The Sources and Analogues of 'A Midsummer-night's Dream' eBook

The Sources and Analogues of 'A Midsummer-night's Dream'

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The sources and analogues
of
"A *midsummer-night's dream*"

A study such as the present one does not demand any elaborate investigation of the date or circumstances of the first production of the play, unless these throw light on the inquiry into its sources; but in any case it is always well to base a literary study on literary history. Here it will suffice to say shortly that *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, first published in 1600, must have been acted before or during 1598, as it is definitely mentioned in Mores' *Palladic Tamia* of that year. A more exact determination of its date can only be derived from the internal evidence supplied by allusions in the text or by metrical and general style. Such allusions as have been discovered—for example, that reference to "the death of learning," V. i. 52-3—form here as elsewhere a battle-ground for critics of all sorts, but do not really assist us to an answer. More trustworthy testimony, however, is afforded by the general character of the play, and by Shakespeare's handling of his material; these considerations, combined with whatever other evidence is available, have caused the play to be assigned to the winter of 1594-5. So placed, it is the latest of the early comedies of Shakespeare, who makes an advance on *The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* but has not yet attained the firmness of hand which fills the canvas of *The Merchant of Venice* with so many well-delineated figures. Once arrived at this conclusion, we need not let ourselves again be led away into vagueness or critical polemics by an attempt to find any aristocratic wedding which this masque-like play seems designed to celebrate; such theorising, however interesting in other ways, does not concern and will not avail us now.

It is none the less of value to recognise at the outset that *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is more of a masque than a drama—an entertainment rather than a play. The characters are mostly puppets, and scarcely any except Bottom has the least psychological interest for the reader. Probability is thrown to the winds; anachronism is rampant; classical figures are mixed with fairies and sixteenth-century Warwickshire peasants. The main plot is sentimental, the secondary plot is sheer buffoonery; while the story; of Titania's jealousy and Oberon's method of curing it can scarcely be dignified by the title of plot at all. The threads which bind together these three tales, however ingeniously fastened, are fragile. The Spirit of Mischief puts a happy end to the differences of the four lovers, and by his transformation of Bottom reconciles the fairy King and Queen, while he incidentally goes near to spoiling the performance of the "crew of patches" at the nuptials of Theseus by preventing due rehearsal

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of their interlude. It is perhaps a permissible fancy to convert Theseus' words "the lunatic, the lover, and the poet," to illustrate the triple appeal made by the three ingredients the grotesque, the sentimental, and the fantastic. Each part, of course, is coloured by the poet's genius, and the whole is devoted to the comic aspect of love, its eternal youth and endless caprice, laughing at laws, and laughed at by the secure. "What fools these mortals be!" is the comment of the immortal; the corollary, left unspoken by those outside the pale, being "What fools these lovers be!"

The sources from which Shakespeare drew the plots of his three dozen of plays are for the most part easily recognisable; and although in each case the material was altered to suit his requirements—*nihil tetigit quod non ornavit*—there is as a rule very little doubt as to the derivation. We can say with certainty that these nine plays were made out of stories from Boccaccio, Masuccio, Bandello, Ser Giovanni, Straparola, Cinthio or Belleforest; that those six were based on older plays, and another half-dozen drawn from Holinshed; that Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, Sidney, Greene, and Lodge provided other plots; and so forth, until we are left with *The Tempest*, founded in part on an actual contemporary event, *Love's Labour's Lost*, apparently his only original plot—if indeed it deserve the name—and finally our present subject *A Midsummer-Nights Dream*.

The problem—given the play—is to discover what parts of it Shakespeare conveyed from elsewhere, and to investigate those sources as far as is compatible with the limits of this book. For this purpose, it is most convenient to adopt the above-mentioned division into three component plots or tales; and because these are rather loosely woven together, the characters in the play may be simultaneously divided thus:—

1. Theseus. The main (sentimental) plot of the four
   Hippolyta. lovers at the court of Theseus.
   Egeus.
   Philostrate.
   Lysander.
   Demetrius.
   Helena.
   Hermia.

2. Bottom. The grotesque plot, with the interlude
   Quince. of *Pyramus and Thisbe*.
   Snug.
   Flute.
   Snout.
   Starveling.

3. Oberon. The fairy plot.
   Titania.
   Puck.
   Fairies.

It may be observed that for these three plots Shakespeare draws respectively on literature, observation, and oral tradition; for we shall see, I think, that while there can be little doubt that he had been reading Chaucer, North's Plutarch and Golding's Ovid, not to mention other works, probably including some which are now lost, it is also impossible to avoid the conclusion that much if not all of his fairy-lore is derived from no literary source at all, but from the popular beliefs which must have been current in oral tradition in his youth.

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Sec. 1. THE MAIN (SENTIMENTAL) PLOT OF
THE FOUR LOVERS AND THE COURT OF THESEUS

“And out of olde bokes, in good feith,
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.”
Chaucer.

* * * *

I

As the play opens with speeches of Theseus and Hippolyta, it is convenient to treat first of these two characters. Mr. E.K. Chambers has collected (in Appendix D to his edition) nine passages from North’s Plutarch’s *Life of Theseus*, of which Shakespeare appears to have made direct use. For example, Oberon’s references to “Perigenia,” “Aegles,” “Ariadne and Antiopa” (II. i. 79-80) are doubtless derived from North; and certainly the reference by Theseus to his “kinsman Hercules” (V. i. 47) is based on the following passage:—

... “they were near kinsmen, being cousins removed by the mother’s side. For Aethra was the daughter of Pittheus, and Alcmena (the mother of Hercules) was the daughter of Lysidice, the which was half-sister to Pittheus, both children of Pelops and of his wife Hippodamia.”

In modern phraseology, Theseus and Hercules were thus second cousins.

Of the Amazon queen North says:—

“Touching the voyage he [Theseus] made by the sea Maior, Philochorus, and some other hold opinion, that he went thither with Hercules against the Amazons, and that to honour his valiantness, Hercules gave him Antiopa the Amazon. But the more part of the other Historiographers ... do write, that Theseus went thither alone, after Hercules’ voyage, and that he took this Amazon prisoner, which is likeliest to be true.”

At this point we should interpolate the reason why Hercules went against the Amazons. The ninth (as usually enumerated) of the twelve labours of Hercules was to fetch away the girdle of the queen of the Amazons, a gift from her father Ares, the god of fighting. Admete, the daughter of Eurystheus (at whose bidding the twelve labours were performed) desired this girdle, and Hercules was sent by her father to carry it off by force. The queen of the Amazons was Hippolyta, and she had a sister named Antiopa. One story says that Hercules slew Hippolyta; another that Hippolyta was enticed on board his ship by Theseus; a third, as we have seen, that Theseus married Antiopa. It

is not easy to choose incidents from these conflicting accounts so as to make a reasonable sequence; but, as North says, “we are not to marvel, if the history of things so ancient, be found so diversely written.” Shakespeare simply states that Theseus “woo’d” Hippolyta “with his sword.” Later in the play we learn that the fairy King and Queen not only are acquainted with court-scandal, but are each involved with the past histories of Theseus and Hippolyta (II. i. 70-80).

Apart from these incidents in Theseus’ life, Chaucer supplies the dramatist with all he requires in the opening of *The Knightes Tale*, which we shall discuss in full shortly.[1]

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"Whylom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duke that highte[2] Theseus;
Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne;
What with his wisdom and his chivalrye,
He conquered al the regne[3] of Femenye,
That whylom was y-cleped[4] Scithia;
And weddede the quene Ipolita,
And broghte hir hoom with him in his contree
With muchel glorie and greet solempnitee,
And eek hir yonge suster Emelye.
And thus with victorie and with melodye
Lete I this noble duke to Athenes ryde,
And al his hoost, in armes, him besyde.
And certes, if it nere[5] to long to here,
I wolde han told yow fully the manere,
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
By Theseus, and by his chivalrye;
And of the grete bataille for the nones
Betwixen Athenes and Amazones,
And how asseged[6] was Ipolita,
The faire hardy quene of Scithia ..."

Egeus, whom Shakespeare makes a courtier of Theseus and father to Hermia, is in the classical legend Aegeus, father of Theseus; both Plutarch and Chaucer so mention him.

The name of Philostrate also comes from Chaucer, where, as we shall see, it is the name adopted by Arcite when he returns to court in disguise, to become first "page of the chamber" to Emelye, and thereafter chief squire to Theseus. It is in this latter capacity that Chaucer's "Philostrate" is nearest to Shakespeare's character, the Master of the Revels.

Of the four lovers, the names of Lysander, Demetrius, and Helena, are of course classical; Shakespeare would find lives of Lysander and Demetrius in North's Plutarch. The name of Hermia, who corresponds with Emilia or Emily of *The Knightes Tale*, as being the lady on whom the affections of the two young men are set, may have been taken from the legend of Aristotle and Hermia, referred to more than once by Greene. The name cannot be called classical, and appears to be a mistranslation of Hermias.[7]

The story of Palamon and Arcite has not been traced beyond Boccaccio, that fountain of romance, though he himself says the tale of "Palemone and Arcita" is "una antichissima storia." Possibly the story was taken, as much of Boccaccio's writing must have been

taken, from tradition. Palaemon is a classical name,[8] and Arcite might be a corruption of Archytas. Boccaccio's *Teseide* (the story of Theseus) which was written about 1344, and may have been first issued wholly or in part under the title of *Amazonide*, is a poem in the vernacular consisting of twelve books and ten thousand lines in *ottava rima*.[9]

Chaucer, in the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* (which is presumably earlier than the *Canterbury Tales*) states that he had already written

" ... al the love of Palamon and Arcyte
Of Thebes, thogh the story is knowen lyte.[10]"

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Skeat says “some scraps are preserved in other poems” of Chaucer; he instances (i) ten stanzas from this *Palamon and Arcite* in a minor poem *Anelida and Arcite*, where Chaucer refers to Statius, *Thebais*, xii. 519;[11] (ii) three stanzas in *Trolius and Crheyde*; and (iii) six stanzas in *The Parlement of Foules*, where the description of the Temple of Love is borrowed almost word for word from Boccaccio’s *Teseide*.[12] Finally, Chaucer used *Palamon and Arcite* as the basis of *The Knightes Tale*. By this time, while he retains what folk-lorists call the “story-radical,” he has reduced Boccaccio’s epic to less than a quarter of its length, and improved it in details. It stands as the first of *The Canterbury Tales*.

ANALYSTS OF CHAUCER’S *KNIGHTES TALE*

Old stories relate that once there was a Duke Theseus, lord of Athens, a conqueror of many lands. His latest conquest was “Femenye” (once called Scythia), whose queen Hippolyta he wedded and brought home, accompanied by her young sister Emilia. Now as he drew near to Athens, a company of ladies met him in the way, and laid before him their complaint, to the effect that, their husbands having fallen at the siege of Thebes, Creon the tyrant of Thebes would not let the bodies be buried or burned, but cast them on a heap and suffered the dogs to eat them. Duke Theseus, having sworn to avenge this wrong, sent Hippolyta and Emilia to Athens, and rode to Thebes, where in full battle he fought and slew Creon, and razed the city. The due obsequies were then performed. [13]

Amongst the slain were found, half-dead, two young knights named Palamon and Arcite, whom the heralds recognised, from the cognisances on their armour, as of blood-royal, and born of two sisters. Theseus sent them to Athens to be held to ransom in prison perpetually, and himself returned home in triumph.

So years and days passed, and Palamon and Arcite dwelt in durance in a tower; till on a morrow of May it befel that the fair and fresh Emilia arose to do observance to May, and walked in the garden, gathering flowers and singing. Now in a high chamber of the tower, which adjoined the garden-wall, Palamon by leave of his gaoler was pacing to and fro and bewailing his lot, when he cast his eyes through the thick-barred window, and beheld Emilia in the garden below; whereat he blenched, and cried out as though struck to the heart. Arcite heard him, and, asking him why he so cried out, bade him suffer imprisonment in patience; but Palamon replied that the cause of his crying out was the beauty of the lady in the garden. Thereupon Arcite spied out of the window at Emilia, and was so struck by her fairness

> “That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
> Arcite is hurt as muche as he, or more.”

So strife began between the two. Palamon said it were small honour for Arcite to be false to his cousin and sworn brother, since each had taken an oath not to hinder the

other in love; nay, as a knight Arcite was bound to help him in his amour. But Arcite replied that love knows no law; decrees of man are every day broken for love; moreover Palamon and he were prisoners, and were like two dogs fighting for a bone which meantime a kite bears away. Let each continue in his love, for in prison each must endure.

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Now a duke name Pirithous came to visit his friend Theseus; who being also a friend to Arcite begged Theseus to let him go free out of prison, which Theseus did. And Arcite was set free without ransom, but on condition that his life should be forfeit if he ever set foot again in any domain of Duke Theseus.

Yet now Arcite found himself in no better stead, being banished from the sight of his lady; and could even find it in his heart to envy Palamon, who might still blissfully abide in prison—nay, not in prison, in Paradise, where sometimes he might see her whom both loved. And on his part Palamon was jealous of Arcite, who might even now be calling together his kin in Thebes to make onslaught on Athens and win his lady Emilia.

"Yow loveres axe I now this questioun,
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?"

