

A.M. Crellin

Manx Folklore: Fairy Legends,  
Customs & Superstitions

chiollagh books  
mannin



CHIOLLAGH BOOKS

Manx Folklore



MANNIN

# CHIOLLAGH BOOKS

## MANX FOLKWAYS

- [1] William Cashen, *William Cashen's 'Manx Folk-Lore'* (1993) ISBN 1-898613-00-1
- [2] Thomas H. Kinrade, *Life at the Lhen, Kirk Andreas: Notes on the Lhane Mooar and Largagh Districts of Kirk Andreas'* (1993) ISBN 1-898613-01-X
- [3] Charles Roeder, *Skeelaln Cheeil-Chiolee—Manx Folk-Tales* (1993) ISBN 1-898613-02-8
- [4] W.W. Gill, *Customs and Traditions, Cures and Charms, Fairies and Phantoms* (1993) ISBN 1-898613-07-9

## PRINT-ON-DEMAND SERIES

### MANX FOLKWAYS

- [1] A.W. Moore, *Manx Folk-Songs* (1994) ISBN 1-898613-04-3
- [2] Mona Douglas, *Manx Folk-Song, Folk Dance, Folklore—Collected Writings* (1994) ISBN 1-898613-05-2
- [3] A.M. Crellin, *Manx Folklore—Fairy Legends, Customs and Superstitions* (1994) ISBN 1-898613-06-0

AVAILABLE FROM ALL GOOD ISLAND BOOKSHOPS

A.M. Crellin

Manx Folklore:  
Fairy Legends,  
Customs and Superstitions

Edited  
by  
Stephen Miller

*Chiollagh Books*  
*Isle of Mann*

'Print-on-Demand'

Titles in this series are prepared with the same editorial care and attention as with all titles from Chiollagh Books. However, they are produced in a much smaller number than other titles. As a result it is only economically feasible to reproduce them in a 'copy-shop' format. The down-grade in quality is unfortunate, but this is not in any way a reflection upon the worth or value of the material published in this format.

This edition first published in 1994 by

Chiollagh Books  
26 Central Drive  
Onchan  
Isle of Mann  
British Isles  
IM3 IEU

This Edition © 1994 by Chiollagh Books

Introduction © 1994 by Stephen Miller

All Rights Reserved

ISBN 1-898613-05-2

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

# Contents

## THE FAIRIES

( 1 ) Fairies stopping the Churning, ( 2 ) Fairies washing their Clothes, ( 3 ) Fairy Fight, ( 4 ) Smelling the Fairies and receiving Harm, ( 5 ) Fairy Music, ( 6 ) A Skeptic

## FAIRIES MET BY DAY

( 7 ) Two Fairies spotted in Daylight, ( 8 ) Harm from the Fairies

## FAIRIES MET BY NIGHT

( 9 ) Horse seeing the Fairies at Night, ( 10 ) Fairy seen in Ballaugh Glen ( 11 ) A Crowd of Fairies spotted near Gob-e-Volley, ( 12 ) Fairies disturbed at Night, ( 13 ) Fairies seen at Night in Tellets Wood

## FAIRY ABDUCTIONS

( 14 ) Fairies trying to steal the Sleeping Girls

## FAIRY CHANGLINGS

( 15-16 ) How to stop the Fairies from stealing the Baby

## FAIRY REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

( 17 ) Harm given to the Farmer begrudging the Fairies some Potatoes

## FAIRIES AND FOOD

( 18 ) Fairies angry at finding no Cake, ( 19 ) Giving Bonnag to the Fairy, ( 20 ) Fairies stopping for Dinner

## FAIRIES AND HOUSE-WATER

( 21 ) Leaving out Bread and Clean Water for the Fairies

## FAIRIES OF SEA AND SHORE

( 22 ) Fairy Fleet a Warning of Stormy Weather

## FAIRY DOGS

( 23 ) Fairy Dogs

## FAIRIES BANISHED

( 24 ) Fairies bothering the Miser

## GLASHTINS

( 25 ) Meeting Two Glashtins

## BUGGANES

( 26 ) Meeting a Buggane at Night, ( 27 ) The Sound of the Buggane

## THE PHYNODDEREE

( 28 ) Haunts of the Phynodderee

## GHOSTS

( 29 ) Sight of Ghosts a sign of Death, ( 30 ) Headless Ghost haunting the Highway, ( 31 ) Ghost haunting the Highway

## THE DEVIL

( 32 ) Meeting the Devil at Night

## CHARMERS AND CURES

( 33-35 ) Herb Doctors, ( 36 ) Fasting Spittle, ( 37-42 ) Herb Doctors, ( 43-44 ) The Dead Hand, ( 45 ) Birthmarks, ( 46-48 ) Warts, ( 49 ) Curing Fits

## THE EVIL EYE

( 50-58 ) The Evil Eye

## MISCELLANEOUS

( 59 ) Miscellaneous

## WITCHCRAFT

( 60 ) The Witch of Cranstal

## BIRTH, MARRIAGE, DEATH

( 61 ) Birth, ( 62 ) Baptism, ( 63-65 ) Weddings, ( 66-67 ) Wakes, ( 68-69 ) Funerals

DEATH SIGNS AND OTHERS

( 70-74 ) Corpse Light, ( 75 ) Sounds of Psalm Singing, ( 76 ) Bees a Sign of Death, ( 77 ) Missing Sleeve taken for a Sign

CALENDAR CUSTOMS

( 78-79 ) Candlemas Day, ( 80 ) Good Friday, ( 81 ) August the First

THE QUAALTAGH

( 82 ) First Footing

DAYS OF THE WEEK

( 83-84 ) Saturday

LUCKY TIME OF DAY

( 85 ) Hatching Eggs

DISTURBING KEEILS BRINGS HARM

( 86-87 ) Disturbing a Keeil

WEATHER SAYINGS

( 88 ) Saying about the Frost

FISHING SUPERSTITIONS

( 89-93 ) Fisherfolk Beliefs



## Introduction

*Manx Folklore: Fairy Legends, Customs and Superstitions* brings together material collected by members of the 'Folk Lore Committee' of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society which appeared in the Society's journal, *Yn Lioar Manninagh* ('The Manx Book') in a series of annual reports. The Secretary of the Committee was Miss A.M. Crellin together with the Reverends Kermode, Harrison, and Savage, with the membership completed by Dr Tellet.

The Secretary evidently had a difficult time persuading other members of the Antiquarians to collect material. The 1893 Report starts with the comment that 'the following recent instances are of some interest, and may serve to show what collectors may expect if they will only be on the look-out for them.' This is a first hint of the frustration that Crellin was to feel with members of the Society and which was to be amplified in her introduction to the next annual report—'Year by year the old people, who alone are the store houses of these tales and traditions, are dying out. I am convinced that there is still very much left for us to learn from them and gather together, which must be done now or not at all.' (Report for 1894)

The Report for 1895 mentions the failure of her idea that members of the Society could club together to subscribe to the Folklore Society. Again she calls for members to collect—'I cannot help thinking that many interesting little items are lost through sheer indifference; and I am afraid, too, that that most fatal of Manx proverbs, "Traa-dy-lioar," [Time Enough] has far too great a fascination for many of us.'

