

The Belief in Fairies.

In countries where a good deal of Celtic blood yet remains pure and untainted with Teutonic or Scandinavian a lingering belief in fairies may still be traced in remote parts. A few years ago an old man in the Isle of Man solemnly assured a traveler there that he himself had one night beheld the fairies at their revels in such multitudes "that there was quite a thickness tremendous of them," and no amount of skeptical questioning could shake the old man in his belief. At the present day, in the wilder parts of Cornwall, a quite genuine belief in being "pisky-led" prevails. "Piskie" (pixie in Devonian) is the common Cornish name for fairies and certain mischievous sprites among them are supposed to derive great pleasure in enticing unwary travelers across the wild moors and hills from the right paths and leading them grievously astray. After landing some unlucky wight in a bog a burst of merry laughter in the air generally informs the traveler who his guide has been. The only way to circumvent these airy sprites is to turn the coat inside out before venturing across a desolate expanse. That they have a certain command over the powers of nature is shown by their having the power to blind and bewilder the traveler by throwing a fog around him, so that he cannot trace his way.

The following account of their personal appearance is preserved in a tale told by old wives in the neighborhood of Lamorna beyond Penzance: An old woman called "Aunt Joan," when on a visit to a neighbor popularly supposed to be a white witch, rubs a little ointment she finds hidden under some fern upon one of her eyes, and the result is that when she opens her eyes "the places was full of sprites and spriggans. In all the folds of the nets and sails hanging from the beams troops of small people were cutting all sorts of capers, the little creatures were tossing up their heels, waving their feathered caps and fans as they launched up and down on the merest bits of sticks or green twigs. Numbers of them were swinging in the cobwebs that hung from the rafters, or riding the mice in and out through the holes in the thatch.

"I noted that all the little men were dressed in green, pinked out with red, and had feathered caps on their heads, high riding boots, with silver spurs on their heels; their ladies were all decked out in the grand old fashion, their gowns were of green velvet, with long trains, some looped up with silver chains and bells or tassels, others had their trains sweeping behind them as they walked in grand state up and down. They seemed to think there was nobody in the house but themselves, prancing about in their high-heeled shoes, sparkling with diamond buckles. The little women all wore high-crowned steeple hats like mine, with wreaths of the most beautiful flowers of all colors around them, sprigs and garlands on all the other parts of their dress and in their hands as well, flitting their fans in the faces of the mer. They were the sauciest little mortals I ever did see. What puzzled me most was to see so many sweet flowers with them at that time of the year. . . . I spied some ugly spriggans seated in the dark corner looking very gloomy, because they are doomed to guard the treasures and do irksome things the merry small people are free from. . . . A troop of the small people entered, playing such sweet strains on the pipes, flutes and other instruments they had made with green reeds of the brook and shells of the shore."

Then follows an account of how the fairy band approached the old dame Chenance (the white witch) and cast bunches of the herbs into her apron, with which she made the healing slaves and lotions. As soon as these fairies retired others came forward, bearing in their hands unopened flowers of the foxglove from which they poured magic dyes, which no sooner touched her dress than it was changed into velvet; others laid silver cord on the quiltings of the petticoat, and decked the old dame out in all manner and variety of flowers. The house is covered with marvelous tapestries, and the old dame so transformed with her fairy attire that Aunt Joan gets frightened and hobbles off, but on glancing back with her unannointed eyes sees Dame Chenance in her ordinary clothes sewing; but on looking with the annointed eye the fairy scene is again revealed.

Another story relates how a man, cutting furze on the heath, finds among the bushes a tiny figure asleep. He was no bigger than a cat and dressed in a green coat, sky-blue breeches and diamond-buckled shoes. Uncle Billy takes him home to his children, who make great friends with him, and call him Bobby Griglans (griglans is old Cornish for heath). He is a gay little creature, who sings and dances for hours together, with a great abhorrence of dirt or dust. He only drinks milk and eats blackberries or hips and haws. They keep him a few days, but

among the furze one day Bobby and the children meet a little man and woman, the man dressed just as Bobby, only wearing riding boots with silver spurs. The little woman wore a green gown spangled all over with silver stars. Her little steeple-crowned hat was wreathed with heather, perched on her golden curls, and the pretty soul was wringing her hands a-crying, "Oh, my dear and tender Skillywidden, where ever canst 'a be gone to, my only joy?" "Now go's back," said Bobby to the children; "my dad and mam are come. Here I am, mammy." By the time he said "Here I am" the little man and woman and Skillywidden vanished and were never more seen. The children got a good thrashing for letting Skillywidden go, for if they had kept him he would have shown their daddy where crocks of gold are buried and they would all of them have been rich.

This allusion to the crock of gold must not serve to confound the fairies with the "Knackers," who are in reality gnomes and live underground, and have possession of gold and gems. Many a man in Cornwall at the present day will tell you with fear and trembling that he has heard the Knackers at work in the mines, and he knows misfortune awaits him. This class of being has no affinity with the fairies of Celtic fancy, but belongs to the demon and gnome traditions of Teutonic nations.

