

and implored to be excused from such a fearful commission, but Sargard was inexorable. That night Ug and the abbot went away together. The next day Ug returned alone. He said that the abbot had given him the slip. Sargard was furious, and censured Ug for his want of care and neglect; but this accusation was unjust, for Ug had buried the abbot with considerable carefulness. Sargard was dejected and unhappy, for in view of the abbot's return he had arranged a variety of interesting if painful experiments to be practised upon the abbot's body.

Osric's studious disposition caused him to delight in abstruse mathematical problems and arithmetical calculations. He was therefore admirably fitted for putting two and two together. The abbot's story, and his subsequent disappearance, led him at first to suspect Ug's veracity; and afterwards to ramble by moonlight in search of the mysterious monk and his fair companion. This was clear to him: either the abbot was false, or Ug knew of the monk's existence. Victims of the unknown beauty were ever before him, interfering considerably with his digestion and his study of the *De Gustibus*; so that, though the author was Alfred, his meaning was not half understood. His was a particularly susceptible time of life. His knowledge of young woman was obtained from the songs of peripatetic bards; but of course no very definite idea could be got from their wandering descriptions. Sargard had been so outrageous a marauder, and so unscrupulous a neighbor, that all the respectable families had removed, or been removed from that part of Mercia in which he settled. It was with an educational view therefore that Osric strode into the woods in search of the maiden; and perhaps it was his inquisitive mood that occasioned the curious sensation he felt in thinking of her.

It was the age of "old-fashioned summers." Clouds obscured the moon only on convenient occasions, and were never absent when required. Trees and plants were sustained by never-failing dew, which fell imperceptibly, and occasioned no rheumatics. The earth, thus not having to yield dew as at present, did not require moisture from above; and if it did rain, the showers were gentle, and fell when nobody was about. The sun at that time rose in the morning and set at night; so that the earth not being necessitated to revolve as now the disastrous effects of revolution were not felt in a meteorology turned entirely upside down. Therefore as Osric wended along his way, the moon stood in the blue heavens in unvelled loveliness, like Venus emerged from the sea. Over soft moss, smooth sward, and crisp heaths he trod, ever and again listening for the longed-for sound of sweet music. Sometimes he stood in the white moonlight, and sometimes in the chequered shade beneath the shining-leaved beech. Everywhere was stillness and silence. When he moved, his footstep scared the brooding thrush that flew across his path with sharp startled cry; or the night-feeling rabbit scurried away to its burrow. Once a tinkling sound caught his ear, and he rushed forwards, to find his hopes dashed even by the loveliness of a prickling brook. Hour after hour he spent wandering, waiting; still listening in the woods. Now he was come to a break in the forest, and between him and the open space stood a patch of tall fox-gloves. The moon was sinking over the wood behind him. In the heavens he faced, a few orange streaks in the paler blue told of the sun's coming. Still silent were the sylvan songsters. Osric leant against a tree in the deep shadow, to hear their joyful awakening. Hark! was that a distant lark? No; never sang lark with that continued sweetness. Nearer, sweeter, clearer, more ravishing became the song; and Osric's hand, folded against his breast, felt his heart beating beneath it. The moon shone fully on the wood opposite. Presently there issued thence the dark figure of a hooded monk; and clinging to his side a slim figure, clad all in white. Nearer and nearer they came, sweeter and sweeter grew the song. Osric gazed only at the fair incarnation of his dream, as she approached him. Still nearer and nearer they came, till he could have thrown himself at her feet, as she passed still singing towards an alley in the wood. He could see the sweet lips parted in that rapturous song, and the small teeth within them; he could see the great lovely eyes looking upwards to the heaven they mirrored; he could see what of her neck the envious golden tresses left unpressed. He could see her graceful breast rising beneath the melody it held; and then she was gone. But long, long the song lingered, growing fainter and fainter, till it died. Whilst he listened he was conscious of nothing else; but that gone, he found tears of exquisite emotion rolling down his cheeks; and believed what he had seen to be a vision, because he had not the power to follow it. Now had the orange streaks become pink; and from many a bush and branch loud sang the awakened birds. Ah! she, that dearest creation he had seen, was the goddess who awakens the birds; the wood nymph, the fairy, the spirit-angel he had read of; and here at her bidding the sun rose, and birds sweetly sang to her glory.