The Report for 1898 continues again in this vein. Most of the report was contributed by Reverend John Quine, Vicar of Lonan. 'I only wish they [the Antiquarians] would follow his plan of making notes, and either send them to me or let the Society have the benefit of them in one way or another. There is, I am sure, still much to be gleaned.'

The 1900 Report asked '... I do wish other of our numerous members would exert themselves and do a little more while the old people are still living ... superstition still lingers, and is dying hard in many parts of the Island.'

The Report for 1901 was the last that appeared under her name (the Folklore Section survived her death

but only produced one further report) and to the end she revealed her frustration with the Society. 'Having only a few Folklore notes ... and in the absence of any other matter of that nature, I propose giving a short account of the "Qualtagh".'

It was to be largely left to Charles Roeder, a German national resident in Manchester, together with Edward Faragher (*Ned Beg Hom Ruy*) of Cregneash, to collect what we have extant today from the closing decades of the 19th century.

Although only a small corpus of material was collected by Crellin and her colleagues, it is nevertheless worthy of reproduction. There is a valuable focus both on fairy legends and medical folklore.

Stephen Miller  
30 JANUARY 1994

### A NOTE ON THE TEXTS

The material here has been re-arranged under headings proposed by myself. The titles of the fairy legends are likewise of my own devising. The typography has been brought into line with house style. Editorial matter has not been reproduced.

### SOURCES

#### REPORT FOR 1893

"Report of the Anthropological Section (Folklore)." *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, II (1901): 68.

#### REPORT FOR 1894

"Report of the Folklore and Place-Name Section." *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, II (1901): 194-97.

#### REPORT FOR 1895

No material relevant to this collection appeared

#### REPORT FOR 1896

"Report of the Anthropological Section (B) Folklore." *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, III, No III (1896): 119-20.

REPORT FOR 1897

“Report of Anthropological Section. (B.) Folk-Lore.” *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, III, No VI (1898): 285-87.

REPORT FOR 1898

“Report of Anthropological Section (B). Folk Lore.” *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, III, No VIII (1898): 379-80.

REPORT FOR 1899

“Report of Anthropological Section. Folk-Lore (B).” *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, III, No X (1899): 482-86.

REPORT FOR 1900

“Folk Lore Report—March, 1900.” *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, III, No XII (1902): 610-11.

NOTE

The volume numbers and dates of publication given above are correct—*Yn Lioar Manninagh* has a complex history of appearance.

See also, A.M. Crellin, “On some Things Manx now Obsolete.” *Yn Lioar Manninagh*, II (1901): 265-70. Notes on weaving, rushlights, spoon-making, the flail, household furnishings and utensils.

# Manx Folklore—Fairy Legends, Customs and Superstitions

## THE FAIRIES

(6) A SKEPTIC

### (1) FAIRIES STOPPING THE CHURNING

When butter would not come they would beat the churn with fresh nettles then lay them on the top.

### (2) FAIRIES WASHING THEIR CLOTHES

N— (Arbory) could often hear the fairies beetling and bleaching their clothes down at the stream.

### (3) FAIRY FIGHT

The old 'trammans' (elder trees) at Ballakoig having been cut down, the fairies came every night to weep and lament. So many met that a fight ensued, and the following morning the people of the house found the 'sthreet' strewn with fairies' thumbs.

### (4) SMELLING THE FAIRIES AND RECEIVING HARM

Mrs C— (Arbory), about December 1891, going to the stream for water, passed through a terrible stink—'between a burnt rag and a stink.' Again, at the stream the stink was so 'thick' she could scarcely breathe. She said nothing till she got home, then she told them she had 'smelled the fairies.'

She knew a case (30 or 40 years ago) of a girl who, when walking with her sister, said 'O, Lord! what a stink!' The sister smelled it, but said nothing. Since then this other has lost her sense of smell—never smelt anything since. And she is alive yet!

### (5) FAIRY MUSIC

Old Bill Pherick was coming home late one night across the mountains from Druidale, and heard the fairies singing, just as he was going over the river by the thorn tree that grows there—the tune they had was 'Bollan Ven,' and, as he wanted to learn it from them, he went back three times before he could pick it up and remember it, but the third time he was successful; just then the sun got up, and the fairies immediately dispersed, for they always to at sun-rise. He came home whistling the tune, and since then it has always been very popular, and very much played on the fiddle; the words of the song 'Yn Bollan Bane' are sung to it. Many people think that Bill Pherick invented the tune; but he didn't, he got it straight from the fairies.

A few years ago, when the Manx Northern Railway was being made, a Manxman who was working on it along with Scotch navy, informed the latter that the 'fairies was taken in his house every night, sure as life,' they were 'Singin' and noisin,' and making a terrible row.' The navy said he would like to hear them, so one evening he repaired to the Manxman's cottage. At midnight the host said he was going to bed, 'he' wasn't going to sit up and hear 'them things,' not he: so off he went, leaving the canny Scotchman in possession of the kitchen. Before long a cheerful chirping sound was heard: evidently the 'fairies' were coming! and, shortly after, a little army of crickets was seen emerging from the holes and crannies round the hearth. It was too much for the navy; he could not resist killing them all, and, laying their little dead bodies side by side on the hearthstone, went and woke up the Manxman and told him that in the morning he would find the 'fairies' lying there dead. Need it be added that after that night, no more fairies were ever 'taken' in that house!

## FAIRIES MET BY DAY

### (7) TWO FAIRIES SPOTTED IN DAYLIGHT

John Radcliffe, of Sulby told me that he was one afternoon, sometime during the winter of 1888 or 1889, shooting in Tellets Wood (Lezayre), and he saw two little figures of very diminutive proportions, peering at him from behind a tree. He thought at first they were the children of a man who was cutting timber further up the wood, and he took no more notice of them. On getting up to the man he asked him who the children were, and the man said he could not tell. He had been working most of the day and saw no children in the wood. Radcliffe said the figures he saw were very small, and appeared to be clothed in some brown material. He believes firmly they were fairies.

### (8) HARM FROM THE FAIRIES

K— (Andreas), when a lad, went with another boy after birds' nesses. At — there was a very large briar, uncut for years. The other lad was peering through, with his face almost touching the briar, when his face, which was 'as straight as yours,' suddenly slipped all to one side, and was never right again. The people said it was the fairies.

## FAIRIES MET BY NIGHT

## (9) HORSE SEEING THE FAIRIES AT NIGHT

One day this winter we had no bread for tea, at Orrisdale. On inquiring the reason the next time the baker's cart came, the boy who drove it said that the horse saw fairies after dark, and so, as it was getting dusk, he had gone home instead of coming on with the bread!

## (10) FAIRY SEEN IN BALLAUGH GLEN

There was a spot in Ballaugh Glen which had a very bad name. A young man and his sister were coming down there late one night, when, just as they were passing the place, something came up against her, she touched her brother's arm to draw his attention, but he whispered her to say nothing, and then they both saw a fairy, with a red hat and red jacket, cross the road before them, and disappear into some old buildings.

