

TRADITIONS, SUPERSTITIONS,

AND

FOLK-LORE,

(CHIEFLY LANCASHIRE AND THE NORTH OF ENGLAND :)

Their affinity to others in widely-distributed localities ;

THEIR

EASTERN ORIGIN AND MYTHICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

BY

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"Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."—*Matthew*, c. xi. v. 25.

"Every fiction that has ever laid strong hold of human belief is the mistaken image of some great truth, to which reason will direct its search, while half reason is content with laughing at the superstition, and unreason with disbelieving it."—*Rev. J. Martineau*.

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CHAPTER VII.

FAIRIES AND BOGGARTS.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your *philosophy!*

Shakspeare.

IN my youthful imagination, some forty odd years ago, "boggarts," ghosts, or spirits of one kind or another, in Lancashire, appeared, to use Falstaff's phrase, to be "as plentiful as blackberries." "Boggart," by some writers is regarded as the Lancashire cognomen for "Puck" or "Robin Goodfellow." Certainly there are, or were, many boggarts whose mischievous propensities and rude practical jokings remind us very forcibly of the eccentric and erratic goblin page to the fairy king, so admirably delineated by Shakspeare in his "Midsummer Night's Dream":—

Fairy—Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite,
Called Robin Goodfellow; are you not he
That fright the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk; and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometimes make the drink to bear no harm;
Mislead night wanderers, laughing at their harm;
Those that hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are not you he?

Puck—Thou speakest aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night,
I jest to Oberon and make him smile,
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal;
And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And, when she drinks, against her lips I hob,
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometimes for three-foot stool mistaketh me.

Ben Jonson makes Robin Goodfellow say—

“Sometimes I meet them like a man,
Sometimes an ox, sometimes a hound,
And to a horse I turn me can,
To trip and trot about them round.

But if to ride,
My back they stride,
More swift than wind away I go :
O'er edge and lands,
Through pools and ponds,
I whirry laughing, Ho ! ho ! ho !”

There is some diversity and variety of colouring in the various fairy types presented in different localities, but they have sufficient in common to justify perfect faith in their near relationship, whether they are styled Peris, as in Persia, Pixies, as in Devonshire, Ginns, as in Arabia, Gnomes or Elves, amongst the Teutons, or “the Leprechaun” or “Good people,” of the sister Island. The finest modern artistic realisation of the fairy kingdom is unquestionably to be found in Shakspeare's “Midsummer Night's Dream.” How strangely, yet how beautifully and consistently, has he there woven together his ethereal conceptions with the grosser, as well as with the more elevated aspect of our common humanity ! How exquisite is the poetry in which the visions of his imaginations are embodied ! The fairy-King Oberon thus describes his queen, Titania's, bower :—

I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where oxslips and the nodding violet grows ;
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine ;
There sleeps Titania, some time of the night,
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight,
And there the snake throws her enamelled skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.

And again at the close of the play, Puck says—

Now it is the time of night,
That the graves all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite
In the church-way paths to glide :
And we fairies that do run
By the triple Hecat's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic.

Witches, fairies, ghosts, and boggarts seem to have become intimately amalgamated in the *repertoire* of modern superstition. Doubtless many of them have a common origin, and are but separate

developments, mythical or artistic, of the universal tendency of primitive peoples to personify, or render more tangible to the ruder sense, their conceptions of those forces of nature, the laws governing which are, to them, hidden in the delusive gloom of ignorance. "Feeorin" is a general term for all things of this character that create fear in the otherwise intrepid heart of a "Lancashire lad." Mr. Edwin Waugh, whose songs in the dialect are not more remarkable for their quaint humour and homely pathos than for their idiomatic truthfulness, aptly illustrates the mingling of the various supernatural terrors to which I have referred, in his admirable ballad, "What ails thee, my son Robin." The mother, alarmed at the lad's melancholy mood, says, inquiringly:—

Neaw, arto fairy-stricken ;
Or arto gradely ill?
Or hasto hin wi' th' witches
I'th cloof, at deep o'th neet ?

Robin replies—

'Tisn't lung o'th feeorin'
That han to do wi' th' dule ;
There's nought at thus could daunt mo,
I'th cloof, by neet nor day ;
It's yon blue een o' Mary's :
They taen my life away.

Queen Mab appears to have been equally as mischievous an elf as Puck. Shakspeare says,—

This is that very Mab
That plats the manes of horses in the night,
And bakes the *elf-locks* in foul sluttish hairs,
Which, once entangled, much misfortune bodes.

Mab, however, like Puck, seems to have had a large element of humour in her composition, which is delineated with marvellous grace and brilliancy in the celebrated speech of Mercutio, in "Romeo and Juliet."

