clutched hold of her by her apron and swung her on his shoulder, and away with him. Before she knew where she was he rushed her across the fields and down the hill, till he brought her to the top of the Spooyt Vooar, the big waterfall of Glen Meay. As the Buggane tore down the hill, the woman felt the ground tremble under his feet, and the noise of the waterfall filled her ears. And, there in front of her, she saw the stream turn to white spray as it came leaping down the rocks. As the Buggane swung her in the air to throw her into the deep pool, she thought that her last hour had come. Then all at once she remembered the knife that she held in her hand! Quick as thought she cut the string of her apron and down she tumbled to the ground, rolling over and over down the hill. [13] And before he knew where he was, the Buggane, with the speed he had on him, pitched forward head first down the rushing Spooyt Vooar. As he went head over heels and down to the bottom of the pool with a souse you'd have heard half-a-mile away, she heard him give a roar out of him:

"Rumbyl, rumbyl, sambyl,  
 I thought I had a lazy Dirt,  
 And I have but the edge of her skirt."  
 And that was the last that was seen of that fellow!

Sophia Morrison, *Manx Fairy Tales* (London: David Nutt, 1911) 8–13.