Now when Arcite had for a year or two endured this torment, he dreamed one night that the god Mercury appeared to him, and said to him, "To Athens shalt thou wend." Whereupon Arcite started up, and saw in the mirror that his sufferings had so changed him that he might live in Athens unknown. So he clad himself as a labourer, and went with one squire to Athens, and offered his service at the court, where for a year or two he was page of the chamber to Emilia, and passed under the name of Philostrate. And in the course of time he was so honoured that Theseus took notice of him, and made him squire of his own chamber, and maintained him nobly.

Meantime Palamon had lain seven years in prison, when it befel on the third day of May (as the old books that tell this story say) that, aided by a friend, he broke prison, having given his gaoler to drink of drugged wine, and so fled the city, and lay hid in a grove. Hither by chance came Arcite to do observance to May; and first Palamon heard him sing

"Wel-come be thou, faire fresshe May;
I hope that I som grene gete may,"

and thereafter fall into a study, as lovers will, lamenting his hard fate that he should be passing under a false name, and daily be slain by the eyes of Emilia. Whereat Palamon started up, and reproached him, and challenged him to fight; and Arcite answered him no less boldly, saying he would bring him arms and weapons on the morrow, as well as meat and drink and bedding for the night.

So on the morrow the two donned their harness, helping each other to arm, and then fell a-fighting, Palamon like a wild lion, and Arcite like a cruel tiger, till they were ankle-deep in blood.

On the same day rode forth Theseus with Hippolyta and Emilia to hunt the hart, and Theseus was aware of the two knights fighting. He spurred his steed between them,

and cried to them to hold their hands. And Palamon told him who they were, and why they fought. Theseus at first was angry, and condemned them both to death; but when the queen Hippolyta and Emilia and the ladies of their train pleaded for them, he relented,

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bethinking himself of what love is, for he himself had been a servant [lover] in his time; wherefore, at the request of the queen and Emilia, he forgave them, if they would swear to do his country no harm, and be his friends. And when they had sworn, he reasoned with them, that each was worthy to wed Emilia, but that both could not so do; therefore let each depart for a year, and gather to him a hundred knights, and then return to tourney in the lists for the hand of Emilia.

"Who loketh lightly now but Palamoun?
Who springeth up for joye but Arcite?"

And thanking him on their knees, they took their leave and rode away.

Royal were the lists which Theseus made, a mile in circuit, and walled with stone. Eastward and westward were marble gates, whereon were built temples of Venus and Mars, while in a turret on the north wall was a shrine of Diana goddess of chastity. And each temple was nobly carven and wrought with statues and pictures.

Now the day of the tourney approached, and Palamon and Arcite returned each with a hundred knights.

"To fighte for a lady, *ben'cite!*
It were a lusty sighte for to see."

Palamon brought with him Ligurge king of Thrace, and with Arcite was Emetreas, the king of India, each a giant in might. So on a Sunday they all came to the city.

And in the night, ere dawn, Palamon arose and went to the temple of Venus to pray that he might win Emilia for his wife; and, as it seemed, in answer to his prayer, the statue of Venus shook, and Palamon held it for a sign that the boon he asked was granted. Emilia meanwhile went to the temple of Diana, and prayed to the goddess, that she might remain a virgin, and that the hearts of Palamon and Arcite might be turned from her; or, if she needs must wed one of the twain, let him be the one that most desired her. To her appeared the goddess Diana, and told her that she must be wedded to one of the two, but she might not tell which that one should be.

And Arcite went to the temple of Mars, and prayed for victory; whereat the door of the temple clattered, and the fires blazed up on the altar, while the hauberk on the god's statue rang, and Arcite heard a murmur of "Victory." So rejoicing thereat he returned home

"As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne."

Thereafter in the heavens above strife began betwixt Mars and Venus, such that Jupiter himself was troubled to quell it; till Saturn (the father of Venus) comforted his daughter with assurance that Palamon should win his lady.

That day was high festival in Athens, and all Monday they justed and feasted, but went betimes to rest that they might rise early to see the great fight. And on the morrow there were lords and knights and squires, armourers, yeomen and commoners, and steeds and palfreys, on every hand, and all was ready.

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Now a herald proclaimed from a scaffold the will of Duke Theseus, decreeing the weapons with which the tourney should be fought, and the rules of the combat. Then with trumpets and music, Theseus and Hippolyta and Emilia in a noble procession took their places; and from the west gate under the temple of Mars came Arcite with a red banner, and from the east, under the temple of Venus, Palamon with a white banner. And the names of the two companies were recited, the heralds left pricking up and down, the trumpet and clarion sounded, and the just began. Sore was the fight, and many were wounded and by the duke's proclamation removed from the fight; and many a time fought Palamon and Arcite together. But everything must have an end; Emetreus gave Palamon a wound; and though Ligurge attempted his rescue, he was borne down; and though Emetreus was thrust from his saddle by Palamon, Palamon was wounded, and had to give up the combat and the hope of winning Emilia. And Theseus cried to them that the tourney was finished, and that Arcite should have the lady; whereat the rejoicing of the people was loud.

But in heaven Venus wept, so that her tears fell down into the lists; yet Saturn promised that her sorrow should be eased soon.

And in truth as Arcite rode in triumph down the lists, looking up at Emilia, Pluto, at the bidding of Saturn, sent from hell a fury, that started from the ground in front of Arcite's horse, which shied and threw his rider; and Arcite pitched on his head, and lay as though dead. They bore him to Theseus' palace, cut his harness from off him, and laid him in a bed.

Theseus for three days entertained the knights of the tourney, and then all of them went their several ways. But Arcite lay dying; no longer had Nature any power;

> "And certeinly, ther nature wol nat wirche,
> Far-wel, phisyk! go ber the man to chirche!"

On his deathbed he called Palamon and Emilia to his side, and bade farewell to his heart's queen, commending Palamon to her,

> "As in this world right now ne knowe I non
> So worthy to ben loved as Palamon
> That serveth yow, and wol don al his lyf.
> And if that ever ye shul ben a wyf,
> Forget nat Palamon, the gentil man."

And his speech failed him, and his strength went out of him: but he still kept his eyes fixed on his lady, and his last word was "Mercy, Emilye!"

Theseus gave Arcite a costly funeral, and built his funeral pyre in the grove where Palamon had heard him lament on the morning of May. And when by process of time

the grief and mourning for Arcite had ceased, Theseus sent for Palamon and Emilia; and with wise words bidding them be merry after woe, gave Emilia to Palamon, who wedded her, and they lived in bliss and in richness and in health.

"Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye.
And God save all this faire companye!"

Such is Chaucer's tale of Palamon and Arcite. It was dramatised before Shakespeare's day by Richard Edwardes in a play now lost. Possibly the play of "Palamon and Arcite" four times recorded—in for different spellings—by Henslowe in his *Diary*[14] is Edwardes' play, but as the latter was performed at Oxford before Queen Elizabeth as early as 1566, it is at least equally possible that Henslowe's play is another version.

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The complete Chaucerian form of the story of Palamon and Arcite is dramatised in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, a play to which Shakespeare undoubtedly[15] contributed. The changes made by the authors—Fletcher and Massinger or Shakespeare, or all three—are little more than such limitations as are demanded by dramatic form; for instance, the Kinsmen, when discovered fighting, are dismissed for a month to find three knights, instead of being given a year to find one hundred. Chaucer's hint, that Palamon was assisted to escape from prison by a friend, is developed by the dramatists to make the sub-plot of the gaoler's daughter. The character-drawing is far more subtle than the poet's; Chaucer leaves the reader's sympathies equally divided, despite the fact that he says plainly that Arcite was in the wrong, because he violated the compact of the two kinsmen to assist each other in love.

We must now consider what justification there is for believing that the main plot of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* was suggested by *The Knightes Tale*. Firstly, as has already been pointed out, the nuptials of Theseus form the beginning of both play and poem; though in the poem the actual ceremony has been performed, and it is his triumphant return to the city of Athens that is interrupted by the widows' appeal for justice; and in the play the action passes in the three or four days before the marriage. Secondly, the wedding-day is the first of May, and there are two references to that "observance of May"[16] which is given by Chaucer as the reason both for Emilia's walking in the garden and for Arcite's seeking of the grove where Palamon lay hid.[17] Thirdly, it can hardly be doubted that Shakespeare took the name of Philostrate from Chaucer; Egeus he would find also in North's Plutarch as the name of the father of Theseus; and it is possible that Chaucer's names for the champions, Ligurge and Emetreus, may have suggested Lysander and Demetrius. Finally, there are two or three minor indications; Lysander and Demetrius fight, or attempt to fight, for Helena, in the "wood near Athens," just as Palamon and Arcite fight for Emilia in the grove[18]; Theseus is a keen huntsman both in the poem and in the play[19]; and he refers[20] to his conquest of Thebes, which, as we have seen, is described in *The Knightes Tale*.

Apart from these details, I do not think Shakespeare is indebted to Chaucer. It is conceivable that the story of Palamon and Arcite affected, but did not supply, the plot of the four lovers in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*; but Shakespeare has added a second woman. This completion of the antithesis is characteristic of his early work; with a happy ending in view, the characters must fall into pairs, whereas with Palamon, Arcite, and Emilia, one of the men must be removed. There is nothing to prevent the supposition that Shakespeare was acquainted from boyhood with Chaucer's story—either in Chaucerian form or possibly in the shape of a chap-book—and that he constructed a first draft of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* quite early in his career as a playwright, subsequently laying it aside as unsatisfactory, and, in his declining years, collaborating with another or others to produce the play on that theme.

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Sec. 2. THE GROTESQUE PLOT: BOTTOM AND THE ASS'S HEAD: WITH THE INTERLUDE OF *PYRAMUS AND THISBE*

"But, for I am a man noght textuel,
I wol noght telle of textes never a del;
I wol go to my tale."—*Chaucer*.

* * * *

II

The second portion of our study will not detain us long, as there are no literary sources for the "rude mechanicals," and their interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe is derived from a well-known classical story. Shakespeare draws them from life, and from his own observation of Warwickshire rustics, as he drew the two Gobbos, Launce, Christopher Sly, and a host of minor characters. Doubtless he had met many of the crew of patches, perhaps beneath the roof of "Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot," where we may suppose him to have made merry with "Stephen Sly, and old John Naps of Greece, and Peter Turf, and Henry Pimpernell."

Bottom takes his name from the wooden reel or spool on which thread is wound; "bottom" simply meaning the base or foundation of the reel. The names of his comrades have no specific connection with the trades they ply; but "Starveling" is appropriate by tradition for a tailor—it takes seven tailors to make a man.

The episode of Bottom's "translation," or transformation into an ass, may have been suggested to Shakespeare by a passage in Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584)—a book with which he must have been acquainted, as we shall see in discussing the fairy-section of the play. Scot mentions the supposed power of witches to change men into animals, and quotes (in order to discredit) some recorded instances. Chief among these is the story[21] of an English sailor abroad, who got into the power of a witch and was transformed by her into an ass, so that when he attempted to rejoin his crew, he was beaten from the gangway with contempt. This will be found in the third chapter of Scot's fifth book: *Of a man turned into an asse, and returned againe into a man by one of Bodin's witches: S. Augustine's opinion thereof*. "Bodin" is Jean Bodin, who wrote a book *de Magorum Daemonomania* (1581; a French version was published in the previous year), and mentions this story (lib. 2, cap. vi.). According to Scot, Bodin takes the story "out of *M. Mal.* [*Malleus Maleficarum*], which tale was delivered to *Sprenger* by a knight of the Rhodes."

Scot mentions further the famous story of the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius[22]; a legend of the reappearance of one of the Popes, a hundred years after his death, with an ass's head; and gives a charm to put an ass's head on a man.[23]

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From these instances a literary origin for Bottom's transformation seems probable but Shakespeare may himself have fallen in with a survival of the witch-superstition Almost while writing these words I receive first-hand evidence that such a tradition is not yet extinct in Welford-on-Avon, a village, four miles from Stratford, with which Shakespeare must have been perfectly familiar. The witch, as usual, was an old woman, credited with the "evil eye" and the power of causing the death of cattle and farm-stock by "overlooking" them; and the native of Welford, from whom the story was communicated to me, would be prepared to produce eye-witnesses of various transformations of the old woman into some kind of animal—transformations effected not only at Welford, but even in the centre of Stratford on market-day!

Shakespeare had probably met with the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in more than one form. Golding's translation in 1575 of the story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*[24] is reprinted in this book[25]; Chaucer included the *Legend of Thisbe of Babylon* as the second story in the *Legend of Good Women*; and there appears to have been also "a boke intituled Perymus and Thesbye," for which the Stationers' Register record the granting of a license in 1562. There is, too, a poem on the subject by I. Thomson in Robinson's *Handeful of Pleasant Delites* (1584).

The *Historia de Piramo e Tisbe* was very early in print in Italy, and continued to be popular in chap-book form until the nineteenth century at least.

In his commentary on *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* in the larger Temple Shakespeare, Professor Gollancz points out the existence of a Pyramus and Thisbe play, discovered by him in a manuscript at the British Museum.[26] This MS. is a Cambridge commonplace book of about 1630, containing poems attributed to Ben Jonson, Sir Walter Raleigh and others, though the greater portion of the contents appear to be topical verses and epigrams unsigned. Amongst these is "Tragaedia miserrima Pyrami & Thisbes fata enuncians. Historia ex Publio Ovidio deprompta. Authore N.R." In the margins are written corresponding passages in Latin from Ovid, whose story it follows closely.