Boggarts, in some cases, appear to have been anything but unwelcome guests. King James I., in his "Dæmonologie," describes the spirit called a "brownie" as something that "appeared like a rough man, and haunted divers houses without doing any evile, but doing, as it were, necessarie turnes up and downe the house ; yet some were so blinded as to beleeve that their house was all the sonsier, as they called it, that such spirits resorted there."

Mr. T. T. Wilkinson relates some good stories of Lancashire goblins, who are believed to have determined the sites of Rochdale,

Burnley, Samlesbury, and some other churches, by removing the stones and scaffolding of the builders in the night time. There is likewise a legend of this class in connection with the church at Winwick, near Warrington, and another at Whaley-bridge, in Derbyshire. Indeed, these goblin church builders are very common throughout the land. In some cases the sprite assumes the form of the archfiend himself. Referring to the famous boggart of Syke Lumb farm, near Blackburn, Mr. Wilkinson says:—

“When in a good humour, this noted goblin will milk the cows, pull the hay, fodder the cattle, harness the horses, load the carts, and stack the crops. When irritated by the utterance of some unguarded expression or marked disrespect, either from the farmer or his servants, the cream mugs are then smashed to atoms; no butter can be obtained by churning; the horses and other cattle are turned loose, or driven into the woods; two cows will sometimes be found fastened in the same stall; no hay can be pulled from the mow; and all the while the wicked imp sits grinning with delight upon one of the cross beams in the barn. At other times the horses are unable to draw the empty carts across the farm yard; if loaded they are upset; whilst the cattle tremble with fear, without any visible cause. Nor do the inmates of the house experience any better or gentler usage. During the night the clothes are said to be violently torn from off the beds of the offending parties, whilst, by invisible hands, they themselves are dragged down the stone stairs by the legs, one step at a time, after a more uncomfortable manner than we need describe.”

Mr. Wilkinson relates an anecdote of a near relation of his own, who, although, “not more imbued with superstition than the majority,” firmly believed that he had once seen “a real dwarf or fairy, without the use of any incantation. He had been amusing himself one summer evening on the top of Mellor Moor, near Blackburn, close to the remains of the Roman encampment, when his attention was arrested by the appearance of a dwarf-like man, attired in full hunting costume, with top boots and spurs, a green jacket, red hairy cap, and a thick hunting whip in his hand. He ran briskly along the moor for a considerable distance, when, leaping over a low stone wall, he darted down a steep declivity, and was soon lost to sight.”

One of the best descriptions of a Lancashire boggart or bargaiſt* that I have met with, was written by the late Crofton Croker, and

*Sir Walter Scott thought *bargaiſt* to be the German *bahrgeist*, the spirit of the bier, alluding to its presence foretelling death. The word is variously written, *barguest* and

published in Roby's "Traditions of Lancashire." I may just remark, *en passant*, that the word "traditions," as applied to nearly the whole of these stories, is a sad misnomer. The tales might, perhaps with propriety, be termed *nouvelletes*, or little novels; but when put forth as "traditions," in the true acceptation of the term, they are worse than useless, for they are calculated equally to mislead both the antiquary and the collector of "folk lore." Croker makes the scene of his story what was once a retired and densely wooded dell, or deep valley, in the township of Blackley, near Manchester, called to this day, "Boggart Ho' Clough." This boggart sadly pestered a worthy farmer, named George Cheetham, by "scaring his maids, worrying his men, and frightening the poor children out of their senses, so that, at last, not even a mouse durst shew himself indoors at the farm, as he valued his whiskers, after the clock had struck twelve." This same boggart, however, had some jolly genial qualities. His voice, when he joined the household laughter, on merry tales being told and practical jokes indulged in, around the hearth at Christmastide, is described as "small and shrill," and as easily "heard above the rest, like a baby's penny trumpet." He began to regard himself at last as a "privileged inmate" and conducted himself in the most extraordinary manner, snatching the children's bread and butter out of their hands, and interfering with their porridge, milk, and other food. His "invisible hand" knocked the furniture about in the most approved modern style of goblin or spiritual manifestation. Yet, this mischievous propensity did not prevent him from occasionally performing some kindly acts, such as churning the cream and scouring the pans and kettles! Truly, he was a "tricksty sprite." Croker refers to one circumstance which he regards as "remarkable," and which will remind modern readers very distinctly of a "spiritual" exhibition which recently attracted much public attention. He says—"the stairs ascended from the kitchen; a partition of boards covered the ends of the steps, and formed a *closet* beneath the staircase. From one of the boards of this partition a large round knot was accidentally displaced, and one day the youngest of the children, while playing with the shoe-horn, stuck it into this knot-hole. Whether or not the aperture had been formed by the boggart as a peep-hole to watch the

boguest being amongst its forms. A very slight provincial change would make the latter *boguerst*, from whence, probably, the Lancashire boggart. The Cymric word *bwg*, which represents, according to Mr. Garnett, the modern bug, bugbear, and hob-goblin, has evidently intimate relation to the root of the word. This sprite is often confounded with others, and is subjected to much local variation.