After that for many nights Osric wandered in the woods; yet found nothing to prove he had not dreamed. Almost he convinced himself that too much *De Gustibus* had disordered his brain, and that the singing night wanderer was

"Nowe lysten friendys to my merrie clenche!  
This Osric colde for thynkyng on this wenche  
Get nothing of his bokes intoe hys hedde,  
Nathless ye auctor of hem was Half-redde."  
*Chronicle of Ug.*

a phantom of his imagination. One night, as he was resting on a fallen trunk, a murmur as of distant song reached him. He sprang up and ran to the spot whence the notes appeared to come; and staying occasionally, he heard the sound increase, until the same sweet song he had before heard came in rich fullness upon him. It seemed as if a few steps more would bring him within sight of the lovely nymph. Carefully now he stepped forwards, lest his footfall might disturb her, and break off her melody. But now at each step the notes grew fainter and fainter still. Then he leapt recklessly onwards for a dozen yards. When he paused, he heard as afar off a faint tinkling mocking laugh; and the birds awoke, and he alone amongst them stood in despair and sorrow. He did not, as young men in more civilised times do, seek to forget his troubles by a systematic course of study, or drink. He indulged himself in perpetual thought of the lovely unknown; wandering by night, and lying on his bed in restless cogitation by day. A third time he heard the voice, and this time he saw the maiden. She stood within an arm's length of him, and she was holding a tiny campanula between her eyes and the moon, better to see its delicate outline. The moonlight in her eyes sparkled as in dew-drops. She was alone, and saw him not until he threw himself upon his knees at her feet, clasping his hands in silent devotion. She did not vanish, but proved her mortality by screaming; but before Osric could assure her of the honorable character of his intentions, he felt himself raised in the air and thrown on one side. As he rose to his feet, he saw the hooded monk standing between him and the maiden. The monk turned his back on Osric, and took the little maid in his arms, and there she nestled. Now Osric felt another emotion; and jealousy and hatred towards the monk filled him with rage. He drew his sword, and called upon the monk to defend himself; the monk faced him, and a shining knife was in his hand. Was it to save Osric or the monk that the maiden sprang between them, fearlessly turning her breast to the monk's knife? Osric hoped and feared equally; but he lowered the point of his sword and bowed his head. Had the monk's knife been at his throat, he could not have moved then. The monk took the girl by the hand, and spoke softly to her; obedient she moved away into the forest shade, but to the last her lovely eyes rested on the entranced Osric.

Gone, gone, gone for ever! The thought flashed through Osric's mind, and its dreadfulness dismayed him. He threw his sword away and sped after her; but scarce two paces had he gone, when a grip was on his arm, and the monk led him back, picked up his sword, and handing it to him, spoke thus: "Thou art young, live; thou art brave, take thy sword. If thou art kind, leave me in peace. Go."

"Who has given thee a right to such a treasure as she? She is too young and too beautiful for thee and night. I will find her, and raise her to all the glories thou keepest her from. And thou shalt fall to deeper shades than these. Get thee a sword and protect thyself!"

The monk laughed derisively, and said, "Do thy best and worst, poor lad."

Then they fought; but the monk used his knife only in defence against Osric's sword, and when Osric's rash play brought his body in contact with the knife's point, his foe drew back, and the blade remained bright. But slowly the monk retreated towards the deeper shadow behind him; and upon him closely pressed Osric, vainly seeking to disable him. At last, when they were beneath the dark shade, Osric believed his blade smote the head of his antagonist, who at that very instant entirely disappeared, and a voice, that seemed to proceed from the very bowels of the earth, cried warningly, "Step no farther!" The singular manner in which the monk had fought, his sudden disappearance, together with the voice from the earth, combined to convince Osric of the supernatural character of these wood wanderers, and for a moment he obeyed the warning injunction, and stood trembling and stationary. Then the thought of her he had lost and his rival banished all else from his mind, and he sprang to the spot where the monk had stood. Headlong he fell through the deceptive growth which masked the precipice, and very surely would he have broken his neck, but for an outstretched tree-bough that, breaking his fall and a rib, slid him gently into a yielding bed of brambles. Whilst he extricated himself from this position, he had ample time to undeceive himself of any belief that lingered with respect to the visionary nature of the transactions, and to find an explanation of the subterranean voice. Yet why the monk should be so carefully merciful remained an insoluble mystery. When morning came, and things were still more discernible, he found blood upon his tunic, yet no wound upon his body. But that mystery was also unravelled. For upon unfastening the girdle that bound his tunic (preparatory to throwing himself upon his bed), something fell from it upon the ground; he stooped, and picked up—an ear. Clapping his hands to his head, he found he had still his

"On manne in dole hys sorroes multiplies,  
Ande syts in ashes and sacke-clothe lyk-  
wyse;

Another manne cares nothinge for hys  
backe,  
But bloweth out hys baggyes with ye sacke;  
By chockpennie ande other rythsome plaie  
To lose hire dol'ors other wyghts essae,  
Ande of hys kyndne Osric was: he laie  
Pythynge and toseyng on hys bedde alle  
dale."