The play is in blank verse of a poor kind with occasional rhyming couplets. After a prologue begins "Actus Primus and ultimus"; there are only five scenes in all, and the whole is quite short. The characters consist of Iphidius, father of Pyramus; Labetrus, father of Thisbe; their children, the protagonists; their respective servants, Straton and Clitipho; and Casina, "ancilla" or handmaid to Thisbe. There is also "a raging liones from ye woods." The moral of the play, as stated by Iphidius, is that

> "the erraticall motions in children's actions
> Must to a regular form by parents be reduc'd."

These lines, and others in the play, would gain by being "reduc'd to a regular form."

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* * * * *

Sec. 3. THE FAIRY PLOT

Siecles charmants de feerie,
Vous avez pour moi mille attraits,
Que de fois dans le reverie,
Mon coeur vous donne de regrets.
Tout ne fut alors que mensonge aimable;
Tout n'est plus que realite;
Rien n'est si jolie que la fable,
Si triste que la verite!

* * * *

III

In *The Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Shakespeare presents a conception of fairy-land as original as that which owes its propagation to Perrault and the other French collectors of fairy-tales; its merits as a popular delineation of the fairy-world are proved by the fact that it has obtained the sanction and approval of tradition, passing almost at once into an accepted literary convention; so that even to-day it is not easy to shake off the inherited impression that the fairies are only what Shakespeare shows them to be. He did not, of course, invent them; he had doubtless both read of them and heard tales of them; but he invested them with a delicate and graceful fancy that has held the popular imagination ever since. Thanks to him, the modern English conception of the fairies is different from the conceptions prevalent in other countries, and infinitely more picturesque and pleasant.

As before, it will be convenient to deal first with the names of his characters.

Oberon is the English transliteration of the French Auberon in the romance of *Huon of Bordeaux*, and Auberon is probably merely the French counterpart of Alberich or Albrich, a dwarf occurring in the German *Nibelungenlied* and other works. Etymologically Alberich is composed of *alb* = elf and *rich* = king. The name Oberon appears first in English literature in Lord Berners' translation of *Huon of Bordeaux* (c. 1534), and afterwards in Spenser[27] and in Robert Greene's play *James IV*, which was acted in 1589.[28] But the king of the fairies in Chaucer[29] is Pluto, and the queen Proserpine.

Titania. Proserpine is the wife of Pluto (in Greek, form, Persephone, wife of Dis). In Elizabethan times, Campion's charming poem "Hark, all you ladies that do sleep"[30] keeps the name of "the fairy-queen Proserpina." Shakespeare appears to have taken the name Titania from Ovid,[31] who uses it as an epithet of Diana, as being the sister

of Sol or Helios, the Sun-god, a Titan. Scot, in his *Discovery of Witchcraft*,[32] gives Diana as one of the names of the "lady of the fairies"; and James I, in his *Demonology* (1597) refers to a "fourth kind of sprites, which by the Gentiles was called Diana and her wandering court, and amongst us called the Phairie."

Curiously enough in Shakespeare's most famous description of the Fairy Queen, she is called Queen Mab;[33] this is said to be of Celtic derivation. Mercutio's catalogue of Mab's attributes and functions corresponds closely with the description of Robin Goodfellow.

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Puck is strictly not a proper name; and in the quartos and folios of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Puck, Robin, and Robin Goodfellow are used indiscriminately. In no place in the text is he addressed as "Puck"; it is always "Robin"[34] (once[35] "Goodfellow" is added). In the last lines of the play he twice refers to himself as "*an* honest Puck" and "*the* Puck," [36] showing that the word is originally a substantive. Dr. J.A.H. Murray has very kindly allowed the slips of the *New English Dictionary* which contain notes for the article 'Puck' to be inspected; his treatment of the word will be awaited with much interest. The earliest and most important reference is to Prof. A.S. Napier's *Old English Glosses* (1900), 191, where in a list of glosses of the eleventh century to Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* occurs "larbula [i. e. larvula], *puca*." Prof. Napier notes that O.E. puca, "a goblin," whence N.E. *Puck*, is a well authenticated word. Dr. Bradley suggests that the source might be a British word, from which the Irish *puca* would be borrowed; this word *pooka*, as well as the allied *poker*, has already been treated in the *N.E.D. Puck*, *pouke*, we find in O.E. (Old English Miscellany, *E.E.T.S.*, 76), in Piers Plowman, and surviving in Spenser; but there are countless analogous forms: *puckle*, *pixy*, *pisgy*, in English, and perhaps (through Welsh) *bug*, the old word for *bugbear*, *bogy*, *bogle*, *etc*.; *puki* in Icelandic; *pickel* in German; and many more.[37]

We may note here the euphemistic tendency to call powerful spirits by propitiatory names. Just as the Greeks called the Furies "Eumenides," the benevolent ones, so is Robin called Good-fellow; the ballad of *Tam Lin*[38] refers to them as "gude neighbours"; the Gaels[39] term a fairy "a woman of peace"; and Professor Child points out the same fact in relation to the neo-Greek nereids.[40] Hence also "*sweet* puck."[41] The names of the four attendant fairies, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard-seed, are Shakespeare's invention, chosen perhaps to typify grace, lightness, speed, and smallness.

The *literary* sources on which Shakespeare, in writing of fairies, probably drew—or those, at least, on which he could have drawn—can be shortly stated. We have already mentioned Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584); this was no doubt the chief source of information regarding Puck or Robin Goodfellow, as well as of the fairies themselves. Shakespeare was doubtless also familiar with the treatment accorded to the fairy-world by Chaucer[42] and Spenser[43] and with the many tales of supernatural beings in romances like *Huon of Bordeaux* and others of the Arthurian cycle. There is also a black-letter tract concerning Robin Goodfellow,[44] but no one has yet proved that this pamphlet was in print before 1628, the date of the earliest surviving edition. Ultimately, however, this matters little, because the tract is evidently drawn largely from oral traditions about Robin, and so has a source common with that of much of Shakespeare's fairy-lore.

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Minor allusions, chiefly, to Robin Goodfellow, he may have met with in various works[45] published before the assumed date of the play; but these, again, add nothing which Shakespeare could not have learned just as well from the superstitions of his day. What these were, and how he handled them, we must now proceed to discuss.

In approaching a subject such as fairy-lore, it is necessary to prepare the mind of the reader to go back to days not merely pre-Christian but even pre-national. Our fairies can no more justly be called English than can our popular poetry. Folk-lore—the study of the traditional beliefs and customs of the common people—is a science invented centuries too late;[46] for lack of evidence, it is largely theoretical. But it teaches its students continually to look further afield, and to compare the tales, ballads, superstitions, rites, and mythologies of one country with those of another. The surprising results thus obtained must not make us think that one country has borrowed from another; we must throw our minds back to a common ancestry and common creeds. "The attempt to discriminate modern national characteristics in the older stratum of European folk-lore is not only idle but mischievous, because it is based upon the unscientific assumption that existing differences, which are the outcome of comparatively recent historical conditions, have always existed." These are the wise words of a sound folk-lorist,[47] and should be laid to heart by all who take up the study.

We cannot begin to investigate the origins of the fairy superstition in the cradle of the world; we must be content to realise that there was a creed concerning supernatural beings common to all the European branches of the Aryan peoples, Greek, Roman, Celt or Teuton. When Thomas Nashe wrote in 1594 of "the Robbin-good-fellowes, Elfes, Fairies, Hobgoblins of our latter age, which idolatrous former daies and the fantasticall world of Greece ycleaped *Fawnes*, *Satyres*, *Dryades*, and *Hamadryades*," he spoke more truly than he knew.[48]

First of all, let us consider the word *fairy*. Strictly, this is a substantive meaning either "the land of the fays," or else "the fay-people" collectively; it is also used as an equivalent for "enchantment." It was originally, therefore, incorrect to speak of "*a* fairy"; [49] the singular term is "*a* fay," as opposed to "*the* fairy." *Fay* is derived, through French, from the Low Latin *fata*, misunderstood as a feminine singular; it is in fact the plural of *Fatum*, and means "the Fates."

Reversing the chronological order, let us proceed to compare the functions of these beings. The Fates, whether the Greek *Moirae* or the Roman *Parcae*, were three in number, and were variously conceived as goddesses of birth or of death; the elements of the primitive idea are, at least, comprised in the conception that they allotted man his fate; we may also note that the metaphor of *spinning* was used in connection with their duties.

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Leaving classical lands and times, we find in the tenth century, amongst the Eddic Lays of northern Europe, the following passage:—

“It was in the olden days ... when Helgi the stout of heart was born of Borghild, in Braeholt. Night lay over the house when the Fates came to forecast the hero’s life. They said that he should be called the most famous of kings and the best among princes. With power they twisted the strands of fate for Borghild’s son in Braeholt...."[50]

Here the “Fates” are the “Norns” of the northern mythology. We find them practising the same functions again in twelfth century Saxo Grammaticus,[51] who calls them “three maidens”; their caprices are shown when two of them bestow good temper and beauty on Fridleif’s son Olaf, and the third mars their gifts by endowing the boy with niggardliness.

In commenting upon both the Eddic Lay and the Danish Historian, the editors remark that this point of the story—the bestowal of gifts at birth—survives in the *chanson de geste* of Ogier the Dane,[52] whose relations with the fairy-world may be narrated shortly as follows.[53]

At the birth of Ogier the Dane, five fairies promised him strength, bravery, success, beauty, and love; after them came Morgan le Fay, whose gift was that, after a glorious career, Ogier should come to live with her at her castle of Avalon. When the hero was over a hundred years of age, Morgan caused him to be wrecked near Avalon. In his wanderings he comes to an orchard, where he eats an apple. A beautiful lady approaches whom he mistakes for the Virgin; but she tells him she is Morgan le Fay. She puts a ring on his finger and he becomes young; she puts a crown on his head, and he forgets the past. For two hundred years he lives in unearthly delights, and the years seem to him to be but twenty. He then returns to earth to champion Christendom; but after triumphing over his foes he returns to Avalon.[54]

The tale of Ogier was long popular in Denmark—of which country he is the national hero—and also in France; and the notion of supernatural gifts at birth has obtained a very wide vogue. But Ogier’s story also exhibits another very popular piece of superstition—that of a journey to or a sojourn in the supernatural world.[55] Our English parallel to Ogier, as Professor Child points out,[56] is Thomas of Erceldoune.

This leads us to the consideration of three English metrical Romances, which in all probability are derived from French sources, containing accounts of the visits to fairy-land made by Thomas of Erceldoune, Launfal, and Orfeo. The first and last of these are also known in the form of ballads; whether these ballads derive directly from the romances, or may be supposed to have existed side by side with them in the fifteenth century, is a question which must not delay us here. The romances and the ballads may all have been known to Shakespeare in book-form or in tradition.

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The romance of *Thomas of Erceldoune* is a poem in three “fyttes” or sections, which is preserved wholly or in part in five manuscripts, of which the earliest may be dated about 1435. The poem tells us that Thomas of Erceldoune’s prophetic power was a gift from the queen of Elf-land, with whom he paid a visit to her realm. The first “fytte” is occupied in narrating his sojourn;[57] while the other two set forth the predictions with which the queen supplied him. The romance is probably of Scottish origin, as the prophecies treat mainly of Scottish history; but the first “fytte” (which alone concerns us here, and indeed appears to be separate in origin from the other two) refers to an “older story.” This, Professor Child says, “was undoubtedly a romance which narrated the adventure of Thomas with the elf queen *simply*, without specification of his prophecies.”

Doubtless the older story was not originally attached to Thomas of Erceldoune, who, as “Thomas Rymour of Ercildoune,” is a historical character. He lived, as is proved by contemporary documents, in the thirteenth century, at Ercildoune (Earlstoun on the banks of the Leader in Berwickshire), and gained a reputation as a “rymour,” *i.e.* poet and prophet—in which character he was venerated by the folk for centuries.

But the Rymour does not concern us; the tale of a mortal’s visit to elf-land would have been told of some one, whether Thomas or another; he was a prophet, and prophets needed explanation. His journal to fairy-land, as narrated in the fifteenth-century romance, survives in the well-known ballad of *Thomas the Rhymer*.[58]

Two points in romance and ballad may be noted. (i) In the romance the lady shows Thomas four roads, leading respectively to heaven, paradise, purgatory, and hell, besides the fair castle of Elf-land. The ballad is content with three roads, to heaven, hell, and Elf-land. (ii) Both in the romance and the ballad, *and also in Ogier the Dane*, the hero makes the same mistake, of supposing his supernatural visitor to be the Virgin Mary.[59]

A curious point about the first “fytte” is that it opens (ll. 1-18) in the first person; at line 41 Thomas is mentioned, and the poem continues in the third person to the end, with a single and sudden change to the first in line 208. I do not know whether any assumption as to the authorship of the romance can be based on such facts; the “I” question in early popular poetry forms an interesting study in itself.[60]

The English romance of *Sir Launfal*, which survives in a manuscript[61] of the fifteenth century, is therein said to have been “made by Thomas Chestre”; but in fact it is chiefly a translation from Marie de France’s lay of *Lanval*, dating from the middle of the thirteenth century. The translator, Thomas Chestre, has, however, taken incidents from other “lais” by Marie de France, and enlarged the whole until it is some three hundred lines longer than the French original.

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Shakespeare may have read the tale in print. *Sir Lambewell* appears to have been printed about 1558,[62] and to have remained in circulation at least until 1575,[63] but no complete copy is now known. A single MS. version of 1650 survives, however, in the Percy Folio.[64] This is another translation from the same French original, but made by some one acquainted with Thomas Chestre's version.