(11) A CROWD OF FAIRIES SPOTTED  
NEAR GOB-E-VOLLEY

Thomas Radcliffe, of Sulby village, shoemaker, told me that, 'a few years back,' he was walking home from Ballaugh one moonlight night, in the month of December, with a man named Quayle, and, on getting near Gob-e-Volley (near midnight—Ed.), they distinctly saw 12 or 14 little people in front of them running across the road, and as they looked, the figures ran into the quarry. At first they took them to be some little children; but, on second thoughts, they considered it strange that children should be about so late at night. So Radcliffe and his friend went into the opening off the road, where they saw the figures go, in order to ascertain who they were, and what they were doing; but, on getting into the quarry, no trace of them could be found, nor any sound heard. They looked and searched everywhere for some considerable time with no success! Radcliffe says he is quite sure they were fairies.

## (12) FAIRIES DISTURBED AT NIGHT

On another occasion this same man was returning from Snaefell, and, coming down into a ravine where there were trees, he disturbed a crowd of creatures, whose voices were like turkeys, but most undoubtedly, supernatural. Going a little further on, he saw in some fields the circling dances of 'will o' the wisps,' and a little further on they appeared again as darting and gambolling lights. This same man said that, in the field behind their house, his father had seen strange supernatural figures moving about, and crying in unearthly voices, 'Eternity! Eternity! how long thou art,' or the like words.

## (13) FAIRIES SEEN AT NIGHT IN TELLETS WOOD

John Radcliffe also told me the following very interesting tale. It appears that one moonlight night he was shooting pigeons in Tellets Wood, some years ago, toward the end of November, when most of the leaves had fallen from off the trees. He had his dog with him, and was also accompanied by a man named Kewley. The light was fairly good in the wood, and just as they were about preparing to return home, a strange sound reached their ears as if numbers of cattle were galloping toward them from the top of the wood. Radcliffe and Kewley immediately separated some distance apart in order to let, what they supposed to be cattle, pass. The noise was terrific, and the dog crouched down on the ground beside Radcliffe. Both men felt as if numbers of cattle were rushing past them at a furious rate, but they could see nothing. They went home, and next day Radcliffe revisited the exact spot where he and his friend had been standing the previous night, in order to ascertain if he could find the tracks or marks of any animals amongst the leaves on the ground, but could only see footmarks of himself, his friend, and his dog. No other leaves appeared disturbed. He is quite unable to account for the strange sound, and although he is a man of strong nerve and fine physique he cannot never be induced again to visit that wood after dark.

## FAIRY ABDUCTIONS

## (14) FAIRIES TRYING TO STEAL THE SLEEPING GIRLS

When Mrs C—'s mother was 'a lump of a girl,' she was sitting one night with her sister, waiting on a sick sow. The two girls fell asleep at the door. Suddenly the old granny heard 'tremendous noising of murther,' etc. Then—in Manx—'But I will, though.' 'But you won't though.' 'But I will.' 'But you won't.' Then a scream, and a rushing sound, as of something 'blown downstairs and out of the house.' The granny, frightened, called out to the girls, who were asleep. Next morning a large pool of blood was found outside the door of the cottage. 'The fairies had tried to steal the sleeping girls, but a person who had been carried off by them prevented them; this so angered the fairies that they killed her. It could not have been a fairy they killed, as they have no blood.'

## FAIRY CHANGLINGS

(15) HOW TO STOP THE FAIRIES FROM  
STEALING THE BABY

Bread and cheese must be left out at night for the fairies, lest they should take the baby and change it.

(16) HOW TO STOP THE FAIRIES FROM  
STEALING THE BABY (2)

The belief in fairies was very strong; there was no limit to the things that the little people could do, and many and strange were the precautions taken against them. On going into a workingman's cottage, some ten years ago, the baby was found alone and asleep in the cradle, the mother having gone for water. A Bible and a pair of tongs were lying in the cradle; these had been put there by the mother to preserve the child from harm during her absence.

## FAIRY REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

(17) HARM GIVEN TO THE FARMER BEGRUDGING  
THE FAIRIES SOME POTATOES

The following story is told by a woman still living. Her father had a field of potatoes, and he noticed that some of them were often taken during the night. He thought it was the work of the fairies, so he resolved to sit all night in the field and watch. His family tried hard to dissuade him from so doing, for they feared some harm would happen to him, However, he would, and he did. Next morning he came back to the house, white and trembling with fear, but would not tell anyone what had happened or what he had seen. He took to his bed, and shortly after died in great agony. Then it was believed that the little people had revenged themselves upon him for his meanness in grudging them a few potatoes.

## FAIRIES AND FOOD

## (18) FAIRIES ANGRY AT FINDING NO CAKE

E.C— (Bride) remembers a girl baking at his house, and forgetting to break the 'thollag rheiny' ('sallag rhenny,' 'dividing cake'). When she got into bed she received a blow in the eye which knocked sparks out. This she knew to be from the fairies, and she went down and baked another cake and broke it for them.

## (19) GIVING BONNAG TO THE FAIRY

At the limekilns by the mouth of Ballaugh river a woman was baking 'bonnags,' and a little child appeared, to whom she gave a 'bonnag.' As soon as it touched her hand, the child disappeared.

## (20) FAIRIES STOPPING FOR DINNER

Not many years ago a man of the name of 'Gill-y-Currie,' living in Jurby, was accustomed always on Sundays, when he came from church and was preparing for his own dinner, to put spoons under the table for the fairies in order that they might help themselves.

## FAIRIES AND HOUSE-WATER

(21) LEAVING OUT BREAD AND CLEAN WATER  
FOR THE FAIRIES

The old people used always to leave bread and water in the house for the fairies when they went to bed at night, and if there was no water in the house they would even go out and fetch some rather than neglect doing this.

## FAIRIES OF SEA AND SHORE

## (22) FAIRY FLEET A WARNING OF STORMY WEATHER

The fishermen say that fairy boats sometimes came out among the herring fleet. When seen, the men said to each other that it was time for them to go ashore, as there was sure to be a storm.

## FAIRY DOGS

## (23) FAIRY DOGS

C— (Arbory), returning home one night (February 1892), passed through a great thickness of Fairy Dogs—the road being covered with small black things. He cried, 'O! Lord! whatever is this!' and they disappeared.

## FAIRIES BANISHED

## (24) FAIRIES BOTHERING THE MISER

A man living near by—very miserly—was bothered with noise every night, and could get no sleep. He came down and threw something to them, saying 'Here, take it, you little devils.' He was no more troubled.

## GLASHTINS

## ( 25 ) MEETING TWO GLASHTINS

He saw two (about 25 years ago) with 'tails three yards on the ground.' He ran and got to the house, which received a blow that shook it!"

## BUGGGANES

## ( 26 ) MEETING A BUGGANE AT NIGHT

Margaret Ester Christian, an old woman living in Sulby, told me last week, that one night she was coming from Ramsey late (after midnight—Ed.), when she was a girl of 17 years of age, and near the Crossag's Road she saw a figure in the road beside her which looked like a 'cat' but as she walked along the figure also walked, and gradually it grew larger and larger, until it assumed the proportions of a 'big horse.' She ran along as fast as she could, and after a little time the figure, whatever it was, vanished. She was very much alarmed.

## ( 27 ) THE SOUND OF THE BUGGANE

C— (Maughold) describes its cry as being something between the bellowing of a bull and a man being choked!