*Chronicle of Ug.*

proper adornment; so he was satisfied—very satisfied—that the ear was not his, and equally that his last blow had taken effect upon the monk. Here also was a convincing proof of the reality of what he had seen; and this proof, for which he had been so long waiting, determined him upon making Ug assist him in his farther search. That very morning he went to Ug's hut. The ranger was absent, and Osric laid a fir cocoon upon the ground in the place where he slept, for this was the customary signal when Ug was wanted at the hall. No notice was taken of the signal, so Osric again went to the hut. The cocoon was moved, but Ug was absent. This time Osric piled up a heap of cocoons, that the signal might not escape notice.

That day, whilst Sargard with Osric and the vassals were dining, the hangings against the door were pushed aside, and the burly ranger stood within the hall.

"Who wants Ug?" he asked.

Osric rose, and beckoning to the ranger, withdrew into the recess of a window. Sargard took no notice of this arrangement; for frequently Osric would have Ug to the hall and talk privily with him. A strong friendship existed between them. Osric was still a very young man; and very young men then were very much as very young men now are. He was very well satisfied with himself. He had attained to the first resting bough up the tree of knowledge, and desisted all humanity to swarm up after him, no matter how unfitted for climbing some amongst them might be, or how much happier they would be to sit on the safe soil of comfortable ignorance. Herein is the Christian superior to the Pagan. He had tried to teach Ug the multiplication table and decency in small clothes. He had also read to him several poems of his own composition. These latter Ug had listened to eagerly, and with infinite patience and perseverance had learned them. With each acquisition his love increased, and but for the multiplication and small clothes (with either of which he would have nothing to do), he would have had entire confidence in Osric, and worshipped him as one all good. True, Osric lately had been less persistent in harping upon the objectionable strings; for the ranger's attention to the poetry was very flattering to the composer, and in that age, barbarous as it was, men generally did that which was most remunerative to their interest or vanity. Still he felt it his duty occasionally to refer to the more strictly educational subject, and he did so, very much to Ug's discomfort. He learnt from Osric's instruction only this: Osric knew more than it became man to know; therefore, he was not to be trusted wholly. Perhaps it was this that made him approach Osric uneasily. He nervously tried to parry the subject.

"Tell me more tales of maids and men," he said. "Or wouldst thou rather that I tell thee of the wood creatures that run and crawl and fly, and of their habits?"

"Tell me," said Osric, "of the hooded monk and the fair maid who wander in your woods."

Just then, Sargard, who thought that rather than to die of ennui, it would be better to listen to what Osric and the ranger were talking about, crept behind them, menacing his vassal to silence with an expressive flourish of his carving knife.

"I know not of this monk. Have I not said so before?" said Ug.

"Thou knowest every part of the forest. All and every night thou wanderest through its depths. Nothing occurs of which thou knowest not. No sound is there that is strange to thee, yet the sweet song of a fair maid and the presence of a monk—"

(To be concluded in our next.)

#### CUSTOMS OF MADAGASCAR.

The form of government in Madagascar was, and we may say is, patriarchal. The unit, or simple element, is the family; and just as the father is the ruler of his children and dependants, so in a village the head man, along with the elders or old men, exercised the duties of magistrates. The king, again, was the great father of his subjects; and to the present day the sovereign is addressed as the father and mother of the people; and he in turn, reversing the compliment, speaks of the people as his father and mother. Thus, when the present Queen of Madagascar was crowned, addressing the people, she said, "O ye under heaven here assembled, I have father and mother, having you; therefore may you live, and may God bless you." Then, referring to the judges and officers, and explaining their relation to the people, she said, "I have made them fathers of the people, and leaders to teach them wisdom." The Malagasy are firm believers in the doctrine of divine right. The sovereign is, in their eyes, in every truth God's vicergerent. Indeed, until within the few past years, it was customary to salute him as God; or God seen by the eye. The late Queen Rasoaheary was the first who forbade these blasphemous appellations. The very belongings of the sovereign are treated with respect. It is no uncommon thing, while being carried about the streets, for your bearers suddenly to run off to some side path to be out of the way. On looking for the cause of this, it will be found that a small procession is passing along, consisting of a forerunner with a spear, who duly shouts out to the passengers to "Clear the way!" Behind are two or four men, it may be, carrying water-pots filled with water for royal use, and followed again by an officer armed with a spear. The summons to get out of the way is obeyed by a rush to the side of the road, and the passers-by stand uncovered until the pro-