All things pass away; even our children now will scarcely deign to own belief in one of the purest fancies that ever entered human imaginations, and which in former days great poets deigned to treat as a by no means despicable belief. Fairies are wholesome diet for our babies' minds than anecdotes of great men and diluted history of human endeavors and failures. Let the children keep their fairies as long as possible, for fairy reverence means simple faith in goodness, and it does no harm for a child to see fairies in the cups of the flowers, even if he afterward has to learn all that can be learnt about vegetable tissues and coloring matter in solution.

The Toboggan.

Now that we have had one good snow storm, with plenty of sleighing and coasting, it is not unreasonable to hope we may have another. There is scarcely a boy in this country who has not enjoyed the fun to be obtained from a sled, and there are few who have not one of these most desirable playthings. But there is a contrivance well known in Canada, which in some respects is better than a sled. This is the toboggan. It is the Indian sled, invented by the Indians, who were forced to have some form of carrie which would ride on the crust of the snow. The toboggan is the companion to the snow shoe, and in its way is as perfect a means to an end.

The advantage of a toboggan when sliding for pleasure lies in the fact that no beaten snow is necessary. It is impossible to use a sled unless one can find a road or path which has been packed down, and coasting is, therefore, confined to places where there has been a good deal of travel. But the course of all others for the toboggan is the open hillside when there has been a good fall of snow, a slight thaw and a sharp frost to set the crust. Over this crust the toboggan fairly flies in its downward run.

To make a sled requires a carpenter and a blacksmith. To make a toboggan requires nothing but the wood, a jack plane and an ax, together with some rawhide thongs or some copper wire. The first thing to get is the wood for the bottom boards. If you want a toboggan seven feet long get a piece of tough spruce nine feet long, five inches wide and five inches thick. Be sure it is straight grained and without knots. Then with the ax start a split at one end one inch thick. By a careful use of wedges you can rive this off the whole length, when you will have a piece nine feet long, five inches wide and one inch thick. This can be split again into pieces half an inch thick, but it is better to dress it down with the jack plane. Prepare the other four pieces in the same way and reduce the width of each to four inches. Tie them all in place on the sides and let them "set" for a day.

The next work is to get out the cross bars. These are half circles in section, flat on one side, one inch and a-half wide and twenty-two inches long. They may be made of pine or any wood that is easily worked and you will need six of them.

Begin at the flat end of the slat, and two inches from the end lay down one of the cross bars at right angles to the slat. Mark each side with a pencil line. Along these lines make holes with an awl large enough to put the wire easily through. These holes on the two lines should not be opposite each other, but should have about three-quarters of an inch between them. On the under

side of the slat cut a shallow groove between the holes for the wire to lie in. Take some No. 10 copper wire, and after securing the end of the cross bar, lace the bar down to the slat with it. When one slat is laced carry the wire on to the next until you have laced all the slats to the cross bar, when make the wire fast. You must allow a quarter of an inch space between each two slats.

Measure eighteen inches along the slat and put on another cross bar. Then another at the same distance. When you have put on five you will find the last one laces to the slats on the inside of the curved up ends. Now take the sixth cross bar and lace it on top of the curved tips of the slats.

The next thing to do is to provide yourself with two rods of some tough wood, about seven and a half feet long and from three-quarters to one inch in diameter. One of these is laid along on the ends of the cross bars and laced down to each with cord or wire. The other is put on the other side of the toboggan, and the two serve as hand rails. Now take some cord and fasten to the end of the sixth cross bar. Bring it down, under the side rod and back to the fourth cross bar, carry it back and forward until you have a good secure lashing. Do the same on the other side and the bent end of the toboggan is securely in place. Then fasten the towing line to the side rails back of the fourth cross bar and the toboggan is complete.

It is amazing what rough usage these things will stand and how you can hang them about. They are the best of all sleds for camping and far better than ordinary sleds for rough work on hill sides or in the field, as they slide over the snow and do not cut into it. They cost the merest trifle for if you can get rawhide to cut into thongs you do not even need to buy wire. Any boy who can use an ax, wedge and jack plane can make one.

Of course you can ornament them in any fashion you please with paint or gold and silver leaf, and as they are very graceful things they always look pretty.

A Hindu Girl.