The story as told in the first of these manuscripts may be condensed as follows. Launfal had been ten years a steward to King Arthur before the King's marriage. He did not like Guinevere, who gave him no gift at her wedding; so he asked leave of the King to go home and bury his father. He went to Caerleon, with two knights given him by Arthur, and sojourned with the mayor; but when his money was spent, he fell into debt, and his knights returned to Arthur's court in rags; but at Launfal's request, they gave out that he was faring well.

One day Launfal rode out in poor attire into the forest, and sat him under a tree to rest. After a while, two fair damsels, beautifully attired and bearing a gold basin and a silk towel, approached him, and bade him come speak with their lady, Dame Triamour, daughter to the King of Olyroun, king of fairy. Launfal was led to where the lady lay, and "all his love in her was light."

On the morrow she promised him rich presents, and said she would come to him whenever he wished for her in a secret place; but he was never to boast of her love. Her presents came to him at the mayor's house of Caerleon, and he spent his riches charitably.

The King, hearing of an exploit of Launfal's, summoned him back to court. The Queen tempted him, but he repulsed her by saying he loved a fairer woman; this of course lost him Triamour. Guinevere (by a trick common in romances) accused Launfal to Arthur; but he was saved from disgrace by the appearance of Triamour, who then carried him off into fairy-land to Olyroun.

The romance of *Sir Orpheo*, a mediaeval version of the classical story of Orpheus and Eurydice, has come down to us in three manuscripts,[65] two of which are not quite complete, which are to be assigned to the fifteenth century at latest. As in the case of *Launfal*, it is doubtless a translation from the French; but as there is no extant original, this can only be presumed. Orpheus becomes Orpheo or Orfeo, and Eurydice becomes Erodys, Heurodis, or Meroudys; in the last the initial letter may be due to the *m* in "dame," the word preceding it.

The story is told as follows.

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In all the world there was no better harper than King Orfeo [Sir Orpheo], and no fairer lady than dame Meroudys. On a morning in the beginning of May, the queen went forth with her ladies to an orchard, and fell asleep under an “ympe"[66] tree till it was long past noon. When her ladies woke her, she cried aloud, tore her clothes, and disfigured herself with her nails. They sought assistance and put her to bed in her chamber, whither the king came to visit her, and ask her what might help her. She told him how in her sleep she had been bidden by a knight to come and speak with his lord the king; she refused, but the king came to her, with a hundred knights and a hundred ladies in white on white steeds, and his crown was all of precious stones. He bore her away to a fair palace, and showed her his possessions. Then he took her back, but bade her be beneath the tree on the morrow, when she should go with them and stay with them for ever.

King Orfeo was greatly distressed, and none could advise him. On the morrow he took his queen and ten hundred knights to guard her beneath the ympe tree; but in vain, she was away with the fairy, and they knew not whither. King Orfeo in grief called together his barons and knights and squires, and bade them obey his high steward as regent; he himself went forth barefoot and in poor attire into the wilderness, with naught but his harp.

So for ten winters he abode in the forest and on the heath, in a hollow tree, or under leaves and grass, till his frame shrank and his beard grew long; and ever and anon, when the day was fair, he would play his harp, and the beasts of the forest and the birds on bush and briar would come about him to hearken.

Then on a hot day he saw the king of fairy and his retinue riding with hounds and blowing horns; and again he saw a great host of knights with drawn swords; and again he saw sixty ladies, gentle and gay, riding on palfreys and bearing hawks on their wrists. Their falcons had good sport, and Orfeo drew nigh to watch; and looking on the face of one of the ladies, he recognised Meroudys. They gazed at each other speechless, and tears ran from her eyes; but the other ladies bore her away. The king followed them to a fair country where there was neither hill nor dale, and into a castle, gaining entrance as a minstrel. Then he saw many men and women sleeping on every side, seemingly dead; among them he again beheld his wife. And he came before the king and queen of that realm, and harped so sweetly that the king promised him whatever he might ask. He asked for the fair dame Meroudys; and he took her by the hand, and they fared homewards.

In his own city he lodged awhile in poor quarters, and then went forth to play his harp; and meeting his steward, who knew the harp but not his master, told him he had found the harp ten winters ago, by the side of a man eaten by lions. This evil news caused the steward to swoon, whereupon King Orfeo revealed himself, and sent for dame Meroudys. She came in a triumphant procession; there was mirth and melody; and they

were new-crowned king and queen. Harpers of Bretayne heard this tale and made the lay and called it after the king

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> “That Orfeo hight, as men well wote; Good is the lay, sweet is the note!”

The ballad which represents the debris of this romance has only been recovered in a single text, from the memory of an old man in Unst, Shetland, and it is incomplete in verse-form, though the reciter remembered the gist of the story. This version of the ballad is further complicated by the fact that the old man sang it to a refrain which appears to be Unst pronunciation of Danish—a startling instance of phonetic tradition.

It is not, however, to be understood from this that it was impossible for Shakespeare to have heard this ballad; English versions *may* have been current in his time. But even so, the ballad would add nothing to the knowledge he might gain elsewhere; it is simply a short form of the romance altered by tradition.[67]

There are half-a-dozen other English and Scottish ballads concerning fairies, none of much importance touching our present theme. They may be best studied in Child’s collection, Nos. 35-41, where under *Tam Lin* he has put together the main features of fairy-lore revealed in traditional ballads.[68] One or two such points may be noted here.

We have seen that Ogier saw the supernatural lady after plucking and eating an apple from a tree. Thomas of Erceldoune, Launfal, and Meroudys, are sleeping or lying beneath a tree when they see their various visitors. Tam Lin in the ballad was taken by the fairies while sleeping under an apple tree. Malory[69] tells us that Lancelot went to sleep about noon (traditionally the dangerous hour) beneath an apple tree, and was bewitched by Morgan le Fay. In modern Greek folk-lore, certain trees are said to be dangerous to lie under at noon, as the sleeper may be taken by the nereids, who correspond to our fairies.

At certain intervals—every seven years, the ballads say—the fiend of hell takes a tithe from the fairies, usually preferring one who is fair and of good flesh and blood. Hence in *Thomas of Erceldoune*,[70] the elf queen is anxious that he should leave her realm, because she thinks the foul fiend would choose him (ll. 219-224).

The notion of the fairies’ demand of a tithe of produce, agricultural or domestic, is parallel to this sacrifice.[71]

A third point on which fairy-lore usually insists is that the steeds of the fairies shall be white; here *Thomas of Erceldoune* is at variance with the other poems, the elf-queen’s palfrey being a dapple-grey. It is curious to learn that this superstition still survives. “At that time there was a gentleman who had been taken by the fairies, and made an officer among them, and it was often people would see him and her riding on a white horse at dawn and in the evening."[72]

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It will have been observed that the tale of Orfeo varies considerably from the classical tale of Orpheus; but this is not surprising; no one can imagine that it comes direct from the classics. A French original is presumed; indeed, there are references in early "lais" to a "Lai d'Orphey," indicating the existence of a poem which was probably the original of our *King Orfeo*. This original is presumed to have been a Breton lay, one of the many that were popular in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the English version may have been taken from the supposed source through a French form.

Now, these Breton lays were chiefly on Celtic subjects, and placed their scenes in the Celtic realms of Great Britain, Little Britain, Ireland, or Scotland. The bards of Armorica doubtless picked up a good story wherever they could find it; and the classical story of Orpheus and Eurydice would appeal strongly to Celts, who have always been famous for harping. But why should these early Celtic singers have made such changes in the story, *unless they had a similar story of their own* which was confused with it? The parallel story has been adduced by Professor Kittredge[73] from an Irish epic tale, The Wooing (or Courtship) of Etain. The portions of the story which concern us here follow.

Eochaid Airemm, king of Ireland, found him a wife in Etain daughter of Etar in the Bay of Cichmany, and with her Mider of Bri Leith (a fairy chief) was in love. On a summer's day, as the king sat on the heights of Tara beholding the plain of Breg, a strange young warrior appeared, gave his name as Mider, and challenged Eochaid to a game of chess for a wager. Many were the games they played, and at first Eochaid won, and bade Mider carry out certain tasks. But at last Eochaid was defeated, and Mider for his reward asked to be allowed to hold Etain in his arms and kiss her. Eochaid put him off for a month; at the end of which time he called together the armies of Ireland, and took Etain into the palace, and shut and locked the doors, and ringed the house with guards. Yet at the appointed hour Mider stood in their midst, fairer than ever; and he sang to Etain:—

"*O fair-haired woman, will you come with me into a marvellous land wherein is music, where heads are covered with primrose hair and bodies are white as snow? There is no "mine" or "thine" there; white are teeth, and black are eyebrows, and cheeks are the hue of the foxglove, and eyes the hue of blackbirds' eggs.... We see everything on every side, yet no man seeth us. Though pleasant the plains of Ireland, yet are they a wilderness for him who has known the great plain*."

But Etain would not go to him, before Eochaid was willing to resign her. And the king would not, yet allowed Mider to embrace her before him. Mider took his weapons into his left hand, and Etain with his right, and bore her away through the skylight. The guards outside beheld two swans flying, and they flew towards the elf-mound of Femun, which is called the Mound of the Fair-haired Women.

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For nine years Eochaid waged war against Mider, digging into the elf-mounds, until he hit upon the fairy-mansion; whereupon Mider sent to the side of the palace sixty women, all exactly like Etain. And first the king carried away the wrong woman, but when he returned to sack Bri Leith, Etain made herself known to him, and he bore her back to the palace at Tara.

It is reasonable to suppose, then, that some Armorican bard, hearing the classical tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, remembered the Celtic legend of Eochaid and Etain, and grafted the one on the other. Hades became Bri Leith, or the vaguely-defined beautiful unknown country; but the classical names displaced the Celtic. The confusion, however, did not at once cease. In one of the MSS. of *Sir Orfeo* it is said that Orfeo's father

> "Was comen of king Pluto,
> And his moder of king Juno"

—confusion worse confounded. Moreover, as we have already seen, even Chaucer called the fairy-king Pluto and the queen Proserpina.

Again, to hark back to the other romances, we have found the word *fay* attached to the name of King Arthur's sister Morgan. Nothing is more remarkably certain than the close and constant association in mediaeval lore of the fairies and the fairy-world with the Arthurian cycle of romance;[74] King Arthur's sister was Morgan le Fay, whose son by Ogier was Merlin; and the romance of *Huon of Bordeaux*, which relates these facts, though strictly belonging to the Charlemagne cycle, contains the account of Oberon's bequest of his realm to King Arthur. Chaucer, whatever other doubts he may have had, was convinced on this point:—[75]

> "In th' olde daies of the King Arthoure,
> Of which that Bretons speken gret honoure,
> Al was this land fulfild of fayerye;
> The elfqueen with hir joly companye
> Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede;
> This was the olde opinion as I rede."

Now the Arthurian legends ultimately derive from Celtic tales, which must be supposed to have travelled from Wales into France by way of Brittany—Little Britain, or Armorica —in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; for there are Welsh versions independent of the Breton forms, though closely akin. Students of early Celtic literature have not as yet agreed about the historical relations between Welsh and Irish stories—whether the Welsh imposed their mythology and heroic legends on the Irish, or *vice versa*; but the general similarity between them is undeniable, and easily explicable by a common Celtic source.

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Everything, then, points to the Celtic legends as the chief origin of the mediaeval fairy-lore; and the early Celtic literature, although its study, complicated by an unfamiliar language, has only recently been undertaken scientifically, has already revealed an extremely rich and complete store of romance that extends over a thousand years. From manuscripts which are attributed to the twelfth century (and even so contain matter rightly belonging to the ninth or tenth), we can trace the development of a creed concerning supernatural beings through the succeeding centuries, down to a time at which the written account is displaced by recorded oral tradition. A race of beings, who must originally have fallen from the Celtic Olympus, continue to appear, with characteristics that remain the same in essence, and under a designation that may be heard in Ireland today, through ten centuries of Irish tradition and literature.[76]

These people are called in Irish mythology the *Tuatha De Danann*, described from at latest 1100 A.D. as *aes sidhe*, “the folk of the [fairy-] hillock;” the name for fairies in Ireland now is “the Sidhe."[77] Originally, it may be, the *aes sidhe* were not identified with the *Tuatha De Danann*; and before the twelfth century the Sidhe were not associated with the Celtic belief in “a beautiful country beyond the sea,” a happy land called by various names—Tir-nan-Og (the land of youth), Tir Tairngire (the land of promise)—which has now become “fairy-land.” In the earliest heroic legends the *Tuatha De Danann* assist or protect mortal champions, and fall in love with mortal men and maids; but with the spread of Christianity (as might be expected) they lost many of their previous characteristics.[78]

To look back for a moment, we must note that so far we have touched no belief later than the fifteenth century, and already we have seen enough blending of various superstitions and legends to give our fairies a very mixed ancestry. Classical mythology, Celtic heroic sagas and northern Eddas in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, Saxo the Danish historian in the twelfth, and a series of romances, running through Celtic-Breton-French-English languages from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries—all combine to alter or add to the popular conception of fairies. Celtic Mider is of human stature, beautiful, powerful, dwelling beneath the earth; he attempts to carry off a mortal bride. Teutonic Alberich is a dwarf, presumably not handsome, but well disposed to mortals. But when we come to *Huon of Bordeaux* we find Oberon’s characteristics are derived from varying sources. He himself describes[79] to Huon, in a fantastic romance-style, which attempts to associate him with as many classic heroes as possible, his parentage and birth:—

“I shall show thee true, it is Julius Caesar engendered me on a lady of the Privy Isle ... the which is now named Chifalonny [Cephalonia] ... after a seven year Caesar passed by the sea as he went into Thessaly whereas he fought with Pompey; in his way he passed by Chifalonny, where my mother fetched him, and he fell in love with her because she showed him that he should discomfit Pompey, as he did.” We are almost supplied with the date of Oberon’s birth.

