

# THE PASSING OF THE FAIRIES.

THE Fairies are to go ! Her Majesty's Inspector has said it. True, no one has actually beheld them since the days of the Round Table, when, we are told :

Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy  
Come dashing down on a tall wallside  
flower.

And still at evenings on before his horse  
The flickering fairy circle wheel'd and broke  
Flying, and link'd again and link'd and  
broke

Flying, for all the earth was full of life.

But though driven from the fields and woods, discredited yet not discouraged, the Little People have maintained their place in the nursery and schoolroom. Thence they are now to be dislodged. Into the dark caverns of the infant mind the bull's-eye lantern of the Inspector has been flashed, and the banditti lurking there, Robin Goodfellow, Puss-in-Boots, Tom Thumb, and Riquet of the Tuft are warned to move on. The clock has struck, and Cinderella must for ever resume her rags, the Sleeping Beauty must awake, Dick Whittington must put away his cat and become merely a Lord Mayor, the Wild Swans must fly away, the Ice Maiden must melt and be no longer seen ! As at the moment of Christ's Nativity the false gods of heathendom are feigned to have passed away, with

A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament,  
so must the crowning of knowledge be attended by the expulsion of the fairies from the imagination of little children.

In an interesting lecture delivered at the College last Saturday, and printed in this number of the *Educational Times*, Mr. Holman delivered a vigorous attack on the use of fairy-tales in education. There, it appears, has outgrown fairy-tales, and "to use them for early educational work is

practically to bring about a reversion to type." They express "the ideas of a profoundly ignorant primitive man, in conditions generally very far removed from those of the little learner." Again, fairy-tales are for adults, not for children, because "they are the prose-tales of the primitive adult, not the primitive child." It is pointed out that the moral teaching of some fairy-stories is very undesirable: even if the hero be a righteous person, "he has more often than not to lie, steal, cheat, and be an ingrate, to accomplish his noble ends." It appears, then, to Mr. Holman, that an edition of fairy-tales for School purposes may be called a "polite form of cannibalism. . . or an improved shorter catechism of idolatry." It would be wiser, he thinks, to stick to the truth, and train the infant mind on the wonders of science and the exciting episodes of history, or of fiction which, like "Robinson Crusoe," might conceivably be true. Fairy-tales hold their own, he says, simply through their charm of manner, their vivid dramatic setting, their simplicity and indefiniteness. Let us steal therefore their manner, and write true stories (if we can) in the old way.

We foresee difficulties: if the dramatic method is adopted in science and history, truth is apt to be rather highly coloured. One of the most successful experiments in this line was Kingsley's "Water Babies"; yet Mr. Laurance Gomme characterized this, even from the standpoint of science, as a book of "pernicious tendencies." It may be true that the facts of electricity and of light, and their modes of motion, may be made as interesting as the stories of the seven league boots, or Aladdin's carpet. The lecturer contended that they