## THE PHYNODDEREE

## ( 28 ) HAUNTS OF THE PHYNODDEREE

There seem a number of places which have the tradition of having had a Phynodderree, it would be interesting if a complete list could be made. In Lonan there are three, namely, Ballalheaney, in Glenroy; Ballamilgyn, overlooking Laxey Gardens, between the valleys; and Ballayolgane, in Agneish. There was also one at Gorden, in Patrick.

## GHOSTS

## ( 29 ) SIGHT OF GHOSTS A SIGN OF DEATH

A. and his son, living in a cottage (now ruinous) in Glenroy, were seafaring men: the father skipper and the son a hand on a Douglas and Whitehaven coal-schooner. The lane from the cottage is along the river bank to join the highroad at the ford over the Glenroy river. As A.'s father was passing the ford coming Douglas way one night, he heard behind him the gate at the end of this cottage lane click as if opened, and click again as if being closed, by some one coming through. Presently he discovered that

two men, who had seemingly come from the cottage, were following him. He wished to get clear of the glen, and walked faster up Cronk-a-Thona hill; but the two men overtook him, and passed in a great hurry, and without speaking; and he noticed a peculiar thing, discernible notwithstanding the darkness, that their faces were as black as coal. That same night the father and son, who lived in the Glenroy cottage were lost at sea, on the passage between Whitehaven and Liverpool.

## ( 30 ) HEADLESS GHOST HAUNTING THE ROADWAY

The old entrance to West Hill House, Castle-town—now closed—was said to be haunted by a head without a body, which moved up and down and travelled along the top of the wall alongside the old road. So strong was the belief in this, that no one would willingly pass up that way after nightfall.

## ( 31 ) GHOST HAUNTING THE HIGHWAY

T. E— was returning from L— after midnight, on a clear still night, when he heard a groan in the road ahead of him. He then saw a dark patch much resembling the shadow of a man's head, as thrown on the grown by moonlight; but there was no moon. The road was dry and white, and it was not shadow; there was nothing there only a dark space. As he did not like the look of it, and could not explain it, he thought it wisest to pass by on the other side! Soon after, a man driving along the road was thrown from his trap and killed. 'Well, it was strange uncommon what the thing was; but there was something there anyway!'

## THE DEVIL

## ( 32 ) MEETING THE DEVIL AT NIGHT

A small farmer, who lived near Orrisdale, was returning home late one night, across the fields near Bishop's Court, when, so he said, the Devil came up to him, and, to rid himself of this most undesirable company, he repeated aloud the verse of a well-known hymn. The Devil immediately took to his heels, and, with a hiss, went off with his bag in the direction of Orrisdale; where, as the neighbours remarked, he would not get much, as John Christian Crellin, formerly of the 6th Dragoons, was living there at the time.

## CHARMERS AND CURES

## ( 33 ) HERB DOCTORS

The belief in these people was and still is very strong; both men and women have practised the art, and they generally would be consulted in preference to medical men. Doubtless there was much virtue in the herbs they gathered and prepared, but they themselves would confess that there was a great deal of imagination about the power which they were supposed to possess. The herbs were chopped up fine and boiled in milk for the patient, and great care had to be taken that the remains were never thrown away, they must either be burned in the fire or thrown in the river.

## ( 34 ) HERB DOCTORS ( 2 )

A man charmer could not teach another woman, neither could a man teach a man; it must always be learned from the opposite sex. It is very difficult to learn the exact formula used, as great reticence is shown on this point.

## ( 35 ) HERB DOCTORS ( 3 )

There was a famous woman charmer a few years ago in the north of the Island. People came to hear from far and near, and they brought their sick in wheelbarrows. She would keel down before the sick person, make the sign of the cross on the floor with her finger, and then on the sore of the patient, saying over to herself some words in Manx perhaps the Lord's Prayer backwards.

This woman's daughter-in-law had frequently seen her charming sick persons, but of course for the reasons given above had not tried to learn the charm from her. This daughter-in-law has a sister living who, some 15 or 20 years ago, had a lump begin to form outside her throat which distressed her very much, as it continued to grow, and none of the doctors appeared to understand or be able to cure it. When the lump was about the size of a walnut the sister went to see her, and found her in tears, and very unhappy. She examined it closely, and pronounced it to be a tumour, telling her it might grow to be 7 lbs in weight. She offered a cure, only she must have faith in God that she would be cured, or it was no use trying. So she told her to go down on her knees every morning when she got up, and to take 'fasting spittle' on her finger, and to draw her finger three times each way across the lump, saying 'In the same of the Father,' etc, and on no account to miss a single morning, but continue to do this daily, and the lump would disappear. The woman did as she was told, and soon the lump began to wither away, and before long it had disappeared entirely.

She is now hale and hearty, without a mark or sign where the lump had been.

## ( 36 ) FASTING SPITTLE

'Fasting Spittle,' moisture taken from the mouth when awakening in the morning, is looked upon as a grand cure for any lump or growth of any kind.

## ( 37 ) HERB DOCTORS ( 4 )

The lad s suffering from enlarged tonsils, so they communicated with a man, clever at doctoring cows, etc, some miles off, asking him to cut a certain herb, which, if he would do, the herb and the tonsils would both wither away together.

## ( 38 ) HERB DOCTORS ( 5 )

Not very my years ago a young girl was taken seriously ill; no one could make out what was amiss with her, and her case was said to have completely baffled the doctors. She almost lost all power of articulate speech, would bark like a dog, foam at the mouth, and was in very great pain. So her parents took her to an old woman who was considered clever, no doubt she was a 'Charmer'; and she said to them, 'Go and dig a lot of large worms and put them in a bag, and put them on her as a poultice, and she will recover.' And they did so, and put on the poultice, and immediately she began to feel relief. It appeared that she had been suffering from tape-worm, or some species of Entozoa, and the outward application of those in the bag was supposed to stir up and attract those within. She did get rid of them, and recovered her health entirely.

## ( 39 ) HERB DOCTORS ( 6 )

Had seen cure by a woman muttering in Manx 'In the Name,' etc, with her thumb on her eye.

## ( 40 ) HERB DOCTORS ( 7 )

Mrs K— had performed a cure she had often seen her mother perform. She used nine pieces of iron (nails etc) which were arranged crosswise on the sore. There was no rubbing or anything, but the usual invocation.

## ( 41 ) HERB DOCTORS ( 8 )

On July 12th, one of the cows at Ballachurry Andreas, was very seriously ill, and there seemed no chance of her recovering. One morning, when 'the Masther' was from home, the head man put the mare into the dog-cart and drove off on his own account to fetch the 'Charmer' from Kirk Bride. On the return of 'the Masther' that evening, the following was the

account given to him of what had taken place in his absence by those who were looking on: When the 'Charmer' arrived he went into the cowhouse, where the cow was lying ill. He first went to her right side, and kneeling down, muttered some words which those standing around could not catch, then, taking some of the straw from under her, began to make with it a 'thumb rope.' After a while he got up, and went to the other side of the cow, and kneeling down, took some more straw, with which he continued making the 'thumb rope.' When it was finished he hung it round her neck, telling those around him that it was to be left there until it fell off. He gave the cow nothing to eat, nor did he do anything else to her. For a short time she got up and looked about her, and seemed better. In a very few days after this she quite recovered, and soon was perfectly strong and well.

## ( 42 ) HERB DOCTORS ( 9 )

Mr Quine says that the belief in charms to stop bleeding is very strong; what the particular charm is I do not know. He says that people still procure earth from new graves in the churchyard, but he does not know how it is used.