cession has passed. This is to prevent the water, or whatever else it may be, being bewitched. The queen and some of the higher members of the royal family who have principalities in distant parts of the country, in addition to a good many other feudal rights, which I have got no time to mention, are entitled to the rump of every bullock killed in the island. The actual rump is conveyed to officers appointed to receive it. This is a custom curious to all, and is deeply interesting to the student of antiquities. Why, the very name anatomists give this part is suggestive. It is called the *sacrum*, or sacred part,—the part devoted to the gods in Greece and Rome. But tracing this up to a higher source, we find that, in the Levitical law, this part was specially directed to be offered up to the Lord. Thus we read in the third chapter of Leviticus:—"And if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering unto the Lord be of the flock, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish. If he offer a lamb for his offering, then shall he offer it before the Lord. And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron's sons shall sprinkle the blood thereof about upon the altar. And he shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace offering, an offering made by fire unto the Lord: the fat thereof, and the whole rump, it shall be taken off hard by the backbone; and the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards. . . . And the priest shall burn it upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire unto the Lord" (ver. 6.11). We may just mention, also, that the same part of the fowl is usually given by children or servants to their fathers, or superiors. When the queen goes abroad she is attended by above a thousand soldiers, and a great number of camp attendants. She is carried in a palanquin, as the roads are too bad to allow carriages to be employed. When a carriage which had been presented to Radama I. was carried up to the capital, he seated himself in it; and, instead of being drawn in it by his faithful subjects, they lifted it, wheels and all, and he had the satisfaction of enjoying a carriage drive after a fashion altogether novel. The palanquin is preceded by attendants dancing, shouting, and singing, with music.—*Sunday Magazine.*

#### A WELSH LEGEND: OWAIN AND THE FAIRIES.

Owain and Dafydd were on their way to the harvest field one evening, to resume the task of gathering in the corn—a duty rendered urgent by the need of making the best of the harvest moon, then at its brightest. They took food with them for their evening meal.

"Boy," said Owain to his companion, "would it not be well that I should run to Cemaes at supper-time, to get my shoes from the cobbler? Our master is not likely to come to us to-night; and even if he should, I can get back in time to resume work after supper."

"Yes, you can easily do that," was the answer.

Super-time having come, Owain put his bread and cheese in his pocket, and started on his errand. After going some distance he perceived close to his path a circle of little men and women, some of grotesque, and all of playful aspect. At the sight he was of course greatly frightened; but, after pausing a moment to recover breath, he summoned courage to approach them, and on doing so saw a little woman of rare beauty in the midst of the group. She was so surpassingly fair that honest Owain was quite smitten by her charms. Seeing his attention fixed on herself, she ran from among the fairy crowd, and, clasping her soft arms round his neck, invited him to join them; to which he joyfully assented, for his fears had now left him, and he thought only of this, the loveliest creature of her sex he had ever seen. Long was the time he spent in company of his new friends—company so delightful that he forgot the lapse of time. But at last, remembering his duty, and fearing that Dafydd might need his help, or that his employer might come to the field and discover his absence, he unwillingly returned without going to Cemaes. When he reached the field the scene was wholly changed. His fellow-servant was not there. The field was a pasture in which cattle were quietly grazing. While wondering at this, a keen sense of hunger came over him. Putting his hand into his pocket for the food he had brought, he found it hard as a stone. On going to the farmhouse, he found there, not his master's household, but strangers, to whom he was as unknown, as they to him. Utterly bewildered, he started to look for a lodging at the house of some neighbors, and on his way met one whose appearance seemed in some way familiar. They both hesitated a moment, until Owain asked—

"Are you Dafydd?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"But who are you? Surely not Owain?"

"Yes, I am Owain."

"Why, where did you go to that evening?"

"Take me home with you, and I'll tell you. How long is that ago?"

"Well," rejoined Dafydd, "let me see—I have been married fifteen years, and you went away five years before that."

"What became of my shoes?"

"The shoemaker kept them till we gave you up for lost, and then sold them."

They started for Dafydd's home together, Owain on the way telling Dafydd his experiences of twenty years with the fairies, and hearing of the many changes that had taken place while he was away.—*Once a Week.*