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He proceeds to narrate how all the fairies but one were invited to his birth, and that one, in anger, said that when he was three years old he should cease to grow; however, she repented immediately and added that he should be “the fairest creature that nature ever formed.” Another fairy endowed him with the power of seeing into the minds of all men; and a third enabled him to go whither he would at a wish. “Moreover, if I will have a castle or a palace at my own device, incontinent it shall be made, and as soon gone again if I list; and what meat or wine that I will wish for, I shall have it incontinent.”

Elsewhere[80] in the romance his handsome equipment and dress are described; his gown, his bow, and above all his horn, “made by four ladies of the fairy,” who endowed it with four gifts; it cured all diseases by its blast, it banished hunger and thirst, it brought joy to the heavy-hearted, and forced any one who heard to come at the wish of its owner.

Horns, in English folk-lore, appear to belong rather to elves than to fairies[81]—the elves that haunt hills, and are known all over Europe; dwarfs, trolls, kobolds, pixies, and so forth. Teutonic witches are called horn-blowers. Again, the fairy-train or fairy-hunt is supposed to carry horns; we have seen it already in *Sir Orfeo*,[82] and in *Thomas of Erceldoune*,[83] the fairy-queen bears a horn about her neck.

But this Oberon of *Huon of Bordeaux* is mortal, and is not pictured as being abnormal in stature, any more than Mider. Shakespeare’s Oberon and Mider are invisible (or can make themselves so), both have supernatural powers, and both are immortal.

The question of the *size* conventionally attributed to the fairies is of importance, because it shows that a confusion existed between the fays of romance with the elves of folk-superstition. Elves and their numerous counterparts in all European countries and elsewhere—we have just given a list of names which can easily be extended—are above all things *small*; they also are earth-dwellers, living in hills or underground chambers, and originally, perhaps, were supposed to be mischievous by nature. But even in Shakespeare’s day, it would be impossible to say that fairies were benevolent and elves malevolent; the two kinds and their respective characteristics were already confused.

Robin Goodfellow, the Puck, or Hobgoblin, is however essentially mischievous. In a book contemporary with our play we find:—

“Think me to be one of those *Familiares Lares* that were rather pleasantly disposed than endued with any hurtful influence, as Hob Thrust, Robin Goodfellow, and suchlike spirits, as they term them, of the buttery, famoused in every old wives’ chronicle for their mad merry pranks."[84]

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But four years later, as we have seen,[85] Nashe confounds elves with fairies in deriving all alike from fauns and dryads. Robin is “mad-merry,” “jocund and facetious,” “a cozening idle friar or some such rogue” [in origin], and so forth—simply described by Shakespeare as a “shrewd and knavish sprite.” The forms of mischief in which he delights are described in *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, II. i. 33-57, and all these “gests” may be found in the contemporary Robin Goodfellow literature;[86] though we have observed that some of the functions attributed to Queen Mab in Mercutio’s famous speech[87] belong rightly to Robin.[88]

Thus we see—to take into consideration but a few points of the myth—that the fairy-superstition and the elf-superstition were melted together in the popular pre-Shakespearean mind, and that Shakespeare himself, making a new division of the characteristics of the two, yet re-welded the whole into one realm by putting the Puck in subjection under the fairy king.

The main characteristics of Shakespeare’s fairies, then, may be summarised shortly:—-[89]

They are a community under a king and queen, who hold a court; they are very small, light, swift, elemental; they share in the life of nature; they are fond of dancing and singing; they are invisible and immortal; they prefer night, and midnight is their favourite hour; they fall in love with mortals, steal babies and leave changelings, and usurp the function of Hymen in blessing the marriage-bed. Oberon, “king of shadows,” can apparently see things hidden from Puck.[90]

Titania, “a spirit of no common rate,” is yet subject to passion and jealousy, and had a mortal friend, “a votaress of my order."[91]

The fairy of folk-lore in Shakespeare’s day is nearly everything that the fairies of *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream* are; we may possibly except their exiguity, their relations in love with mortals, and their hymeneal functions. His conception of their size as infinitesimal at least differs from that of the popular stories, where (as far as can be ascertained) they are shown to be about the size of mortal children.

We may conclude these remarks with the modern Irish-Catholic theory of the origin of the fairies:—

“When Lucifer saw himself in the glass, he thought himself equal with God. Then the Lord threw him out of Heaven, and all the angels that belonged to him. While He was ‘chucking them out,’ an archangel asked Him to spare some of them, and those that were falling are in the air still, and have power to wreck ships, and to work evil in the world."[92]

* * * *

OBERON’S VISION.

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A Midsummer-Night's Dream, like too many other plays of Shakespeare, has been unable to escape the inquisition of "deuteroscopists"—those who are always on the look-out for historical and other allusions. The dainty passage (II. i. 148-174), in which Oberon gives Puck directions how and where to find the magic herb that works the transformations of love in the rest of the play, appears to contain a reference to Elizabeth as "a fair vestal throned by the west" and "the imperial votaress." So much may be reasonably granted; but Warburton in his edition proceeded to identify "the mermaid on a dolphin's back" with Mary Queen of Scots, the dolphin of course being the Dauphin, and so forth. This interpretation of the alleged secret allegory was displaced in 1843 by one rather more plausible—though still needlessly fantastic.

Oberon's Vision, by the Rev. N.J. Halpin (Shakespeare Society, 1843) attempts to prove that in composing this passage Shakespeare was referring to the Earl of Leicester's attempt to win Elizabeth's hand, when she visited him at Kenilworth in 1575; the mermaid, uttering dulcet and harmonious breath, so that the rude sea grows civil, and the stars that shot from their spheres, are explained, by parallel passages from contemporary accounts, as parts of the pageant or "Princely Pleasures" which formed the Queen's entertainment. The Earl was simultaneously intriguing with Lettice, Countess of Essex, who ultimately became his wife; and it is she who, according to the Rev. Halpin, is intended by the "little western flower"; to him the passage means:—

> "Cupid, on behalf of the Earl of Leicester, loosed an arrow at Queen Elizabeth; but the Virgin Queen's maidenhood was so unassailable that the bolt missed her, hitting the Countess of Essex, who succumbed."

In other words, Shakespeare mentions the Queen only in order to point out her rival's success!

It is as unnecessary to discuss the degrees of probability in Halpin's identifications as it was for him to elaborate them. Certainly it is likely that Shakespeare intended a compliment to his queen; it is possible that the "mermaid on a dolphin's back" was a reminiscence of a pageant which he might have visited Kenilworth at the age of eleven to see; and it may be true that he meant to hint at Leicester.

On the other hand, I think that another explanation is more obvious and more rational. Shakespeare had to introduce into his play the magic herb which was to alter the loves of those into whose eyes it was squeezed. We may reasonably guess that he had read somewhere one of the many popular legends that explain why the violet is purple, why the rose is red, *etc.*; there are some in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*[93] which Shakespeare read in Golding's translation. He saw an opportunity of paying a graceful compliment to Elizabeth by saying that the magic flower, once white, had been empurpled by a shaft of Cupid's drawn at the fair vestal and imperial votaress, who yet passed on untouched;

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“And maidens call it love-in-idleness”

—a popular name for the common pansy.

NOTES ON THE INTRODUCTION

[1] For *The Knightes Tale*, see Prof. Skeat’s edition (modern spelling) in the “King’s Classics,” and his excellent introduction.

[2] was named

[3] realm

[4] called

[5] were not

[6] besieged

[7] See Mr. R.B. McKerrow’s note on Nashe’s reference to the name in *Have with You to Saffron-Walden* (*Works,* iii. 111).

[8] See Statius, *Thebais*, I, 13-14, *etc*. (Chaucer refers to “Stace of Thebes,” *Knightes Tale*, 1436.) Athamas, having incurred the wrath of Hera, was seized with madness, and slew his son Learchus. His wife Ino threw herself, with his other son Melicertes, into the sea, and both were changed into sea-deities, Ino becoming Leucothea, and Melicertes Palaemon, whom the Greeks held to be friendly to the shipwrecked. The Romans identified him with Portunus, the protector of harbours.

[9] See Skeat’s *The Knight’s Tale*, xi-xv.

[10] little.

[11] In this passage, Statius describes the meeting between Theseus, returning in triumph with Hippolyta, and the widows of those slain at the siege of Thebes, who complain that the tyrant Creon will not permit their husbands’ bodies to be either burned or buried. This episode, as we shall see, is the opening of the *Knightes Tale,* and reappears in a modified form in *The Two Noble Kinsmen.*

[12] J. M. Rigg’s introduction to his translation of the *Decameron* (1903)

[13] This opening, derived from Statius (see note, p. 13), serves merely to introduce the main story, much in the same way as the Theseus story in *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream* is simply the “enveloping action” of the play.

[14] W.W. Greg's edition, i 19-20, ii. 168. Henslowe's dates for the performances are 17 September, 16 and 27 October, and November, 1594. Against the first entry are the much-discussed letters "ne," which appear to mark a new play. It will be seen that according to the theory that *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* belongs to the winter of 1594-5, this Palamon and Arcite play was performed immediately before.

[15] Professor Gollancz considers that Shakespeare had no hand in the play.

[16] Cf. I. i. 167 and IV. i. 129-30.

[17] It is perhaps fantastic to interpret too literally Arcite's song to May—"I hope that I som grene gete may"—but, however little of their primitive significance now remains, celebration of the rites of May is by no means extinct. See E.K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, I. 117: "their object is to secure the beneficent influence of the fertilization spirit by bringing the persons or places to be benefited into direct contact with the physical embodiment of that spirit."

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Shakespeare's apparent confusion of a May-day with a Mid-summer-night may seem pardonable to the folk-lorist in the light of the fact that various folk-festivals appear to take place indiscriminately on May-day or Midsummer-day. See Chambers, *op. cit.* i. 114, 118, 126.

[18] Cf. III. ii. 331 and 401, *etc*.

[19] Cf. IV. i. 100-183.

[20] In V. i. 51.

[21] Reprinted in this book, p. 135.

[22] He might have added *Lucius the Ass*, a similar tale by Lucian of Samosata.

[23] Reprinted in this book, p. 139.

[24] Ovid, *Met.* iv. 55, sqq.

[25] See p. 73.

[26] Addl. MS. 15227, f. 56b.

[27] *Faerie Queen,* II. i. 6, II. x. 75.

[28] See A.W. Ward's *English Dramatic Literature*, i. 400, ii. 85.

[29] *The Marchantes Tale*, 983 (Skeat, E. 2227).

[30] A.H. Bullen's edition of Campion (1903), p. 20.

[31] *Metamorphoses*, iii. 173. Ovid, in the same work, uses "Titania" also as an epithet of Latona (vi. 346), Pyrrha (i. 395), and Circe (xiv. 382, 438). The fact that Golding gives "Phebe" as the translation of "Titania" in iii. 173, is a strong piece of evidence that Shakespeare sometimes at least read his Ovid in the Latin.

[32] Ed. Brinsley Nicholson, p. 32. Book III, chap. ii. (See p. 135.)

[33] *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iv, 53, sqq.

[34] In II. i. 40, "sweet puck" is no more a proper name than "Hobgoblin"; so also in l. 148 of the same scene. In neither case should the name be printed with a capital P.

[35] II. i. 34.

[36] V. i. 418, 421.

[37] Wright, *English Dialect Dictionary*, s.v. Puck, gives Scotland, Ireland, Derby, Worcester, Shropshire, Gloucester, Sussex and Hampshire as localities where the name is recorded.

[38] Text H in Child's *Ballads*, I. 352.

[39] Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1890), vol. ii, tales xxv, xxvi, *etc*.

[40] *Ballads*, I. 314, and note.

[41] *M.N.D.*, II. i. 40. (See note on p. 37.)

[42] *The Wyf of Bathe's Tale*, at the beginning; and elsewhere.

[43] *The Faerie Queene,* chiefly in Book II, where in Canto X, stanzas 70-76, he gives a fictitious list of the generations of fairies; the first "Elfe" was the image made by Prometheus, to animate which he stole fire from heaven; the list ends with Oberon, and Tanaquil the Faerie Queen.

[44] Reprinted in this book, pp. 81-121.

[45] Mr. Chambers, in his edition of the play, Appendix A, Sec. l8, gives (i) *Tarlton's News out of Purgatory* (1590) (see p. 63), (ii) Churchyard's *Handfull of Gladsome Verses* (1592) (see p. 141), (iii) Nashe's *Terrors of the Night* (1594).

[46] The word *folk-lore* has only been in existence sixty years, and the science is very little older; it was vaguely referred to as "popular antiquities" before that time.

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[47] Alfred Nutt, *The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare* (1900), p. 24. This little book is instructive and valuable.

[48] Nashe's Works, ed. R.B. McKerrow, i. 347.

[49] Gower, however, does so, as early as the fourteenth century; *Confessio Amantis*, ii. 371.