## ( 43 ) THE DEAD HAND ( 1 )

A poor woman in a neighbouring parish having a child suffering from some strumous affection, took the little one to the churchyard and sprinkled it with the earth from a new-made grave. This, however, not proving a perfect cure, she next took the child to a house where an old man was 'laid out' preparatory to his being put in the coffin, and she drew the hand of the corpse over the features of the child two or three times—with what effect were are not told.

## ( 44 ) THE DEAD HAND ( 2 )

A woman in this parish a short time ago, took a child of her sister's who had a trifling blemish or 'birthmark' on its face, to three different houses where she heard of a corpse, and had the mark stroked with the dead hand, expecting the operation to be effectual in removing the blemish.

## ( 45 ) BIRTHMARKS

Mrs H—, when an infant, was cured by her grandmother, who closed doors and windows, and sealed the keyholes, then roasted the heart of a freshly-killed sheep, which was stuck full of pins, to a perfect cinder. When this was done she opened the front door. (The beast must be newly killed.)

## ( 46 ) WARTS ( 1 )

Had used knotted thread (tied round hand or fingers, etc), which was then buried, and as it decayed the warts disappeared.

## ( 47 ) WARTS ( 2 )

A black slug was rubbed on the warts, then a thorn run through the slug: when withered, the wart would be gone.

## ( 48 ) WARTS ( 3 )

On the first Wednesday of the new moon cause the patient to look at the moon on his bended knees; then, from under his right foot, take some mould and rub it over the warts. Before the end of that moon the warts will have disappeared.

## ( 49 ) CURING FITS

Lace, Ballacreggan, and another man said that some years ago lights were seen frequently at night in Jurby Church, and that he and his friend, being out late at night, saw the light and made up their minds to go and see what was the cause. They went. Lace pushed the door, which opened easily, and went in. His friend, being afraid, stood at the door. On entering, he (Lace) saw at the Clerk's desk a man reading the Bible, with a candle in a skull on a stick. On questioning him as to what brought him there at that hour, he said his daughter was subject to fits, and he was advised by a wise man to read certain chapters at midnight in church, with a skull and candle. It was said she gradually got better.

## DROGH HOOIL—THE EVIL EYE

## ( 50 ) THE EVIL EYE ( 1 )

The belief in the 'Evil Eye' ('Drogh Hooil') was very strong in the Island, even until quite recently, though now we hear little about it. This power for evil was considered to run in families, so that certain families were held in terror and visits from them received with fear. It was considered best, at their departure, to follow and gather up some of the dust from their footprints, and scatter this over any animal upon which it was feared they had cast an 'evil eye.' The dust had to be gathered at once, and before the person had crossed a stream of water, otherwise it would be of no use. Many instances can be given.

One woman told, how many years ago, her mother kept poultry; another woman, who was supposed to have the 'drogh hooil,' came to buy eggs from her, but she refused to sell to her, and gave them to



someone else; on leaving the house, she with the 'evil eye,' passing the fowls, made some remark about them; a few moments later the woman of the house went out and found one of the fowls dead, with its head twisted round; she brought it into the house, and going out again, found another in the same state.

Then she knew that the 'evil eye' had been put upon them by that other woman when she passed them. She, therefore, put them at once on the top of the fire and burnt them, for anything that has died of the 'evil eye' must be burnt, it must never be eaten or used in any way. This same woman had also a young pig, and a cousin of the above mentioned woman, who had also a bad reputation, came to buy eggs, but was refused like the other. So she went away, but had hardly gone when the pig fell ill, foamed at the mouth, and died.

Soon afterwards the woman got another; in a few days the same person passed by the house with a friend, and wondered whether this pig would be bewitched like the last. The relator of this story was sitting in her own cottage, a few yards off the other, when she heard her fowls flying up on the roof, making a great noise as if much frightened; she ran out and found that her mother's new little pig had jumped out of its sty, and was rushing wildly about, foaming at the mouth, apparently ill in the same manner as its predecessor had been.

She was very much alarmed, and called loudly to her mother to come out, which she did, and other neighbours soon collected. The mother said she would go off to a man, more than three miles away, who was a clever 'Herb Doctor,' and would get a cure from him, the neighbours thought it was no use, as the pig would not live that long; however, she went. Meanwhile, the narrator had caught up the pig by the hind leg, and, running into the road where the woman with the 'evil eye' had passed, covered the pig with dust from her footprints, saying, at the same time, 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' This seemed to have a beneficial effect.

The mother ran on and found the herb doctor, who at once assured her that the pig would not die; he gave her some herbs for it, telling her that it would eat them greedily. Hardly believing him, she hastened back, and when she had arrived near home, called out, 'Is the pig alive?' And they said, 'Yes.' And she ran on, and boiled the herbs according to the wise man's direction, and the pig eat them greedily and recovered.

## ( 51 ) THE EVIL EYE ( 2 )

Here is a case of the 'evil eye' which happened so lately as in December, last year (1896).

A young calf of some three months old, which belonged to Ballachurry, in Andreas, was very suddenly taken ill, it rushed wildly about its stall, shouting and bellowing, with its eyes starting out of its head, and altogether behaving in a wild and most extraordinary manner, almost as though possessed.

In an hour's time it was dead. On making inquiries of a neighbouring farmer, who has a large stock of cattle, as to the nature and cause of this peculiar illness, the owner of the dead calf was told that only once in his long experience of farming had this farmer had a calf so afflicted, and upon that occasion it was said to be suffering from the 'evil eye.' Some dust from the road leading to the cowhouse was swept up into a shovel, and sprinkled over the calf, the result being that the animal shortly recovered. This is the best known cure for the 'evil eye,' and I believe that is very commonly done in the Island at the present time, especially in the north. The owner of the dead calf (J.C. Crellin) was only sorry that he did not know about the cure in time, that he might have tried it, and so, according to the usual results, have saved its life!

## ( 52 ) THE EVIL EYE ( 3 )

A sheep was taken very ill (March 1895] which belonged to a man in the north of the Island. In order to cure it he swept up some of the dust and dirt from the highroad close by in a shovel; this he sprinkled over the back of the sheep. Shortly after doing so the sheep recovered, and very soon was perfectly strong and well again! This sheep, evidently, had suffered from the 'evil eye!' However, it shows that there is still a certain amount of faith in these kind of charms.

## ( 53 ) THE EVIL EYE ( 4 )

A man with the 'evil eye' went to see a woman, but she was out working in a field near by. She saw him go from her house to the cow-house, and wondering what he wanted there, so soon as he had left, went to see. Under the cow she found three eggs placed in the form of a triangle. She knew that his was unnatural and meant harm; so she took them away and destroyed them. That same night the cow fell ill, and never properly recovered, and before very long had to be killed.

## ( 54 ) THE EVIL EYE ( 5 )

Another old man tells a story. His father, C—, was going to Ballaugh Old Church, and a neighbour called to go with him. C—'s cow was eating crushed gorse from a wooden tub in the cow-house, and the neighbour looked in and said, 'Fine cow that, C—.' They went to church and came back together, parting at the door. C— went into his house and found his wife distracted, for the cow had stopped eating the moment the man spoke about her, and would not now touch her food. The wife thought she was sick, and C— seeing that something was wrong, followed after the man, and taking a handful of snow from his footprints, sprinkled it over the food in the tub, then the cow recovered, and began to eat again contentedly.