motions of the family, I cannot pretend to say. Some thought it was, for it was called the boggart's peep-hole; but others said that they had remembered it before the shrill laugh of the boggart was heard in the house. However this may have been, it is certain that the horn was ejected with surprising precision at the head of whoever put it there; and either in mirth or in anger the horn was darted forth with great velocity, and struck the poor child over the ear." To say the least of it, it is rather remarkable that the mere substitution of the words *structure* or *cabinet* for *closet*, and *trumpet* for *horn*, to say nothing of the peculiar quality of the boggart's voice, should make the whole so eloquently suggestive of the doings of a certain "Mr. Ferguson" and his friends the Davenport Brothers, and other "spiritual manifestations" recently so much in vogue. All this supernatural mountebanking was, it appears, taken in good part by Mr. Cheetham's family, and when the children or neighbours wished for a little excitement they easily found it in "laking," that is, playing, with this eccentric and pugnacious disembodied spirit.*

But Mr. Boggart eventually returned to his old avocations, and midnight noises again disturbed the repose of the inmates of the haunted house. Pewter pots and earthen dishes were dashed to the floor, and yet, in the morning they were found perfectly uninjured, and in their usual places. To such a pitch at last did matters reach, that George Cheetham and his family were observed one day by neighbour John Marshall sullenly following a cart that contained their household goods and chattels. What transpired is best told in Mr. Croker's own words:—

"Well, Georgy, and soa you're leaving th'owd house at last," said Marshall.

"Heigh, Johnny, my lad, I'm in a manner forced to it, thou sees," replied the other, "for that wearyfu' boggart torments us soa, we can neither rest neet nor day for't. It seems loike to have a malice agains t' young uns, an' it ommost kills my poor dame at thoughts on't, and soa, thou sees, we're forced to flit like."

"He had got thus far in his complaint when, behold, a shrill voice, from a deep upright *churn*, the topmost utensil on the cart, called out, 'Ay, ay, neighbour, we're flitting, you see.'

"'Od rot thee,' exclaimed George, "If I'd known thou'd been flitting too, I wadn't ha' stirred a peg. Nay, nay, it's no use, Mally,"

*QUERY.—Has the Lancashire and Yorkshire word "lake," meaning "to play," anything in common with the modern word "larking," now so much in vogue?

he continued, turning to his wife, 'we may as weel turn back again to th'owd house, as be tormented in another not so convenient.'

In Florence of Worcester's Chronicle, under the date, 1188, a singular story is related, which explains "how the devil, in the shape of a black dwarf, was made a monk." From some of the details, it appears to embody, in no slight degree, the popular superstition regarding the mischievous Puck. On three distinct occasions the cellars of a monastery at Prum, in the arch-diocese of Treves, had been invaded, bungs wantonly withdrawn from casks, and good wine spilled on the floor. The abbot, in despair, at length ordered the bungholes to be "anointed round with chrism." On the following morning "a wonderfully dwarfish black boy" was found "clinging by the hands to one of the bungs." He was released, dressed in a monk's habit, and made to associate with the other boys. He, however, never uttered a word, either in public or private, or tasted food of any kind. A neighbouring abbot pronounced him to be a devil lurking in human form; and, the chronicle informs us, "while they were in the act of stripping off his monastic dress, he vanished from their hands like smoke."

This sort of superstition was devotedly respected by even such men as Martin Luther. He tells us of a demon who officiated as *famulus* in a monastery. He was a good hand at an earthly bargain too, and insisted on having full measure for his money, when employed to fetch beer for the monks.

I remember in my youth hearing a story of a headless boggart that haunted Preston streets and neighbouring lanes. Its presence was often accompanied by the rattling of chains. I forget now what was its special mission. It frequently changed its form, however, but whether it appeared as a woman or a black dog, it was always headless. The story went that this boggart or ghost was at length "laid" by some magical or religious ceremony in Walton Church yard. I have often thought that the story told by Weaver, a Preston antiquary, in his "Funerall Monuments," printed in 1681, and which I have transcribed at page 149 of the "History of Preston and its Environs," may have had some remote connection with this tradition. He relates how Michael Kelly, the celebrated Dr. Dee's companion, together with one Paul Wareing, "invocated some of the infernal regiment, to know certain passages in the life, as also what might bee knowne by the devils foresight, of the manner and the time of the death of a noble young gentleman then in his wardship." He further relates how, on the following evening they dug up in Law

(Walton) Church yard, the corpse of a man recently buried, when, "by their incantations, they made him (or rather some evil spirit through his organs) to speake, who delivered strange predictions concerning the said gentleman." From the whole of this narration, it is evident that Weaver honestly believed some special sorcery or *diablerie* had been perpetrated in the localities referred to.

