

[FOR THE BEE.]

POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS.—No. 6.

FAIRIES.

MR DAWSON,

SIR,—The fairies are a race of beings, whether mortal or not, and whether they inhabit the earth or air, I cannot say, that are more wonderful than even Gulliver's Lilliputians. I have often seen the man, that saw the man, that saw them; but I never had the pleasure of seeing them myself. The most authentic information that I have had, represents them as a merry little people, clothed in green coats, inhabiting little green hills, commonly called fairy hillocks.—About these, in moonlight nights, they are frequently seen, frisking and dancing; some one of the family, or hive, which shall I call it, playing the fiddle. From this trait in their character, one would expect that they were an inoffensive race: but no, they are a set of mischievous little bodies as ever one had any thing to do with. Even in their merry-making, they delight in tricks. I have heard of a man who went to see them in a frolic, and who, by stopping there what he conceived but an hour or two, found on his reaching home, that they had unconsciously kept him a year. To detail all the freaks of the fairies, would fill a volume as big as Robinson Crusoe. I shall only select a few of them, and these not the most wonderful, in case people do not believe me.

Many a decent, honest man has lost a good, dutiful, and well-fashioned wife, by the fairies. True they would give him another, but such an one as would not excite the envy of his neighbor; she would be a nib-a-wao, eater-cap, or a cankered body, that there is scarce such a thing as living with. This happened during the accouchment of the good woman. To prevent this, it was common among the superstitious, to go three times round the bed with a lighted candle, repeating a prayer at every round, and laying the bible under her head. These precautions were not necessary after the woman's going to church, as the fairies had no more power over her for that time. They likewise stole, or rather exchanged infants; when this happened, they put a *shargar* in its place. This I think is one of their own offspring, and corresponds in character to the wife they replaced, being diminutive and cross. The means used to prevent this, has escaped my memory; but the danger is over when the child is baptized; and I have little doubt but this is the cause of infants being christened so young where superstition prevails.

The brute creation is not exempt from their malevolent attacks; cattle being elf-shot, happening frequently. This is a wound inflicted without any perforation of the skin, by a triangular piece of flint which I have often seen, but which I supposed to be a missile used in warfare before the invention of guns; the carefully preserving one of these is an antidote, and divests the fairies of their art in this respect.

As I do not think it would tend to any good to expose more superstitious observances at this time, particularly as I may have broached work enough for myself, and perhaps exhausted the patience of some of your readers, I shall bring the series to a close.

I intended giving my name now, but as "A Countryman" has not given his, I shall as usual remain,

Yours,

Respectfully,

AMICUS VERITATIS

Colchester, June 1837.

[FOR THE BEE]

MR DAWSON,

SIR,—This is not an answer to "A Countryman's" second communication; it is only giving the reason why I have not answered it, and to make some passing observations thereon.

I wrote as the friend of truth, and as this champion of error has not thought proper to combat upon the

ground marked out by me, (which was candor,) I now decline the contest; particularly as he has summoned a host of old wives, as he is pleased to call them, to his assistance. I have no recollection of using such language as he says I did. I acknowledge a challenge to the witches; but the old ladies I respect too much to make the one and the other synonymous terms.

I would now observe that I have not seen as great nonsense, so well written, since the days of John Gilpin. Had not "A Countryman" told us that he was in earnest, all would have considered it a joke, and laughed at it as I have done; but now they shake their heads and say, "What a curious figure superstition makes when it meets with vanity."

The degree of guilt attached to us on account of ignorance, is something proportioned to the means of information we have access to. Had "A Countryman" studied his Theological Dictionary more closely, I think he would not speak of Deism as he does; but as his conscience seems to be tender upon the point, I shall for his information, say, that a Deist is one who either doubts or denies that the scriptures are a revelation from Heaven, and not a differing in opinion as to whether there is good ground in them for believing in dead lights or not. All those unacquainted with science conceive it to be enveloped in impenetrable mystery; and they wish all who are so credulous as to believe them, to be impressed with the same idea. Those whose mental optics are exercised, know, that science and superstition are just such a contrast as light and darkness. If they were personified, you would see Science ascending an eminence, carrying with him such instruments as a telescope, a barometer, a quadrant, compasses, &c., and with them contriving to his own satisfaction, and that of others, the elevation he has attained to, the weight of the air at that elevation, the latitude he was in, &c. If you were to ask him about optics, he would tell you that all might be more or less acquainted with them, as every one was possessed of the means. As some seemed to doubt of this, he said, who among you has a looking glass to shave at, which shows the face not exactly where it is, this is reflection, and the mirror is a reflector. If you put a straight stick in a pool of water, it appears crooked; and every time you see a rainbow, an optical illusion is presented to you; and if you would be at a little pains to become acquainted with this branch of my business, the cause of this you would see clearly.