[50] The opening of the beautiful *Helgi and Sigrun Lay* as translated by Vigfusson and York Powell in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (1883), i. 131; see also the editors' Introduction, i. lxi, lxiv.

[51] *Danish History*, iii. 70, 77; vi. 181; cf. O. Elton's translation (1894), pp. 84, 93, 223, and York Powell's introduction thereto, lxiv.

[52] "It is worth noting that the Romance of Olger the Dane contains several late echoes of the old Helgi myth. *a.* The visit of the fairies by night to the new-born child ... *e.* His return to earth after death or disappearance ... Mark that Holgi is the true old form ... The old hero Holgi and the Carling peer Otgeir (Eadgar) are distinct persons confused by later tradition."—*Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, i. cxxx.

"The *Fates* ... bestow endowments on the new-born child, as in the beautiful Helge Lay ... a point of the story which survives in the Ogier of the Chansons de Geste, wherein Eadgar (Otkerus or Otgerus) gets what belonged to Holger (Holge), the Helga til of Beowulf's Lay."—Saxo, *Danish History*, lxiv.

[53] Cf. Child's *Ballads*, i. 319.

[54] In *Huon of Bordeaux* Merlin comes with King Arthur to Oberon's death-bed; Arthur introduces him as his nephew, the son of Ogier the Dane and "my sister Morgan."

[55] The mere mention of these subterranean explorations opens up an immense field of discussion and speculation that can here be only relegated to a note; we can treat at greater length none but those legends which bear directly on our subject. Odysseus visited Hades, Aeneas descended to Orcus or Tartarus, and they have their counterparts in every land and every mythology. Human aetiological tendencies supply explanations of any cavern or natural chasm—even a volcano must be the mouth of the entrance to hell or purgatory—from Taenarus, where Pluto carried off Proserpine, and the Sibyl's cavern, whence Aeneas sought the lower regions, to the famous Lough Dearg in Donegal, the entrance to "St. Patrick's Purgatory," and the Peak cavern in Derbyshire. The student may begin his researches with T. Wright's *St. Patrick's Purgatory* (1844). A very common tale in Celtic literature is that of the visit of some hero to the underworld and his seizure of some gift of civilisation—just as Prometheus stole fire from heaven.

[56] *Ballads*, loc. cit.

[57] A version of Fytte I will be found in this book, pp. 122-132.

[58] See Child's *Ballads*, No. 37, Thomas Rymer, i. 317-329; also the romance, *Thomas of Erceldoune* (E.E.T.S., 1875), where Prof. J.A.H. Murray prints all texts parallel, and adds a valuable introduction.

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[59] A similar episode survives in a Breton folk-tale, cited by Professor Kittredge in Child's *Ballads*, iii. 504. In *Huon of Bordeaux* (E.E.T.S. edition, p. 265), Charlemagne mistakes Oberon for God.

[60] See Gummere, *The Popular Ballad* (1907), pp. 66-7.

[61] Cottonian, Caligula A. II. A later version is at the Bodleian, MS. Rawlinson C. 86, and a Scottish version in Cambridge University Library, MS. Kk. 5. 30.

[62] It was licensed to John Kynge the printer between 19 July 1557 and 9 July 1558. See Arber, Stationers' Registers, i. 79. Two fragments are in the Bodleian; see Hales and Furnivall, *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript* (1867), i. 521-535.

[63] In this year it is mentioned, as having been amongst Captain Cox's books, in Laneham's famous *Letter*. See *Shakespeare Library* reprint, p. xxx.

[64] Brit. Mus. MS. Addl. 27,879; see Hales and Furnivall, *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, i. 142.

[65] Harl. 3810 (British Museum), printed by Ritson in *Ancient English Metrical Romances* (1802) ii. 248; the Auchinleck MS. (W. 4. 1, in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh), printed by D. Laing in *Ancient Popular Poetry of Scotland*, iii; and Ashmolean 61 (Bodleian Library, Oxford), printed by Halliwell in his *Fairy Mythology*, p. 36. The three are collated by O. Zielke, *Sir Orfeo* (Breslau 1880), a fully annotated edition. The last is used here.

[66] A grafted fruit tree; here probably an apple.

[67] It may be seen in Child's *Ballads*, i. 215, with a full analysis of the romance, and in the present editor's *Popular Ballads of the Olden Time*, Second Series, p. 208.

[68] *Ballads*, i. 338-340; see also various "Additions and Corrections" in the later volumes, and s.v. *Elf*, *Elves*, *etc*. in the *Index of Matters and Literature*.

[69] *Morte Darthur* (ed. Sommer), vi. l. 3.

[70] See below, p. 131.

[71] See J.M. Synge, *The Aran Islands* (1907), p. 48, and A. Nutt, *Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare*, p. 22.

[72] See Synge, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[73] See his admirable article on *Sir Orfeo* in the *American Journal of Philology*, vii. 176-202. *The Courtship of Etain* may be seen in English, translated from the two versions in

Egerton MS. 1782. and the “Leabhar na h-Uidhri”—an eleventh century Irish MS.—in *Heroic Romances of Ireland*, by A. H, Leahy, i. 7-32.

[74] A. Nutt, *Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare*, p. 12.

[75] *Wyf of Bathe’s Tale*, 1-6.

[76] See A. Nutt, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17; and various authorities given by G.L. Kittredge, *op. cit.*, p. 196 notes.

[77] Pronounced *shee*.

[78] Mr. Alfred Nutt (*op. cit.*, pp. 19-23) is at pains to show the close association of the *Tuatha De Danann* with ritual of an agricultural-sacrificial kind, in the aspect they have assumed—“fairies”—to the modern Irish peasant. The Sidhe have fallen from the high estate of the romantic and courtly wooers and warriors, as they must once have fallen from the Celtic pantheon.

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[79] Chap, xxv. (E.E.T.S. edition, 72). Oberon recites his history again in chap. lxxxiv. (p. 264).

[80] Chap. xxii. (E.E.T.S. edition, p. 65, sqq.).

[81] Cf. Child's *Ballads*, Nos. 2 (*The Elfin Knight*), 4 (*Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight*), 41 (*Hina Etin*), and perhaps 35 (*Allison Gross*), with his note on the last, l. 314, referring to No. 36 (*The Laily Worm and the Machrel of the Sea*).

[82] See above, p. 51.

[83] See p. 124, l. 39.

[84] *Tarlton's News out of Purgatory, published by Robin Goodfellow* (1590), Shakespeare Society reprint, p. 55.

[85] See above, p. 41.

[86] See the extracts from Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* and the *Robin Goodfellow* tract, pp. 133-140 and 81-121.

[87] Romeo and Juliet, I. iv. 33-94. See above, p. 37.

[88] Had I been able to find a book, *Veridica relatio de daemonio Puck*, referred to in the article *Diable* in the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Occultes* (in Migne, tome 48, vol. i., p. 475), it might be that it would prove of great interest. In any case this allusion (pointed out to me by Mr. R.B. McKerrow) is an early instance of Puck used as a proper name.

[89] Abbreviated from E.K. Chambers' full analysis with references, *Warwick Shakespeare* edition of *M.N.D.* pp. 142-4.

[90] See II. i. 155.

[91] How far Shakespeare associated his fairy queen Titania with her nominal parent Diana, is a question that would make matter for an elaborate study in mythology and mysticism, and might yet lead to no result. Diana is Luna in the heavens; Lucina (the goddess of child-birth) and the Huntress on earth; and Hecate in the underworld, goddess of enchantments and nocturnal incantations, often also identified with Proserpina. Titania is a votaress of the moon; we have seen that fairies are intimately concerned with mortal babies, and that there is a fairy-hunt (see the quotation from James I's *Demonology*, p. 37 above); and we have also noted the confusion of Proserpina with the fairy-queen.—The *Tuatha De Danann* are said to be "the folk of *Danu*"—who is Danu? Hecate was called Trivia, on account of the above tripartition of Diana; her statues were set up where three roads met, and the fairy-queen in *Thomas*

the Rhymer points out to him the three roads that lead to heaven, hell, and elf-land. Speculation is easily led astray.

[92] J.M. Synge, *Aran Islands*, p. 10.

[93] The metamorphosis of Hyacinthus, for instance, Bk. X, 162, sqq.; although there are others in the same book. See also the alteration in the mulberry caused by Pyramus' blood (pp. 77-80).

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ILLUSTRATIVE TEXTS

TEXTS

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THE LEGEND OF PYRAMUS AND THISBE

From Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1575), Book IV, ff. 52-3.

Within the town (of whose huge walls so monstrous high and thick,
The fame is given Semiramis for making them of brick)
Dwelt hard together two young folk, in houses joined so near,
That under all one roof well nigh both twain conveyed were.
The name of him was Pyramus, and Thisbe call'd was she,
So fair a man in all the East was none alive as he.
Nor ne'er a woman, maid, nor wife in beauty like to her.
This neighbourhood bred acquaintance first, this neighbourhood first did stir
The secret sparks: this neighbourhood first an entrance in did show
For love, to come to that to which it afterward did grow.
And if that right had taken place they had been man and wife,
But still their parents went about to let[1] which (for their life)
They could not let. For both their hearts with equal flame did burn.
No man was privy to their thoughts. And for to serve their turn,
Instead of talk they used signs: the closelier they suppressed
The fire of love, the fiercer still it raged in their breast.

The wall that parted house from house had riven therein a cranny,
Which shrunk at making of the wall: this fault not marked of any
Of many hundred years before (what doth not love espy?)
These lovers first of all found out, and made a way whereby
To talk together secretly, and through the same did go
Their loving whisp'rings very light and safely to and fro.
Now as at one side Pyramus, and Thisbe on the tother
Stood often drawing one of them the pleasant breath from other:
O spiteful wall (said they) why dost thou part us lovers thus?
What matter were it if that thou permitted both of us
In arms each other to embrace? or if thou think that this
Were over-much, yet mightest thou at least make room to kiss.
And yet thou shalt not find us churls: we think ourselves in debt
For the same piece of courtesy, in vouching safe[2] to let
Our sayings to our friendly ears thus freely come and go.

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Thus having where they stood in vain complained of their woe,
When night drew near they bade adieu, and each gave kisses sweet
Unto the parget[3] on their side the which did never meet.
Next morning with her cheerful light had driven the stars aside,
And Phoebus with his burning beams the dewy grass had dried,
These lovers at their wonted place by fore-appointment met,
Where after much complaint and moan they covenanted to get
Away from such as watched them, and in the evening late
To steal out of their fathers' house and eke the city gate.
And to th' intent that in the fields they strayed not up and down,
They did agree at Ninus' tomb to meet without the town,
And tarry underneath a tree that by the same did grow;
Which was a fair high mulberry with fruit as white as snow,
Hard by a cool and trickling spring. This bargain pleased them both,
And so daylight (which to their thought away but slowly go'th)
Did in the Ocean fall to rest, and night from thence doth rise.
As soon as darkness once was come, straight Thisbe did devise
A shift to wind her out of doors, that none that were within
Perceived her; and muffling her with clothes about her chin,
That no man might discern her face, to Ninus' tomb she came
Unto the tree, and set her down there underneath the same.
Love made her bold. But see the chance, there comes besmeared with blood
About the chaps, a lioness all foaming from the wood,
From slaughter lately made of kine to staunch her bloody thirst
With water of the foresaid spring. Whom Thisbe, spying first
Afar by moonlight, thereupon with fearful steps gan fly
And in a dark and irksome cave did hide herself thereby.
And as she fled away for haste she let her mantle fall,
The which for fear she left behind not looking back at all.
Now when the cruel lioness her thirst had staunched well,
In going to the wood she found the slender weed that fell
From Thisbe, which with bloody teeth in pieces she did tear.
The night was somewhat further spent ere Pyramus came there.
Who seeing in this subtle sand the print of lion's paw,
Waxed pale for fear. But when that he the bloody mantle saw
All rent and torn; one night (he said) shall lovers two confound,
Of which long life deserved she of all that live on ground.
My soul deserves of this mischance the peril for to bear.
I, wretch, have been the death of thee, which to this place of fear
Did cause thee in the night to come, and came not here before.

My wicked limbs and wretched guts with cruel teeth therefore
Devour ye, O ye lions all that in this rock do dwell.
But cowards use to wish for death. The slender weed that fell
From Thisbe up he takes, and straight doth bear it to the tree,
Which was appointed erst the place of meeting for to be.