This belief that the devil made use of other organs than his own, in giving expression to his thoughts or opinions was shared in by the learned. Melancthon tells us of an Italian girl who was "possessed" with a devil, and who, although she knew no Latin, quoted Virgil fluently (at least Satan did through her organ of speech), when questioned by a Bolognese professor. This anecdote is rather unpleasantly suggestive of certain recent clairvoyant exhibitions.

Amongst other youthful terrors to which I remember being subjected, one had reference to a mythic monster styled "raw head and bloody bones." This boggart appeared to partake of the cannibal nature of some of the giants and ogres in our nurserytales, one of which, on the approach of the redoubtable "Jack, the Giant Killer," called out to his wife, "I smell fresh meat!" or according to the popular rhyme—

Fee, fo, fam, I smell the blood of an Englishman!

Be be alive or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to salt and bread!

The said "raw head and bloody bones," I was seriously informed, preferred to breakfast on the bodies of naughty children, nicely roasted! I can likewise remember well being told that boggarts especially loved to haunt and otherwise annoy those who refused to believe in their existence. After experience, I need scarcely say, has demonstrated the contrary to be much nearer the truth.

Mr. Edwin Waugh, in his "Grave of Grislehurst Boggart," gives a vivid picture of this species of superstition as it still exists in Lancashire. The story is admirably told in a conversation between the author, an old weaver and his dame, and is replete with characteristic traits. It seems this boggart, although it was supposed to be "laid" in the most orthodox manner, still troubled the neighbourhood. The old dame declares—"It's a good while sin it were laid; an' there were a cock buried w'it, we a stoop (a stake) driven through it. It 're nooan settled with a little, aw'll uphowd yo."

"'And do you really think,' said the author, 'that this place has been haunted by a boggart?'

"'Has bin—be far!' replied the dame. 'It is new! Yodd'n soon find it eawt, too, iv yo live't oppo th' spot. It's very mich iv it wouldn't may yor yure fair ston of an end, othur with one marlock or

another. There's noan so mony folk oppo this country side at likes to go deawn yon lone at after delit (daylight), aw con tell yo.'

" 'But it's laid and buried,' replied the author, 'it surely doesn't trouble you much now.'

" 'Oh, well,' said the old woman, 'iv it doesn't, it doesn't; so there needs no moor. Aw know some folk winnut believe sich things; there is some at'll believe naught at o' iv it isn't fair druvan into um, wilty, shalto; but this is a different case, mind yo. Eh, never name it; thoose at has it to dhyel wi knows what it is; but thoose at knows naught abeawt sich like—whau, it's like summat an' nawt talkin' to 'um abeawt it; so we'n e'en lap it up where it is.' "

This boggart, from its doings, appears to have been an exact counterpart of George Cheetham's plague. On Mr. Waugh inquiring if the weaver never thought of digging into the grave in order to satisfy his curiosity on the matter, the old lady broke in with— "Naw; he'll delve noan theer, nut iv aw know it. . . . Nor no mon elze dar lay a finger oppo that greawnd. Joseph Fenton's a meeterly bowd chap, an' he's ruvven everything up abeawt this country side, welly, but he dar not touch Gerzlehus' Boggart for his skin! An' I howd his wit good, too, mind yo!"

The Grislehurst dame seems to have placed some emphasis on the fact, when their ghost or boggart was "laid," that "there was a cock buried wi' it." This ceremony resulted, doubtless, from a lingering remnant of the ancient and almost universal superstition that the soul departeth from the body in the form of a bird. This Dr. Kuhn regards as intimately connected with the Aryan belief respecting birds being soul-bringers. I am not aware, however, whether the barn-door fowl is included amongst the numerous lightning birds, which Kelly describes as having "nestled in the fire-bearing tree," of which the clouds formed the foliage, and the sun, moon, and stars the fruit.

In Willsford's "Nature's Secrets" (1658), is, however, the following passage, which shows the connection of the common fowl with stormy weather:—

"The vigilant cock, the bird of Mars, the good housewife's clock and the Switzer's alarum, if he crows in the day-time very much, or at sun-setting, or when he is at roost at unusual hours, as at nine or ten, expect some change of weather, and that suddenly, and that from fair to foul, or the contrary; but when the hen crows, good men expect a storm within doors and without. If the hen or chickens in the morning come late from their roosts (as if they were constrained by hunger), it presages much rainy weather."