Now look at Superstition sneaking away into some gloomy recess, muttering some incantation if he injects any one to counteract the effect of a bad eye, with a charm sewed into the waistband of his trousers, branding any old woman he sees, with wrinkles in her face, with the handsome epithet of a witch, sometimes his hair standing erect from the appearance of some hobgoblin of his own creating, and finding fault with any one who says it is a deception. From the manner in which they acted, it was evident they both wished to propagate their own opinions; and when they met, you would have been amused to hear their arguments,—but as I have not now time to give you it all, I shall just tell you what passed at parting.

Superstition had quoted a good many texts of scripture, and he said it would give him satisfaction, if Science would support what he had said, in the same way? Well to please him, Science said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

I said when I began to write these strictures on superstition, that I would not shrink from controversy if truth was elicited thereby: now I think one truth at least is brought to light, i. e. that superstition is more popular and more prevalent than many were aware of.

Yours,

Respectfully,

AMICUS VERITATIS.

June, 1837.

CANADA POLITICS.

AFFAIRS OF CANADA, AND THE MINISTERIAL BILL.

From Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, for April, 1837.

A struggle has commenced between the British Ministry and Canada, which, unless conciliatory measures be adopted, and some rash steps be retraced, can terminate only in one way—the separation of that colony, as well as all the other North American colonies, from this country. After the experience the people of Britain had, sixty years ago, of the issue of the contest between the old American colonies and the mother country, and the more recent examples of the Spanish settlements in South America, we think they ought seriously to consider whether they will waste their treasure and their blood in a dispute, in which victory will bring neither advantage nor honour, while defeat will be attended with mortification and disgrace. Nor is that defeat likely to be distant or uncertain. The first Congress in the old colonies, on account of the grievances arising from the British government, was held in New York in 1765; and on the 4th of July 1776, the independence of the United States was declared. When that struggle commenced, the inhabitants of the States did not exceed two millions, and they were supposed to be unfit to become soldiers; yet in a few years, they defeated, in numerous pitched battles, the best troops of Britain, veterans who had distinguished themselves in the Continental wars. The grievances of which the Canadians complain are, at least, as great as those of the old colonists. All that the British government attempted with them was to raise taxes within the colonies by the act of the British legislature, for the purpose of defraying the expense incurred in their own defence; and no complaints existed—or, at least, were much felt, or loudly expressed—as to the administration of their internal governments. In some of the colonies, such as Connecticut and Rhode Island, indeed the people enjoyed so uncontrolled an independence in the regulation of their local concerns, that the revolution did not render necessary the slightest alteration in the forms of their administration. One of these colonies retains, even to this day, the charter of Charles II., as its system of state government; and another parted with the Royal charter, for a constitution of its own making, only in 1818. At the beginning of the quarrel, as has now been ascertained beyond doubt, the old colonists had not the slightest intention of separating from Britain; and it was only in the struggle, when the inferiority of regular troops to bands of freemen, fired with a sense of their wrongs and determined to assert their liberty, became apparent, that the hope of creating an independent state—untrammelled by the base and selfish aristocracy which blunts the energies and weakens the resources of European states—arose, and was so triumphantly realized.

Lower Canada is by far the most important of our North American colonies, both as regards population and trade; and whatever course the ruling oligarchy of this country (for both factions, Whig and Tory, seem to make common cause in oppressing her) force Canada to take, will soon be followed by all the rest. In 1832, the population of these colonies was as follows:—

Lower Canada,	539,823
Upper Canada,	211,567
New Brunswick,	72,943
Nova-Scotia and Cape Breton,	142,548
Prince Edward's Island,	32,292
Newfoundland,	60,058

At present, the population, from its rapid increase in new countries, and the number of emigrants who have arrived from Europe,