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And when he had bewept and kissed the garment which he knew,
Receive thou my blood too (quoth he), and therewithal he drew
His sword, the which among his guts he thrust, and by and by
Did draw it from the bleeding wound, beginning for to die,
And cast himself upon his back. The blood did spin on high
As when a conduit pipe is cracked, the water bursting out
Doth shoot itself a great way off, and pierce the air about.
The leaves that were upon the tree besprinkled with his blood
Were dyed black. The root also, bestained as it stood
A deep dark purple colour, straight upon the berries cast,
Anon scarce ridded of her fear with which she was aghast,
For doubt of disappointing him comes Thisbe forth in haste,
And for her lover looks about, rejoicing for to tell
How hardly she had 'scaped that night the danger that befell.
And as she knew right well the place and fashion of the tree
(As which she saw so late before) even so when she did see
The colour of the berries turned, she was uncertain whether
It were the tree at which they both agreed to meet together.
While in this doubtful stound[4] she stood, she cast her eye aside,
And there beweltered in his blood her lover she espied
Lie sprawling with his dying limbs; at which she started back,
And looked pale as any box; a shuddering through her strack,
Even like the sea which suddenly with whissing noise doth move,
When with a little blast of wind it is but touched above.
But when approaching nearer him she knew it was her love,
She beat her breast, she shrieked out, she tare her golden hairs,
And taking him between her arms did wash his wounds with tears;
She meint[5] her weeping with his blood, and kissing all his face
(Which now became as cold as ice) she cried in woeful case:
Alas! what chance, my Pyramus hath parted thee and me?
Make answer, O my Pyramus: it is thy Thisbe, even she
Whom thou dost love most heartily that speaketh unto thee:
Give ear and raise thy heavy head. He, hearing Thisbe's name,
Lift up his dying eyes, and, having seen her, closed the same.
But when she knew her mantle there, and saw his scabbard lie
Without the sword: Unhappy man, thy love had made thee die;
Thy love (she said) hath made thee slay thyself. This hand of mine
Is strong enough to do the like. My love no less than thine
Shall give me force to work my wound. I will pursue thee dead,
And, wretched woman as I am, it shall of me be said,

That like as of thy death I was the only cause and blame,
So am I thy companion eke and partner in the same.
For death which only could, alas! asunder part us twain,
Shall never so dissever us but we will meet again.
And you the parents of us both, most wretched folk alive,
Let this request that I shall make in

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both our names belyve[6]
Entreat you to permit that we, whom chaste and steadfast love,
And whom even death hath joined in one, may, as it doth behove,
In one grave be together laid. And thou unhappy tree,
Which shroudest now the corse of one, and shalt anon through me
Shroud two, of this same slaughter hold the sicker[7] signs for ay
Black be the colour of thy fruit and mourning-like alway,
Such as the murder of us twain may evermore bewray.
This said, she took the sword, yet warm with slaughter of her love,
And setting it beneath her breast did to the heart it shove.
Her prayer with the gods and with their parents took effect,
For when the fruit is throughly ripe, the berry is bespect[8]
With colour tending to a black. And that which after fire
Remained, rested in one tomb as Thisbe did desire.

* * * * *

ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW; HIS MAD PRANKS AND MERRY JESTS

Not omitting that ancient form of beginning tales, *Once upon a time* it was my chance to travel into that noble county of Kent. The weather being wet, and my two-legged horse being almost tired (for indeed my own legs were all the supporters that my body had), I went dropping into an alehouse; there found I, first a kind welcome, next good liquor, then kind strangers (which made good company), then an honest host, whose love to good liquor was written in red characters both in his nose, cheeks and forehead: an hostess I found there too, a woman of very good carriage; and though she had not so much colour (for what she had done) as her rich husband had, yet all beholders might perceive by the roundness of her belly, that she was able to draw a pot dry at a draught, and ne'er unlace for the matter.

Well, to the fire I went, where I dried my outside and wet my inside. The ale being good, and I in good company, I lapt in so much of this nappy liquor, that it begot in me a boldness to talk, and desire of them to know what was the reason that the people of that country were called Long-tails[1]. The host said, all the reason that ever he could hear was, because the people of that country formerly did use to go in side-skirted coats. "There is," said an old man that sat by, "another reason that I have heard: that is this. In the time of the Saxons' conquest of England there were divers of our countrymen slain by treachery, which made those that survived more careful in dealing with their enemies, as you shall hear.

“After many overthrows that our countrymen had received by the Saxons, they dispersed themselves into divers companies into the woods, and so did much damage by their sudden assaults to the Saxons, that Hengist, their king, hearing the damage that they did (and not knowing how to subdue them by force), used this policy. He sent to a company of them, and gave them his word for their liberty and safe

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return, if they would come unarmed and speak with him. This they seemed to grant unto, but for their more security (knowing how little he esteemed oaths or promises) they went every one of them armed with a short sword, hanging just behind under their garments, so that the Saxons thought not of any weapons they had: but it proved otherwise; for when Hengist his men (that were placed to cut them off) fell all upon them, they found such unlooked a resistance, that most of the Saxons were slain, and they that escaped, wondering how they could do that hurt, having no weapons (as they saw), reported that they struck down men like lions with their tails; and so they ever after were called Kentish Long-tails."

I told him this was strange, if true, and that their country's honour bound them more to believe in this than it did me.

"Truly, sir," said my hostess, "I think we are called Long-tails, by reason our tales are long, that we used to pass the time withal, and make ourselves merry." "Now, good hostess," said I, "let me entreat from you one of those tales." "You shall," said she, "and that shall not be a common one neither, for it is a long tale, a merry tale, and a sweet tale; and thus it begins."

THE HOSTESS'S TALE OF THE BIRTH OF ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW

Once upon a time, a great while ago, when men did eat more and drink less—then men were more honest, that knew no knavery, than some now are that confess the knowledge and deny the practice—about that time (whensoe'er it was) there was wont to walk many harmless spirits called fairies, dancing in brave order in fairy rings on green hills with sweet music (sometime invisible) in divers shapes: many mad pranks would they play, as pinching of sluts black and blue, and misplacing things in ill-ordered houses; but lovingly would they use wenches that cleanly were, giving them silver and other pretty toys, which they would leave for them, sometimes in their shoes, other times in their pockets, sometimes in bright basins and other clean vessels.

Amongst these fairies was there a he-fairy; whether he was their king or no I know not, but surely he had great government and command in that country, as you shall hear. This same he-fairy did love a proper young wench, for every night would he with other fairies come to the house, and there dance in her chamber; and oftentimes she was forced to dance with him, and at his departure would he leave her silver and jewels, to express his love unto her. At last this maid was with child, and being asked who was the father of it, she answered a man that nightly came to visit her, but early in the morning he would go his way, whither she knew not, he went so suddenly.

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Many old women, that then had more wit than those that are now living and have less, said that a fairy had gotten her with child; and they bid her be of good comfort, for the child must needs be fortunate that had so noble a father as a fairy was, and should work many strange wonders. To be short, her time grew on, and she was delivered of a man child, who (it should seem) so rejoiced his father's heart, that every night his mother was supplied with necessary things that are befitting a woman in child-birth, so that in no mean manner neither; for there had she rich embroidered cushions, stools, carpets, coverlets, delicate linen: then for meat she had capons, chickens, mutton, lamb, pheasant, snite[2], woodcock, partridge, quail. The gossips liked this fare so well that she never wanted company; wine had she of all sorts, muskadine, sack, malmsey, claret, white and bastard; this pleased her neighbours well, so that few that came to see her, but they had home with them a medicine for the fleas. Sweetmeats too had they in such abundance that some of their teeth are rotten to this day; and for music she wanted not, or any other thing she desired.

All praised this honest fairy for his care, and the child for his beauty, and the mother for a happy woman. In brief, christened he was, at the which all this good cheer was doubled, which made most of the women so wise, that they forgot to make themselves unready, and so lay in their clothes; and none of them next day could remember the child's name but the clerk, and he may thank his book for it, or else it had been utterly lost. So much for the birth of little Robin.

OF ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW'S BEHAVIOUR WHEN HE WAS YOUNG

When Robin was grown to six years of age, he was so knavish that all the neighbours did complain of him; for no sooner was his mother's back turned, but he was in one knavish action or other, so that his mother was constrained (to avoid the complaints) to take him with her to market, or wheresoever she went or rode. But this helped little or nothing, for if he rode before her, then would he make mouths and ill-favoured faces at those he met; if he rode behind her, then would he clap his hand on his tail; so that his mother was weary of the many complaints that came against him, yet knew she not how to beat him justly for it, because she never saw him do that which was worthy blows. The complaints were daily so renewed that his mother promised him a whipping. Robin did not like that cheer, and therefore, to avoid it, he ran away, and left his mother a heavy woman for him.

HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW DWELT WITH A TAILOR

After that Robin Good-fellow had gone a great way from his mother's house, he began to be hungry, and going to a tailor's house, he asked something for God's sake. The

tailor gave him meat, and understanding that he was masterless, he took him for his man, and Robin so plied his work that he got his master’s love.

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On a time his master had a gown to make for a woman, and it was to be done that night: they both sat up late so that they had done all but setting on the sleeves by twelve o'clock. This master then being sleepy said, "Robin, whip thou on the sleeves, and then come thou to bed; I will go to bed before." "I will," said Robin. So soon as his master was gone, Robin hung up the gown, and taking both sleeves in his hands, he whipped and lashed them on the gown. So stood he till the morning that his master came down: his master seeing him stand in that fashion asked him what he did? "Why," quoth he, "as you bid me, whip on the sleeves." "Thou rogue," said his master, "I did mean that thou shouldst have set them on quickly and slightly." "I would you had said so," said Robin, "for then had I not lost all this sleep." To be short, his master was fain to do the work, but ere he had made an end of it, the woman came for it, and with a loud voice chafed for her gown. The tailor, thinking to please her, bid Robin fetch the remnants that they left yesterday (meaning thereby meat that was left); but Robin, to cross his master the more, brought down the remnants of the cloth that was left of the gown. At the sight of this, his master looked pale, but the woman was glad, saying, "I like this breakfast so well, that I will give you a pint of wine to it." She sent Robin for the wine, but he never returned again to his master.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW AFTER HE WENT FROM THE TAILOR

After Robin had travelled a good day's journey from his master's house he sat down, and being weary he fell asleep. No sooner had slumber taken full possession of him, and closed his long-opened eyelids, but he thought he saw many goodly proper personages in antic measures tripping about him, and withal he heard such music as he thought that Orpheus, that famous Greek fiddler (had he been alive), compared to one of these, had been as infamous as a Welsh harper that plays for cheese and onions. As delights commonly last not long, so did those end sooner than he would willingly they should have done; and for very grief he awaked, and found by him lying a scroll, wherein was written these lines following in golden letters.

Robin, my only son and heir,
How to live take thou no care:
By nature thou hast cunning shifts,
Which I'll increase with other gifts.
Wish what thou wilt, thou shalt it have;
And for to vex both fool and knave,
Thou hast the power to change thy shape,
To horse, to hog, to dog, to ape.
Transformed thus, by any means
See none thou harm'st but knaves and queans;
But love thou those that honest be,

And help them in necessity.
Do thus, and all the world shall know
The pranks of Robin Good-fellow;
For by that name thou called shalt be
To age's last posterity.
If thou observe my just command,
One day thou shalt see Fairy Land.
This more I give: who tells thy pranks
From those that hear them shall have thanks.

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Robin having read this was very joyful, yet longed he to know whether he had this power or not, and to try it he wished for some meat: presently[3] it was before him. Then wished he for beer and wine: he straightway had it. This liked him well, and because he was weary, he wished himself a horse: no sooner was his wish ended, but he was transformed, and seemed a horse of twenty pound price, and leaped and curveted as nimble as if he had been in stable at rack and manger a good month. Then wished he himself a dog, and was so: then a tree, and was so: so from one thing to another, till he was certain and well assured that he could change himself to any thing whatsoever.

HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW SERVED A CLOWNISH FELLOW

Robin Good-fellow going over a field met with a clownish fellow, to whom he spake in this manner. “Friend,” quoth he, “what is a clock?” “A thing,” answered the clown, “that shows the time of the day.” “Why then,” said Robin Good-fellow, “be thou a clock, and tell me what time of the day it is.” “I owe thee not so much service,” answered he again, “but because thou shalt think thyself beholden to me, know that it is the same time of the day as it was yesterday at this time.”

These cross-answers vexed Robin Good-fellow, so that in himself he vowed to be revenged of him, which he did in this manner.

Robin Good-fellow turned himself into a bird, and followed this fellow, who was going into a field a little from that place to catch a horse that was at grass. The horse being wild ran over dyke and hedge, and the fellow after; but to little purpose, for the horse was too swift for him. Robin was glad of this occasion, for now or never was the time to put his revenge in action.

Presently Robin shaped himself like to the horse that the fellow followed, and so stood before the fellow: presently the fellow took hold of him and got on his back, but long had he not rid, but with a stumble he hurled this churlish clown to the ground, that he almost broke his neck; yet took he not this for a sufficient revenge for the cross-answers he had received, but stood still and let the fellow mount him once more.

In the way the fellow was to ride was a great plash of water of a good depth: through this must he of necessity ride. No sooner was he in the midst of it, but Robin Good-fellow left him with nothing but a pack-saddle betwixt his legs, and in the shape of a fish swam to the shore, and ran away laughing, *ho, ho, hoh!*[4] leaving the poor fellow almost drowned.

HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW HELPED TWO LOVERS AND DECEIVED AN OLD MAN

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Robin going by a wood heard two lovers make great lamentation, because they were hindered from enjoying each other by a cruel old lecher, who would not suffer this loving couple to marry. Robin, pitying them, went to them and said: "I have heard your complaints, and do pity you; be ruled by me, and I will see that you shall have both your hearts' content, and that suddenly if you please." After some amazement the maiden said, "Alas! sir, how can that be? My uncle, because I will not grant to his lust, is so straight over me, and so oppresseth me with work night and day, that I have not so much time as to drink or speak with this young man, whom I love above all men living." "If your work be all that hindereth you," said Robin, "I will see that done: ask me not how, nor make any doubt of the performance; I will do it. Go you with your love: for twenty-four hours I will free you. In that time marry or do what you will. If you refuse my proffered kindness never look to enjoy your wished-for happiness. I love true lovers, honest men, good fellows, good housewives, good meat, good drink, and all things that good is, but nothing that is ill; for my name is Robin Good-fellow, and that you shall see that I have power to perform what I have undertaken, see what I can do." Presently he turned himself into a horse, and away he ran: at the sight of which they were both amazed, but better considering with themselves, they both determined to make good use of their time, and presently they went to an old friar, who presently married them. They paid him, and went their way. Where they supped and lay, I know not, but surely they liked their lodging well the next day.