## ( 55 ) THE EVIL EYE ( 6 )

This man tried on another occasion to work harm. He asked a neighbour who was killing a pig to give him a bait of fresh pork, to bait, as he said, a very long line on the shore. It was given to him, but the other found next morning that, instead of using it for bait as pretended, he had taken it into his cowhouse and hidden it under the cows, in order to do them some injury. He was a notorious character in this sort of way. The power these people were supposed to wield was enormous. At Orrisdale, in January, 1888, a beautiful brood of early chickens were hatched. For two or three weeks they thrived and were strong and healthy, then one by one they all died off, and it was remarked at the time that it seemed as though some one who owed a grudge had put the 'evil eye' upon them. Then an instance was given of a woman who had a fine, healthy baby, until a neighbour came in one day who owed the mother a grudge. She saw it, and from that time the child grew sick and weakly, and it was supposed that she had put the 'evil eye' on it.

## ( 56 ) THE EVIL EYE ( 7 )

The Irish ever have been disliked by the Manx people. One old woman told me how, one day, when she had her baby of about six weeks old in her arms, an old Irish woman and her daughter came in; they were strangers to her, but they took up the baby and made a great fuss and ado about it, which at the time the mother very much disliked; she feared they would be doing it harm. They had hardly gone when the baby began to scream, and it screamed and screamed, nothing would pacify it; it screamed until it was fairly tired out. The child's mother was greatly alarmed, and wished her mother to go out and 'sweep up the dust' after the woman, but she ridiculed the idea and would not do so. Every day at the same hour the baby began to scream, and this continued for nearly a fortnight.

At last the poor woman told her husband that he really must go to a herb doctor not far off, and get something from him to cure the child. So he went, but as it was after sunset the herb doctor declined cutting anything that evening, but told him to come again next day, when they should be ready, for the herbs must always be gathered before sunset. However, the child's father was not able to go for them the following day, and that evening the baby's screams 'bet all,' the mother had never had such a time with it. So the next day her husband went for the herbs, and found the 'doctor' in great wrath. He told him never to do that again, but to come at once for the herbs and not appear so indifferent about them; no wonder the baby was so much worse that evening, when the herbs were lying cut and waiting to the fetched.

The husband rather shamefacedly took home the herb, which were all cut up fine; the mother was to boil them in new milk and give the baby teaspoonful. This she did, and immediately the baby became better. To make doubly sure, she repeated the same the following day, and, on the third day, she boiled the herbs in water, gave her baby a teaspoonful, and then washed him all over in the decoction. After this she had no more trouble with him, as he was perfectly well.

With regard to the 'sweeping of the dust' to counteract the 'evil eye,' the first question the herb doctor put to the father was whether his wife had done this, and he said she had done very wrong in omitting it, for, had the dust been sprinkled over the baby, with the word 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' the child would never have suffered as it did.

## ( 57 ) THE EVIL EYE ( 8 )

There was a woman who had a most troublesome cow, which, after it had its first calf, refused to be milked, so that its legs had to be tied, and it had to be held to prevent its kicking and crushing the woman when she milked it. Having told a neighbour what trouble she had every day with it, he said to her, 'Go to the High Bridge (Ballaugh), at one o'clock at night, when all is still, and take some one with you, and sweep all the dust off the bridge, and bring it back with you; then go into the cowhouse, and, if the cow is quiet and 'chewing the cud,' do not disturb her, but sprinkle the dust round about her.' So she went and did as she was told. Next morning when she went as usual to milk, the cow seemed quieter though tied and held by the men, so she said to the men, 'Loose the ropes,' and they did so, and she said, 'Let her alone,' they let her alone, and the cow stood still. Ever afterwards they cow was gentle and docile as could be.

## ( 58 ) THE EVIL EYE ( 9 )

I have heard of several instances of a calf having been burnt to avert the influence of the 'evil eye,' or prevent a man's cattle from being bewitched. I have also heard of a cock having been sacrificed by a man who imagined that he was under the influence of witchcraft.

## ( 59 ) MISCELLANEOUS

The people have a strange dislike to bury an animal, assigning as a reason that by so doing they would be cheating the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field of their rightful food, and fearing lest they should cause more to follow. The body is to be left on the surface of the ground to decay away, and, as may be imagined, the result is sometimes not agreeable. Some twelve years ago a farmer in Ballaugh who had lost a calf caused it to be buried in a field. When his wife and daughter heard of this they went and had the carcass dug up, and placed on the sands of the sea shore. The late Dr Wood, some few years ago, saw the carcass of a dog on the railway line near Michael, and had the greatest difficulty in getting it buried, though he insisted that it was dangerous to health.

## WITCHCRAFT

## ( 60 ) THE WITCH OF CRANSTAL

The 'Witch of Cranstal' having dipped her stick in some filthy mixture, drew it across a field, and put a cow to graze in the other part of the field. Although there was no fence, other than the charmed line, neither was the cow tethered, yet the hay grew and was cut in the half where the cow was not put by her.

## BIRTH MARRIAGE DEATH

## ( 61 ) BIRTH

It is considered unlucky for a child to carry a baby down stairs before it has been taken up, and to this day a Manx nurse will see that the newly-born is taken up at the first opportunity.

## ( 62 ) BAPTISM

It was in former days considered very unlucky not to have every child baptized, and parents were most careful see that this was always done—of course, in those days, only by the 'parson.'

## ( 63 ) WEDDINGS ( 1 )

The custom still prevails of blowing horns in the evening before a wedding outside the house where the bride and bridegroom live. These dreary sounds, produced generally from cow's horns, continue for several hours.

## ( 64 ) WEDDINGS ( 2 )

Sometimes, also, a large boulder held in the two hands would be rolled backwards and forwards against the gable of the cottage.

## ( 65 ) WEDDINGS ( 3 )

It was always customary, when paying a first visit to a bride, to bring some little present in the hand. This might be instead of, or in addition to, anything given before the wedding.

## ( 66 ) WAKES

'Wakes' were commonly kept in a house where anyone lay dead. Three or four of the neighbours taking it in turn to sit up at night in the room with the corpse, all the family retired to rest excepting one, who would sit up to provide for the wants of those who were watching. They were provided with books, and tobacco, and candles, and so passed the night, the house being for the time spoken of as 'the wake house.'

## ( 67 ) WAKES ( 2 )

Some years ago I happened to be present one evening in the death chamber when the corpse of the deceased was about to be placed in the coffin. As I was standing by the bed I heard the undertaker say in a whisper to the nurse, who was there, 'Have you loosed everything?' She announced that all was right. The body was then placed in the coffin. Being curious to know what this conversation referred to, I asked, and was told that it was an old custom here to loose everything before putting a body into the coffin, so that there might be no impediment or hindrance at the Resurrection.

## ( 68 ) FUNERALS ( 1 )

It was the custom at funerals for the mourners who were near relations and wore crepe hatbands to keep their hats on during the service in church, and on the second Sunday after the funeral the relations would come to the morning service in church, and sit during the whole of the service. Mourners always sat.