The Romans used fowls in divination. Mohammed, too, is said to have included amongst his domestic pets a white cock, which he regarded as his friend, and considered that it protected him from the machinations of witchcraft, of genii and devils, and of the evil eye.

Mr. T. T. Wilkinson relates a curious anecdote, which he had, a few years ago, from a respectable gentleman, in the neighbourhood of Burnley, about "killing a witch." His informant was one of the farmers engaged in the mystical ceremony, the object of which was the destruction of a wizard who had wrought sad havoc amongst his neighbours' cattle. He says:—"They met at the house of one of their number, whose cattle were then supposed to be under the influence of the wizard; and, having procured a live cock chicken, they stuck him full of pins and burnt him alive, whilst repeating some magical incantation. . . . The wind suddenly rose to a tempest, and threatened the destruction of the house. Dreadful moanings, as of some one in intense agony, were heard from without, whilst a sense of horror seized upon all within. At the moment when the storm was at the wildest, the wizard knocked at the door, and, in piteous tones, desired admittance. They had previously been warned, by the 'wise man' they had consulted, that such would be the case, and had been charged not to yield to their feelings of humanity by allowing him to enter." The violent death of the cock, it appears, was necessary to raise the storm. The sequel of the story informs us that exposure to its violence killed the presumed wizard in the course of a week.

There is a superstition in Cornwall that the crowing of a cock at midnight indicates that the angel of death is passing over the house. Mr. Hunt relates the following anecdote, from which it appears that chanticleer is largely credited in that district with supernatural attributes:—

"A farmer in Towednack having been robbed of some property of no great value, was resolved, nevertheless, to employ a test which he had heard the 'old people' resorted to for the purpose of catching a thief. He invited all his neighbours into his cottage, and when they were assembled, he placed a cock under the 'brandice' (an iron vessel formerly much employed by the peasantry in baking, when this process was carried out on the hearth, the fuel being furze and ferns). Every one was directed to touch the brandice with his, or her third finger, and say, 'In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, speak.' Every one did as they were directed, and no sound came from beneath the brandice. The last person was a woman, who

occasionally laboured for the farmer in his fields. She hung back, hoping to pass unobserved amidst the crowd. But her very anxiety made her a suspected person. She was forced forward, and most unwillingly she touched the brandice, when, before she could utter the words prescribed, the cock crew. The woman fell faint on the floor, and, when she recovered, she confessed herself to be the thief, restored the stolen property, and became, it is said, 'a changed character from that day.'"

Shakspeare appears to have been fully aware of the prevalences of a superstition which attributed to ghosts and wandering spirits a wholesome dread of the sonorous tones of chanticleer's early morning song. In the first scene in *Hamlet*, on the departure of the ghost, Bernardo says :—

It was about to speak when the cock crew.

Horatio answers :—

And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard
The cock that is the trumpet of the morn,
Doth with his lefty and shrill-sounding throat,
Awake the god of day ; and, at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine : and of the truth herein
This present object made probation.

To which Marcellus adds :—

It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes,
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long :
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad.
The nights are wholesome ; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

And again, Puck, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, referring to the morning star or early dawn, which awakeneth chanticleer, says :—

My fairy lord, this must be done with haste ;
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger ;
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards : damned spirits all,
That in cross-ways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone :
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light,
And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

Not so, however, with the fairies, for Oberon rejoins:—

But we are spirits of another sort :
 I with the morning's love have oft made sport ;
 And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
 Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,
 Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
 Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams.

The cock was one of the attendants or emblems of Æsculapius or Asclêpius, the god of medicine of the Greek mythology, and this fowl was commonly sacrificed to him. In addition to his knowledge in the art of healing disease, he possessed the power of raising the dead to life. He was believed to be the son of Apollo. According to Plato, the last words of Socrates were, "Criton, we owe a cock to Asclêpius." This bird, as well as the serpent, was one of his sacred emblems.

The Roman god Janus is regarded by many to be in some respects a Latin form of the Greek Asclêpius. He opens the year and the daily morning, and is the porter of heaven. One of his peculiar emblems was a cock, by the means of whose matutinal song he was supposed to announce the approach of the dawn.

The crowing of a cock of the colour of gold is to be the signal of the dawn of *Ragnavock*, "the great day of arousing," according to Scandinavian mythology. A black cock is likewise said to crow in the *Niflheim*, or "land of gloom."

J. Bossewell, in "Workes of Armourie" (1597), says:—"The lyon dreadeth the white cocke, because he breedeth a precious stone called allectricium, like to the stone that bright Calcedonius, and for that the cocke beareth such a stone, the lyon specially abhorreth him." The stone referred to was said to be similar to a dark crystal, and about the size of a bean.