A Hindu baby girl is an unwelcome addition to the family; her birth is supposed to be no blessing, but a curse and a sign of divine wrath. Rukhmabai says that when the new-born baby is a girl "the father gnashes his teeth and stamps his feet. The mother is sorely disappointed, and although her tenderness may bring its sure wealth of love, she curses both herself and the child. There is, moreover, a notion that women who bear only girls are sinful, and this intensifies the grief." Another Hindu woman gives the same testimony. Ramabai (high caste Hindu widow) says that in no country in the world is a mother so laden with care and anxiety in anticipation of the birth of a child as in India. All her hope of happiness depends upon the sex of the unborn child. A wife who bears daughters and no sons is frequently put away by her husband; husbands sometimes threaten their wives that, if the coming child is a daughter, the offending mother will be henceforth banished from the society of her lord and master; a new wife will be installed in her place and the offending wife will be made into the servant and drudge of the household. Ramabai does not merely make general statements to this effect, but gives several special instances that have come within her own knowledge, among her own friends and acquaintances, of this punishment having been meted out to mothers who gave birth to girls. Mothers try to avert the bad luck of having a daughter by superstitious ceremonies previous to the birth of the child.

Soda as a Sugar Saver.

Have you ever stood despairingly before a crock of stewed cranberries, gooseberries, rhubarb, dried plums—or, worse than all, prunellas—throwing in sugar, tasting, puckering your face and throwing in more, glancing dubiously meanwhile at the lowering of the sugar in your "dollar's worth" can? I remember well my grandmother's rule for sweetening pie plant pies. It was this: "Put in all the sugar your conscience will allow, then shut your eyes and throw in a double handful." Her pies were excellent, but the rule was expensive. Here is a cheaper one: When sweetening extremely acid fruits like the above stir in a little soda before adding the sugar. Experience will guide you as to the quantity you may safely use without injuring the flavor of the fruit, but, as a general rule, I think a half a teaspoonful of soda to a quart of fruit may be easily borne.

Never speak ill of anybody: you can do just as much execution with a shrug of the shoulders or a significant look.

Spring Smiles.

Are women born contrary, or is it acquired.

A man never gets so poor that he can't borrow trouble without security.

"Papa, what is a fad?" "A fad, my son, is somebody else's peculiarity."

Complaint is made that the choir sings out of tune. They should wear tunics.

Marriages are called "matches" because they are sometimes followed by scratching.

A boat is a funny thing, and so polite too. It never goes before the public without a bow.

Let's wife originated, "Looking Backward" thousands of years before Bellamy was born.

The habitual drinker is hardly an amusing spectacle, and yet he raises a good many smiles.

Experience has established the fact that lawsuits are more wearing on a man than any other.

A man who is crushed under a falling ceiling would not be apt to consider the situation sublime.

A fugitive poem is one that has escaped from its author after it has been out doing time in a scrap book.

Clara—"Oh, I have so much to say to you." Maude—"And I to you. Let's go to the opera to-night."

A woman who married a one-legged man says it doesn't take much to make her husband "hopping mad."

"I," said Blinks, "started life without a cent in my pocket." "And I," put in Hicks, "started in life without a pocket."

Hot water is said to be a sure cure for every complaint, but we never knew a man to feel any better because his wife kept him in it.

Sunday-School Teacher—"Now, little boys, what do you know about Goliath?" Freddy Fangle—"Please, ma'am, he was rocked to sleep."

He—"And you say we are too poor to marry; would you marry me if you were rich?" She—"No, but I would marry you if you were rich?"

Trembling Youth—"Madam, I love you to distraction; will you be my wife?" Girl of the Future—"You may leave your reference and call again."

Kicker—"Why do you keep Smythe in your store? He is no good as a clerk!" Merchant—"No, he would hardly do as the head of a department; but he is all right as a counter-irritant."

Caller—"Please, sir, the master, Deacon Skinfint, died last night and the missus wants to know if you will preside at the funeral?" Long-Suffering Pastor—"Yes," certainly, with pleasure."

Dolly—"So you've named the mare after me, Jack, you dear, silly boy?" Jack—"Yes rather; she's the fastest little thing in the country."

"Not this Eve, some other Eve," gallantly remarked Adam, when his good wife was accused of having mimicked the sacred apple.

Aunt Mary—"Now, Jennie, let me see whether you know your lesson. Tell me who first discovered whalebone?" "Jonah. I guess."

Rejected you? Why, I thought she had a great interest in you." "But then love isn't so much a matter of interest with her as capital."

The man who will complain that a twenty-minute sermon is too long will sit half a day watching a couple of chess players making two moves.

Children's Eating.

Some parents compel their children to eat against their will, as when they come to the breakfast table without an appetite, or have lost in prospect of a visit or a ride, or for the sake of "eating their plate clean" in discouragement of wasteful habits. Unless we are thirsty we cannot drink the purest spring water without aversion, and as for eating when there is no appetite it is revolting, as any one may prove to himself by attempting to take a second meal in twenty minutes after having eaten a regular dinner. The appetite, the hunger, is excited by the presence of gastric juice about the stomach; but if there is no gastric juice there can be no hunger, no appetite, and to compel a child to swallow food when it is distasteful is an absurdity and a cruelty.

The amount cleared at the Montreal clearing house in 1890 was \$473,984.06, against \$454,523,000 in 1889. Of the 61 cities and towns in Canada and the United States where there are clearing houses, Montreal stands twelfth.