## ( 69 ) FUNERALS ( 2 )

It is unlucky for a funeral to be straggling, as it indicates another soon to follow. Also, that a funeral will not take a route that involves going away from the church; and, in the case of a Nonconformist funeral, a family would not have their service in the chapel, as, the house lying between the chapel and the church, it involved turning their backs on the church if they went to the chapel first.

## DEATH SIGNS AND OTHERS

## ( 70 ) CORPSE LIGHT ( 1 )

It is commonly believed by those sufficiently credulous in such matters, that sparks or flames of fire seen, or imagined to be seen, passing a dwelling is a sure sign of death or disaster to some of the inmates.

## ( 71 ) CORPSE LIGHT ( 2 )

Another story of the same kind was told me by an old woman, who remembers well having heard in her youth of some neighbours of hers who were coming up through Ballaugh village late one night, and they saw, as they thought, fire coming out of one of the chimneys of a house, which blazed up quickly and then went out. The inmates of the house knew nothing at all about it, as they were all fast asleep in bed. A short time after, one of them died. Light and sparks are also often seen moving about a room shortly before a death in a house.

## ( 72 ) CORPSE LIGHT ( 3 )

The belief in mysterious lights appearing about the time of a death in the neighbourhood is not by any means exploded, though it is difficult to get the people to speak of them except among their more credulous neighbours. The lights are said by some to go from the house where the corpse lies, direct to the churchyard before the interment had taken place. In other cases they merely hover about the house. Mr C—, of Balla—, in Ballaugh, told the writer that he was looking out about three o'clock one morning from his bedroom window, about a year ago, and saw a light in the field by R—'s house—the nearest to his own—that he put on his clothes and went downstairs, when he saw the light go towards the high-road—that he went in the same direction, but by the time he got to the road it had disappeared, and he never saw it after. That he said to his wife, 'R—'s wife, who is now lying ill, will be gone within a month.' She died very shortly afterwards. He had probably seen an 'ignis fatuus,' as the ground below R—'s house is wet and marshy.

## ( 73 ) CORPSE LIGHT ( 4 )

J. R— who recently resided in the parish of Andreas, but who now lives in Sulby, told me that one night, a few years back, he was walking home from Ramsey and, on getting close to Regaby gate, he saw a bright light (like a ball of fire) in front of him travelling along the road. The light suddenly turned towards the hedge on the right hand side, adjoining the road, and rested upon the hedge for some little time. The light then went into the field. He followed it and saw it going over the field for some distance. It then took a semi-circular route and again went on to the highroad further up and disappeared. When J. R— arrived home he told his wife what he had seen, and said he felt sure that a neighbour, who was seriously ill at the time, would die. The neighbour died two days afterwards, and that week J. R— was invited to attend the funeral. He said that he attended the funeral, and that, owing to the bad state of the road, the coffin had to be taken over the hedge into the adjoining field (this was at the exact spot he had seen the light a few night previously). The coffin was carried over the field and taken again into the high-road at the very place the light disappeared. He said 'this was one of the most curious sights he had ever seen.'

## ( 74 ) CORPSE LIGHT ( 5 )

The same informant says he has often seen this in his younger days (he is now 86 years of age): That if you kicked up a sod of turf with the foot a bright light immediately showed itself—that it would quickly disappear, and then show itself again several yards away—that if you followed it, it would go further on, and you might chase it for hours, and it would still skip away and elude you. Though people were wont to regard this in more ignorant times superstitiously, it plainly enough proceeds from natural causes. We do not hear of 'will o' th' wisps' now-a-days, for the good reason that the Curragh is so much better drained than formerly.

## ( 75 ) SOUNDS OF PSALM SINGING

The same informant told me he had on several occasions distinctly heard the singing of the funeral psalm as if by the Parish Clerk and others, before a burial. This used to be a very common superstition in the Island. I have often heard of it from old people.

## ( 76 ) BEES A SIGN OF DEATH

It's a sign of death, min; yes, it is, for there was three swarms came them three years, one after another, into the chimley of the house, an' I lost three, one after the other; a big lump of a boy, and two gells, it was terrible loss. Do you remember the year Parson

died? Well, Tom was goin' to work one morning, and he toul ('told') me as he was goin' along he saw a swarm of bees go down the Parson's chimley. I said to him, there'll be a death there soon. Sure enough, the Parson died that year.

( 77 ) MISSING SLEEVE TAKEN FOR A SIGN

It happened that the sleeve of a dress which was being made disappeared, and, though search was made everywhere, could not be found. This was said to be 'a sign,' 'a sign' meaning a coming death or disaster; needless, perhaps, to say, the sleeve turned up again all right, and nothing terrible happened!

### CALENDAR CUSTOMS

( 78 ) CANDLEMAS DAY

The 12th day of February is called 'Caillagh-ny-Groamagh's Day.' The story is as follows: 'Caillagh-ny-Groamagh,' the gloomy or sulky witch, was said to have been an Irish witch who had been thrown into the sea by the people of Ireland with the intention of drowning her. However, being a witch, she declined to be drowned, and floated easily until she came to the Isle of Man, where she landed on the morning of February 12th. It was a fine, bright day, and she set to work to gather 'brasnags'—sticks to light a fire, by which she was able to dry herself. The spring that year was a wet one. It is said that every 12th Feb-ruary morning she still goes out to gather 'brasnags' to make a fire by which to dry herself; that if it be fine up to noon, and she succeeds in doing so, then a wet spring will follow. But, if the morning be wet and she cannot get dry, then the spring will be a dry one.

( 79 ) CANDLEMAS DAY ( 2 )

On this day the old people say, 'Laa fadther, Laa ail' ('Half of the Fodder, Half of the Fire')—meaning that, as the winter is only half over, there should be as much straw, hay, and turnips for the cattle, and turf for the fires, unconsumed, as had already been used.

( 80 ) GOOD FRIDAY

I recollect any old lady, who always put away her sewing on Good Friday, and gave as her reason that no needle or any pointed piece of iron should be used on the day of Our Saviour's Passion in remembrance of the nailing to the cross.

( 81 ) AUGUST THE FIRST

There was a custom in this parish, and elsewhere in the Island, for the young people, on the first Sunday in August, to go in companies to the highest mountains.

### THE QUAALTAGH

( 82 ) FIRST FOOTING

I purpose giving a short account of the 'Quaaltagh' or 'First Foot,' a subject which I think may be very fitly dealt with by this section.

It is gratifying to be able to say that the 'quaaltagh' is still to the fore, and has lived to usher in another century. Of all the events of the years, few played a more important part than the 'first foot' that crossed the threshold of any dwelling after the old year had expired and the new year begun. The first person who entered the house, was to bring good or ill to the inmates. A fair haired person was considered a better omen than a dark, [a] man was more acceptable as the 'quaaltagh' than a woman; but, be it who it might, the 'first foot' was to be warmly welcomed, brought in and fed; cake and wine and other dainties were generally in readiness, be the time what it might, after the midnight hour, or when the morn of New Year's Day was far advanced. On January 1st of this year I heard of a fair-haired 'quaaltagh' being warmly welcomed and fed in one of our northern parishes, where he was visiting several houses for the purpose of collecting a rate, and, though the rate had to be paid, still he happened to be the 'quaaltagh,' and ill-luck to the inmates if they neglected their duty to make him welcome. And, in another house in another parish, the cook was highly pleased because the 'quaaltagh' was a fine, strong, healthy, 'genal' man, who was sure to bring good luck—true, he was dark—and his good qualities were so pronounced, that the colour of his hair became quite a trivial matter.