A most astounding story affirming the supernatural attributes of chanticleer is related in Pinkerton's "General Collection of Voyages and Travels." In the "Voyage to Congo," a Capuchin "missioner," named Father Morolla, relates the following remarkable incident with the utmost gravity and evidently with perfect faith in the veracity of the story:—On the capture of a certain town by the army of Sogno, a large cock was found with an iron ring attached to one of its legs. The unfortunate rooster was speedily placed in the pot and boiled in the most orthodox fashion. When, however, his captors were about to commence their improvised feast, to their astonishment the cooked "pieces of the cock, though sodden and near dissolved, began to move

about, and unite into the form they were in before, and being so united, the restored cock immediately raised himself up, and jumped out of the platter upon the ground, where he walked about as well as when he was first taken. Afterwards he leaped upon an adjoining wall, where he became new-feathered all of a sudden, and then took his flight to a tree hard by, where, fixing himself, he, after three claps of his wings, made a most hideous noise, and then disappeared. Every one may imagine what a terrible fright the spectators were in at this sight, who, leaping with a thousand Ave-Marias in their mouths from the place where this had happened, were contented to observe most of the particulars at a distance."

The fabulous animal, the cockatrice, was believed to result from a "venomous egg" laid by an aged cock, and hatched by a toad. The monster had the head and breast of the dunghill champion, and "thence downwards the body of a serpent." Toads are frequently referred to by old writers in connection with witches and witchcraft.

In a MS. "Medycine Boke," belonging to Dr. Sampson Jones, of Bettws, Monmouthshire (1650-90), is the following strange recipe, entitled, "Cock water for a consumption and cough of the lungs":—"Take a running cock and pull (pluck) him alive, then kill him and cutt him in pieces and take out his intrals and wipe him cleane, breake the bones, then put him into an ordinary still with a pottle of sack and a pottle of red cow's milk," etc., etc.

The mythical character and medical qualities of red cow's milk have been referred to in the previous chapter.

Lightning birds were supposed to come "down to earth either as incorporations of the lightning, or bringing with them a branch charged with latent or invisible fire." The eagle or the falcon was the form which Agni, the fire-god, assumed on such occasions. The fire-birds were very numerous, and included the woodpecker, the robin, the wren, the owl, the cuckoo, the stork, the swallow, and the hoopoe. Kelly quotes the Herefordshire rhyme as evidence that the ancient superstition respecting the wren is still alive in England, as well as in France, Scotland, Wales, and the Isle of Man. The peasants there say:—

Robin Redbreast and Jenny Wren
Are God Almighty's cock and hen.

In Lancashire, however, the rhyme is:—

A robin and a wren
Are God's cock and hen.

And it is generally followed by the intimation that

A spink and a sparrow
Are the devil's bow and arrow.

To kill or rob the nests of these sacred birds was supposed to hazard the destruction of the culprit's residence by lightning. A Cornish rhyme says :—

Those who kill a robin or a wran
Will never prosper, boy or man.

In the "laying" of the redoubted Grislehurst boggart, it is not improbable, as ghosts are not easily confined in a corporeal sense, that some superannuated old rooster, who had disturbed the bodily rest, and scared the wits of the neighbouring rustics by some untoward cock-a-doodle-doing, furnished all that was really "laid" in the mysterious grave referred to. An impression may have been entertained that the troublesome elf who had turned the household topsy-turvy had made the said rooster's corpus his temporary earthly tabernacle. Perhaps the "wise men" of the hamlet vainly imagined that nought was required but the driving of a "stoop" through the feathered repository to utterly "squelch" its ghostly occupant.

Since the above was written, a paragraph from the *Carnatic Telegraph* has "gone the round of the press," relating to the "casting out of devils," as at present practised in India. From this, it appears that the cock is, with the Hindoos as with the Lancashire peasant, a most potent instrument in the subjugation of troublesome spirits. The Hindoo exorcist tied his patient's hair in a knot, and then with a nail attached it to a tree. Muttering some "incantatory" stanzas, he seized a live cock, and, holding it over the poor girl's head with one hand, he, with the other, cut its throat. The blood-stained knot of hair was left attached to the tree, which was supposed to detain the demon. It is firmly believed that one "or a legion thus exorcised will haunt that tree till he or they shall choose to take possession of some other unfortunate."