Originally the 'quaaltagh' were Carol Singers, who came at midnight on December 31st to usher in the new year. Until quite recently I cannot remember the time when a quaint carol, with an equally quaint tune, was not sung under my bedroom window. I have written down the words of the carol, as far as I can recall them; other verses there were, which I have forgotten; the tune I have had harmonized, and am not aware of ever having seen it in print, or the carol either. That carol was succeeded at least in this district, by an adaptation of the hymn 'While Shepherd's Watch,' with the following refrain after each verse:

## I

Happy New Year, happy New Year,  
A bright and happy New Year.  
May the Stars shine bright  
With their heavenly light  
And, God bless the glad New Year

The melody of the hymn and refrain were quaint and pretty. I have also had them harmonized, and hope that if they are not already in print, it may be possible to publish them in this magazine. As far as I know they have both entirely died out, but it would be a pity if they should be lost altogether. In the present day, at Christmas and the New Year, there are 'Singers,' far too many of them, but carol singers are I fear gone, certainly we hear now only hymns of various sorts sung to us; a very poor substitute, to my thinking, for the old carols and the old times.

## II

When you go to your stable,  
    your mind is on your horse;  
Your mind is not on Jesus Christ,  
    who died upon the Cross;  
Who died upon the Cross,  
    and so happy may we be,  
For we never did for Jesus Christ,  
    as he has done for we.  
May the Lord send you a joyful New Year,  
    New Year, New Year  
May the Lord send you a joyful New Year.

When you go to your dining-room,  
    your mind is on your dinner;  
Your mind is not on Jesus Christ,  
    who died to save the sinner;  
Who died to save the sinner,  
    and so happy may we be, etc

## III

When you go to your cellar,  
    your mind is on your beer;  
Your mind is not on Jesus Christ,  
    who shed the bitter tear;  
Who shed the bitter tear,  
    and so happy may we be, etc.

God bless the master of this house,  
    and bless the mistress too,  
And all the little children,  
    that circle round his knee;  
That circle round his knee,  
    and so happy may we be,  
For we never did for Jesus Christ,  
    as he has done for we.  
May the Lord send you a joyful New Year,  
    New Year, New Year.  
May the Lord send you a joyful New Year.

## DAYS OF THE WEEK

## ( 83 ) SATURDAY ( 1 )

The last day of the week seems to have been held in considerable reverence. Many of the old women would put away their spinning at noon, and do no more that day. This was evidently in preparation for the Sunday, and it was said to be in accordance with the injunction, 'the evening and morning,' etc. Others would not 'cast on' stitches for a new stocking during the day, supposing the old one were finished.

## ( 84 ) SATURDAY ( 2 )

Fishermen would not put to sea in their small boats.

## LUCKY TIME OF DAY

## ( 85 ) HATCHING EGGS

Always put eggs to hatch under a hen at high tide: 'Full tide brings full eggs,' i.e., chickens.

## DISTURBING KEEILS BRINGS HARM

## ( 86 ) DISTURBING A KEEIL ( 1 )

A man in Algare had about the place a stone or stones from Keill Abban (St Luke's) built into a wall or walls. One night—perhaps the night first after the sacrilege—as he lay in his bed, he became aware that two men were in his room; but whether visible by a candle that was burning or by moonlight the narrator could not say. Anyhow, he heard them in conversation about himself. One proposed to kill him. 'No,' said the other, 'but let's 'straake' (strike) him unmarciful.' The man became ill, and spent his time very poorly all the rest of his days; in fact, it was not very long he lived after that any way.

## ( 87 ) DISTURBING A KEEIL ( 2 )

A treen chapel occupied the side of a field on The Rheyn, in West Baldwin. Blackthorn, gorse, briars, etc, grew on the precincts; and the place was used to dry linen on the bushes. Kewley, the purchaser, rooted up the bushes, and removed the stones of foundations, the grave slabs, and some inscribed stones to build into fences and farm buildings. One inscribed stone is in the Government Office; but the others were lost. He levelled and ploughed over the ground, incorporating the area into the field. The story of the consequences, including the statement that he was warned by neighbours not to touch the old chapel and the graves. Anyway:

His son who ploughed the place took an unaccountable pain in his arms, and eventually died before his father.

The Kewley children were always ailing, and several of them died.

Everything went wrong with the prosperity of the family:

He heard disturbing noises: e.g., in the dead hours of the night all his horses seemed to have been let loose out of the stable, and to be galloping furiously around the farmyard as if terrified or lashed by a driver; but, on his getting up and going out, he could discover nothing, the horses being found standing quietly in the stable, but a sound of hoofs was heard galloping away past the haggart and the chapel field.

A windmill into which the stones of the graves were built became a source of such constant anxiety that it was ultimately taken down. One version of the story implied that the mill was unaccountable and mysteriously set going at night, with the risk, of course, of its getting on fire and burning the whole farmstead. He took down the mill and re-buried all stones as near their original as possible.

Kewley, in conclusion, was a Methodist local preacher, and an 'uncommon good Manx scholar.' In the end, they sold the place, having gone back in the world.

## WEATHER SAYINGS

### ( 88 ) SAYING ABOUT THE FROST

There is an old saying about the weather, that if frost begins with the moon on the wane, there will not be much of it.

## FISHING SUPERSTITIONS

### ( 89 ) FISHERFOLK BELIEFS ( 1 )

Fishermen will send to a well-known charmer for herbs before putting out to sea. This to give them luck.

### ( 90 ) FISHERFOLK BELIEFS ( 2 )

They spit on their bait for luck.

### ( 91 ) FISHERFOLK BELIEFS ( 3 )

They will steal any small article from a lucky boat in order to get the luck.

### ( 92 ) FISHERFOLK BELIEFS ( 4 )

They deem it unlucky to leave the harbour in the third boat; or, on a Friday; or, to take a white stone as ballast; as an illustration of this last: a few years ago one who had constant ill-luck in fishing obtained the nick-name 'Clash Bane' ('White Stone').

### ( 93 ) FISHERFOLK BELIEFS ( 5 )

To whistle at sea, or to speak of a 'mouse,' or any other supposed noxious 'vermin,' is considered unlucky. To avert the ill, scratch the mast.





This electronic edition first published in 2002 by

Chiollagh eBooks  
26 Central Drive  
Onchan  
Isle of Mann  
British Isles  
IM3 IEU

This Electronic Edition © 2002 by Chiollagh eBooks

Electronic Database Rights © 2002 Chiollagh eBooks

All Rights Reserved

This Electronic Edition is made available only under Licence

This page constitutes an extension of the copyright  
notice of the original printed edition

This electronic edition first published in 2002 by

Chiollagh eBooks  
26 Central Drive  
Onchan  
Isle of Mann  
British Isles  
IM3 IEU

This Electronic Edition © 2002 by Chiollagh eBooks

Electronic Database Rights © 2002 Chiollagh eBooks

All Rights Reserved

This Electronic Edition is made available only under Licence

This page constitutes an extension of the copyright  
notice of the original printed edition