In a work published in 1869, entitled "Count Teleki; a Story of Modern Jewish Life and Customs, by Eca," the author describes a ceremony called the "Keparoth or atoning sacrifice," in which the common barn-door fowl plays an important part. The penitent "whirled a cock around his head, saying, 'This is my atonement, this is my ransom. This cock goeth to death, but may I be gathered and enter into a long and happy life and into peace.' This he repeated three times. . . . The sacrifice consists of a cock for the male,

and a hen for a female. A white fowl is preferred to any other, in allusion to the words of the prophet, 'Though your sins be as scarlet they shall become white as snow.' A pregnant woman takes three, two hens and one cock, one hen for herself and the other two for the unborn infant—the hen lest it should be a girl, and the cock lest it should be a boy." The fowls are immediately afterwards handed over to the Jewish butcher to be killed.

A yet very prevalent superstition asserts that a person at the point of death finds serious difficulty in "shuffling off this mortal coil" should there happen to be any game cock feathers in the bed on which he lies. Pigeons' feathers are likewise said to prolong the agonies of death.

In France, a black cock is the chief instrument employed to raise the devil, and extract from the fiend sums of money. The incantation must be performed at a locality where four roads meet or two cross each other.

Mr. Wilkinson, referring to the Hothersall Hall boggart, says it "is understood to have been '*laid*' under the roots of a large laurel tree, at the end of the house, and will not be able to molest the family so long as that tree exists. It is a common opinion in that part of the country that the roots have to be moistened with milk on certain occasions, in order to prolong its existence, and also to preserve the power of the spell under which the goblin is laid."

The laurel here appears to be invested with the mythical properties of the ash and the rowan trees, which were supposed to possess irresistible power over "witches, fairies, and other imps of darkness." The author of "Choice Notes" quotes an Aberdeenshire couplet, which asserts that

Rowan, ash, and red thread
Keep the devils frae their speed.

and further adds:—"It is a common practice with the housewives in the same district to tie a piece of red worsted thread round their cows' tails previous to turning them out to grass for the first time in the spring. It secures their cattle, they say, from an evil eye, from being elfshot by fairies, etc." The red thread is here, like the berries of the rowan, the mutch of the woodpecker, the red breast of the robin, etc., in the Aryan myths, typical of the lightning.

In many nooks and corners of Lancashire, and some other parts of England, other stories may be found, many of which point to the Puck or Robin Goodfellow of the fairy mythology as their most probable prototype.

Roby says:—"The English Puck (the Lancashire Boggart), the Scotch Bogie, the French Goblin, the Gobelinus of the Middle Ages, and the German Kobold, are probably only varied names for the Grecian Khobalus,—whose sole delight consists in perplexing the human race, and evoking those harmless terrors that constantly hover round the minds of the timid. So, also, the German Spuck, and the Danish Spogel, correspond to the northern Spog; whilst the German Hudkin, and the Icelandic Puki, exactly answer to the character of the English Robin Goodfellow."

These English domestic sprites or elves that seem to claim a species of kinship to those they alternately torment and render substantial aid, clearly find their counterparts in the ghost and fairy lore of other nations. Kelly says, "Many similar tales are told of the German Zwergs, or dwarfs, who are the same race of little people as the elves and fairies that live in the hearts of green hills and mounds in Great Britain and Ireland. Often does it happen that a whole colony of these Zwergs effects an exodus from a German district, because the people have given them some offence, or 'have become too knowing for them;' and on these occasions there is always a river to be crossed." This was ever a difficulty, but not an unconquerable one, with the German elves. In England and Scotland a certain class of goblin or ghost found a running stream an impassable barrier. Poor Tam o'Shanter's mare Meg demonstrated the truth of this by the sacrifice of her caudal appendage. Grimm says that many facts tend to show a near relationship between elves of this class and the souls of men. The ordinary ghosts of the present day, whether voluntary visitors or obedient servants of "spirit mediums," are supposed to be the souls of the departed. Kelly says, on the authority of Kuhn and Schwartz, "Some of the many names by which the Zwergs are known in North Germany mean the 'ancients' or the 'ancestors,' and mark the analogy between the beings so designated and the Hindoo Pitris or Fathers; whilst other names—Holden (*i.e.*, good, kind) in Germany; good people, good neighbours, in Ireland and Scotland—connect the same elves with the Manes of the Romans." The Pitris of the Hindoos seem to furnish the germ of "good fairies," the fairy godmother, the Persian Pepis, the Arabic Ginns, the chief of the followers of Oberon and Titania, and of the kindlier phase in the character of Puck, Robin Goodfellow, or the Lancashire bogie, or domestic boggart, but the larking propensity of this sprite may possibly have resulted from a more modern addition to the spirit lore of the Northern Aryan people.

Mr. Jno. Aubery, Fellow of the Royal Society, in his "Miscellanies," published in 1696, gives what he styles "a Collection of Hermetical Philosophy," which exhibits an astonishing amount of superstition even amongst the presumed learned men of the age. Amongst other things he informs his readers, on the authority of a letter from a "learned friend," in Scotland, that a certain Lord Duffin was suddenly transported, by fairies, from his residence in Morayshire and that he was "found the next day in Paris, in the French king's cellar, with a silver cup in his hand!" Such a feat was worthy of the sprite who could put a "girdle round the earth in forty minutes." Truly, as Ben Johnson's Puck says, he could "travel swifter than the wind with a load of humanity on his back."

Our ordinary stories of church-yard ghosts, and other apparitions and "spiritual manifestations," have much more in common with the "folk-lore" of classical antiquity than is generally known. There is a story told by Pliny the younger, which so much resembles many that we have heard in youth, that nothing is required but a change of name, place, and date, to thoroughly domesticate it amongst us. It is related as follows, in Melmoth's translation of Pliny's letters:

"There was at Athens a large and spacious house which lay under the disrepute of being haunted. In the dead of the night a noise resembling the clashing of iron was frequently heard, which, if you listened more attentively, sounded like the rattling of chains; at first it seemed at a distance, but approached nearer by degrees; immediately afterwards a spectre appeared in the form of an old man extremely meagre and ghastly, with a long beard and dishevelled hair, rattling the chains on his feet and hands. . . . By this means the house was at last deserted, being judged by everybody to be absolutely uninhabitable; so that it was now entirely abandoned to the ghost. However, in hopes that some tenant might be found who was ignorant of this great calamity which attended it, a bill was put up giving notice that it was either to be let or sold. It happened that the philosopher Athenodorus came to Athens at this time, and, reading the bill, inquired the price. The extraordinary cheapness raised his suspicion; nevertheless, when he heard the whole story, he was so far from being discouraged that he was more strongly inclined to hire it, and, in short, actually did so. When it drew towards evening, he ordered a couch to be prepared for him in the fore part of the house, and, after calling for a light, together with his pen and tablets, he directed all his people to retire. But that his mind might not, for want of employment, be open to the

vain terrors of imaginary noises and spirits, he applied himself to writing with the utmost attention. The first part of the night passed with usual silence, when at length the chains began to rattle; however he neither lifted up his eyes nor laid down his pen, but diverted his observation by pursuing his studies with greater earnestness. The noise increased, and advanced nearer, till it seemed at the door, and at last in the chamber. He looked up, and saw the ghost exactly in the manner it had been described to him; it stood before him, beckoning with his finger. Athenodorus made a sign with his hand that it should wait a little, and then threw his eyes again upon his papers; but, the ghost still rattling his chains in his ears, he looked up, and saw him beckoning as before. Upon this he immediately arose, and, with the light in his hand, followed it. The ghost slowly stalked along, as if encumbered with his chains, and turning into the area of the house, suddenly vanished. Athenodorus, being thus deserted, made a mark, with some grass and leaves, where the spirit left him. The next day he gave information to the magistrates, and advised them to order that spot to be dug up. This was accordingly done, and the skeleton of a man in chains was there found; for the body having lain for a considerable time in the ground, was putrefied and mouldered away from the fetters. The bones, being collected together, were publicly buried, and thus, after the ghost was appeased by the proper ceremonies, the house was haunted no more."

I was forcibly struck with the peculiarly Eastern character of a traditionary observance related to me during my investigation of the remains found in the ancient British tumulus at Over Darwen, in Lancashire, in November, 1864. I was informed that the country people spoke of the mound as a locality haunted by "boggarts," and that children were in the habit of taking off their clogs or shoes, under the influence of some such superstitious feeling, when walking past it in the night time.

Keppel, in his "Visit to the Indian Archipelago," refers to a somewhat similar superstition in Northern Australia. The natives will not willingly approach graves at night alone; "but when they are obliged to pass them, they carry a fire stick to keep off the spirit of darkness."

It is perhaps scarcely necessary that I should refer to the fact that recent naturalists have satisfactorily demonstrated that the green circles termed "fairy rings," have nothing "supernatural" in their character, being simply a result of the growth of a species of fungus. Not long ago, "the learned" contended that they resulted from some

obscure kind of electric action. Sir Walter Scott, who held this opinion, sneeringly refers to them as "electrical rings, which vulgar credulity supposes to be traces of fairy revels." Thousands of English peasants, yes, and many presumed much wiser people, nevertheless, yet firmly adhere to the ancient faith. Singularly enough, Shakspeare seems almost to have intuitively guessed at their true origin. When Prospero, for the last time invokes the aid of the supernatural, he exclaims :—

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves ;
And ye that on the sands with printless feet
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back ; you demi-puppets, that
By moonshine do the green-sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites ; and you, whose pastime
Is to make *midnight mushrooms*.