Robin, when that he came near the old man's house, turned himself into the shape of the young maid, and entered the house, where, after much chiding, he fell to the work that the maid had to do, which he did in half the time that another could do it in. The old man, seeing the speed he made, thought that she had some meeting that night (for he took Robin Good-fellow for his niece); therefore he gave him order for other work, that was too much for any one to do in one night; Robin did that in a trice, and played many mad pranks beside ere the day appeared.

In the morning he went to the two lovers to their bed-side, and bid God give them joy, and told them all things went well, and that ere night he would bring them ten pounds of her uncle's to begin the world with. They both thanked him, which was all the requital that he looked for, and being therewith well contented he went his way laughing.

Home went he to the old man, who then was by, and marvelled how the work was done so soon. Robin, seeing that, said: "Sir, I pray marvel not, for a greater wonder than that this night hath happened to me." "Good niece, what is that?" said the old man. "This, Sir; but I shame to speak it, yet I will: weary with work, I slept, and did dream that I consented to that which you have

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so often desired of me (you know what it is I mean), and methought you gave me as a reward ten pounds, with your consent to marry that young man that I have loved so long." "Didst thou dream so? thy dream I will make good, for under my handwriting I give my free consent to marry him, or whom thou dost please to marry (and withal writ); and for the ten pounds, go but into the out-barn, and I will bring it thee presently. How sayest thou," said the old lecher; "wilt thou?" Robin with silence did seem to grant, and went toward the barn. The old man made haste, told out his money, and followed.

Being come thither, he hurled the money on the ground, saying, "This is the most pleasing bargain that ever I made;" and going to embrace Robin, Robin took him up in his arms and carried him forth; first drew him through a pond to cool his hot blood, then did he carry him where the young married couple were, and said, "Here is your uncle's consent under his hand; then, here is the ten pounds he gave you, and there is your uncle: let him deny it if he can."

The old man, for fear of worse usage, said all was true. "Then am I as good as my word," said Robin, and so went, away laughing. The old man knew himself duly punished, and turned his hatred into love, and thought afterward as well of them as if she had been his own. The second part shall show many incredible things done by Robin Good-fellow (or otherwise called Hob-goblin) and his companions, by turning himself into divers sundry shapes.

THE SECOND PART OF ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW, COMMONLY CALLED HOB-GOBLIN

HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW HELPED A MAID TO WORK

Robin Good-fellow oftentimes would in the night visit farmers' houses, and help the maids to break hemp, to bolt[5], to dress flax, and to spin and do other work, for he was excellent in everything. One night he came to a farmer's house, where there was a good handsome maid: this maid having much work to do, Robin one night did help her, and in six hours did bolt more than she could have done in twelve hours. The maid wondered the next day how her work came, and to know the doer, she watched the next night that did follow. About twelve of the clock in came Robin, and fell to breaking of hemp, and for to delight himself he sung this mad song.

And can the physician make sick men well?
And can the magician a fortune divine?
Without lily, germander and sops-in-wine?
With sweet-brier
And bon-fire,

And strawberry wire,
And columbine.

Within and out, in and out, round as a ball,
With hither and thither, as straight as a line,
With lily, germander and sops-in-wine.
With sweet-brier,
And bon-fire,
And strawberry wire,
And columbine.

When Saturn did live, there lived no poor,
The king and the beggar with roots did dine,
With lily, germander and sops-in-wine.
With sweet-brier,
And bon-fire,
And strawberry wire,
And columbine.

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The maid, seeing him bare in clothes, pitied him, and against the next night provided him a waistcoat. Robin, coming the next night to work, as he did before, espied the waistcoat, whereat he started and said—

Because thou lay'st me, himpen, hampen,[6]
I will neither bolt nor stampen;
'Tis not your garments new or old
That Robin loves: I feel no cold.
Had you left me milk or cream,
You should have had a pleasing dream:
Because you left no drop or crumb,
Robin never more will come.

So went he away laughing, *ho, ho, hoh!* The maid was much grieved and discontented at his anger: for ever after she was fain to do her work herself without the help of Robin Good-fellow.

HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW LED A COMPANY OF FELLOWS OUT OF THEIR WAY

A company of young men having been making merry with their sweethearts, were at their coming home to come over a heath. Robin Good-fellow, knowing of it, met them, and to make some pastime, he led them up and down the heath a whole night, so that they could not get out of it; for he went before them in the shape of a walking fire, which they all saw and followed till the day did appear: then Robin left them, and at his departure spake these words—

Get you home, you merry lads!
Tell your mammies and your dads,
And all those that news desire,
How you saw a walking fire.
Wenches, that do smile and lisp
Use to call me Willy Wisp.
If that you but weary he,
It is sport alone for me.
Away: unto your houses go
And I'll go laughing *ho, ho, hoh!*

The fellows were glad that he was gone, for they were all in a great fear that he would have done them some mischief.

HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW SERVED A LECHEROUS GALLANT

Robin always did help those that suffered wrong, and never would hurt any but those that did wrong to others. It was his chance one day to go through a field where he heard one call for help: he, going near where he heard the cry, saw a lusty gallant that would have forced a young maiden to his lust; but the maiden in no wise would yield, which made her cry for help. Robin Good-fellow, seeing of this, turned himself into the shape of a hare, and so ran between the lustful gallant's legs. This gallant, thinking to have taken him, he presently turned himself into a horse, and so perforce carried away this gallant on his back. The gentleman cried out for help, for he thought that the devil had been come to fetch him for his wickedness; but his crying was in vain, for Robin did carry him into a thick hedge, and there left him so pricked and scratched, that he more desired a plaister for his pain than a wench for his pleasure. Thus the poor maid was freed from this ruffian, and Robin Good-fellow, to see this gallant so tame, went away laughing, *ho, ho, hoh!*

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HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW TURNED A MISERABLE USURER TO A GOOD HOUSE-KEEPER

In this country of ours there was a rich man dwelled, who to get wealth together was so sparing that he could not find in his heart to give his belly food enough. In the winter he never would make so much fire as would roast a black-pudding, for he found it more profitable to sit by other men's. His apparel was of the fashion that none did wear; for it was such as did hang at a broker's stall, till it was as weather-beaten as an old sign. This man for his covetousness was so hated of all his neighbours, that there was not one that gave him a good word. Robin Good-fellow grieved to see a man of such wealth do so little good, and therefore practised to better him in this manner.

One night the usurer being in bed, Robin in the shape of a night-raven[7] came to the window, and there did beat with his wings, and croaked in such manner that this old usurer thought he should have presently died for fear. This was but a preparation to what he did intend; for presently after he appeared before him at his bed's feet, in the shape of a ghost, with a torch in his hand. At the sight of this the old usurer would have risen out of his bed, and have leaped out of the window, but he was stayed by Robin Good-fellow, who spake to him thus—

If thou dost stir out of thy bed,
I do vow to strike thee dead.
I do come to do thee good;
Recall thy wits and starkled[8] blood.
The money which thou up dost store
In soul and body makes thee poor.
Do good with money while you may;
Thou hast not long on earth to stay.
Do good, I say, or day and night
I hourly thus will thee affright.
Think on my words, and so farewell,
For being bad I live in hell.

Having said thus he vanished away and left this usurer in great terror of mind; and for fear of being frighted again with this ghost, he turned very liberal, and lived amongst his neighbours as an honest man should do.

HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW LOVED A WEAVER'S WIFE,
AND HOW THE WEAVER WOULD HAVE DROWNED HIM

One day Robin Good-fellow, walking through the street, found at the door sitting a pretty woman: this woman was wife to the weaver, and was a-winding of quills[9] for her husband. Robin liked her so well, that for her sake he became servant to her husband,

and did daily work at the loom; but all the kindness that he showed was but lost, for his mistress would show him no favour, which made him many times to exclaim against the whole sex in satirical songs; and one day being at work he sung this, to the tune of *Rejoice Bag-pipes*—

Why should my love now wax
  Unconstant, wavering, fickle, unstaid?
With nought can she me tax:
  I ne’er recanted what I once said.
I now do see, as nature fades,
  And all her works decay,
So women all, wives, widows, maids,
  From bad to worse do stray.

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As herbs, trees, roots, and plants
  In strength and growth are daily less,
So all things have their wants:
  The heavenly signs move and digress;
And honesty in women's hearts
  Hath not her former being:
Their thoughts are ill, like other parts,
  Nought else in them's agreeing.

I sooner thought thunder
  Had power o'er the laurel wreath,
Than she, women's wonder,
  Such perjured thoughts should live to breathe.
They all hyena-like will weep,
  When that they would deceive:
Deceit in them doth lurk and sleep,
  Which makes me thus to grieve.

Young man's delight, farewell;
  Wine, women, game, pleasure, adieu:
Content with me shall dwell;
  I'll nothing trust but what is true.
Though she were false, for her I'll pray;
  Her falsehood made me blest:
I will renew from this good day
  My life by sin opprest.

Moved with this song and other complaints of his, she at last did fancy him, so that the weaver did not like that Robin should be so saucy with his wife, and therefore gave him warning to be gone, for he would keep him no longer. This grieved this loving couple to part one from the other, which made them to make use of the time that they had. The weaver one day coming in, found them a-kissing: at this he said [nothing] but vowed in himself to be revenged of his man that night following. Night being come, the weaver went to Robin's bed, and took him out of it (as he then thought) and ran apace to the river side to hurl Robin in; but the weaver was deceived, for Robin, instead of himself, had laid in his bed a sack full of yarn: it was that that the weaver carried to drown. The weaver standing by the river side said:—Now will I cool your hot blood, Master Robert, and if you cannot swim the better you shall sink and drown, With that he hurled the sack in, thinking that it had been Robin Good-fellow. Robin, standing behind him, said—

For this your kindness, master, I you thank:
Go swim yourself; I'll stay upon the bank.

With that Robin pushed him in, and went laughing away, *ho, ho, hoh!*

HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW WENT IN THE SHAPE OF A FIDDLER TO A WEDDING, AND OF THE SPORT THAT HE HAD THERE

On a time there was a great wedding, to which there went many young lusty lads and pretty lasses. Robin Good-fellow longing not to be out of action, shaped himself like unto a fiddler, and with his crowd under his arm went amongst them, and was a very welcome man. There played he whilst they danced, and took as much delight in seeing them, as they did in hearing him. At dinner he was desired to sing a song, which he did to the tune of *Watton Town's End*[10].

THE SONG

It was a country lad
  That fashions strange would see,
And he came to a vaulting school,
  Where tumblers used to be:
He liked his sport so well,
  That from it he'd not part:
His doxy to him still did cry,
  Come, buss thine own sweetheart.

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They liked his gold so well,
  That they were both content,
That he that night with his sweetheart
  Should pass in merriment.
To bed they then did go;
  Full well he knew his part,
Where he with words, and eke with deeds,
  Did buss his own sweetheart.

Long were they not in bed,
  But one knocked at the door,
And said, Up, rise, and let me in:
  This vexed both knave and whore.
He being sore perplexed
  From bed did lightly start;
No longer then could he endure
  To buss his own sweetheart.

With tender steps he trod,
  To see if he could spy
The man that did him so molest;
  Which he with heavy eye
Had soon beheld, and said,
  Alas! my own sweetheart,
I now do doubt, if e’er we buss,
  It must be in a cart.

At last the bawd arose
 And opened the door,
And saw Discretion cloth’d in rug,
  Whose office hates a whore.
He mounted up the stairs,
  Being cunning in his art;
With little search at last he found
  My youth and his sweetheart.

He having wit at will,
  Unto them both did say,
I will not hear them speak one word
  Watchmen, with them away!
And cause they loved so well
  ’Tis pity they should part.
Away with them to new Bride-well;
  There buss your own sweetheart.

His will it was fulfilled,
  And there they had the law;
And whilst that they did nimbly spin,
  The hemp he needs must taw.
He ground, he thumped, he grew
  So cunning in his art,
He learnt the trade of beating hemp
  By bussing his sweetheart.

But yet, he still would say,
  If I could get release
To see strange fashions I'll give o'er,
  And henceforth live in peace,
The town where I was bred,
  And think by my desart
To come no more into this place
  For bussing my sweetheart.

They all liked his song very well, and said that the young man had but ill-luck. Thus continued he playing and singing songs till candle-light: then he began to play his merry tricks in this manner. First he put out the candles, and then, being dark, he struck the men good boxes on the ears: they, thinking it had been those that did sit next them, fell a-fighting one with the other; so that there was not one of them but had either a broken head or a bloody nose. At this Robin laughed heartily. The women did not escape him, for the handsomest he kissed; the other he pinched, and made them scratch one the other, as if they had been cats. Candles being lighted again, they all were friends, and fell again to dancing, and after to supper.

Supper being ended, a great posset was brought forth: at this Robin Good-fellow's teeth did water, for it looked so lovely that he could not keep from it. To attain to his wish, he did turn himself into a bear: both men and women (seeing a bear amongst them) ran away, and left the whole posset to Robin Good-fellow. He quickly made an end of it, and went away without his money; for the sport he had was better to him than any money whatsoever. The fear that the guests were in did cause such a smell, that the bridegroom did call for perfumes; and instead of a posset, he was fain to make use of cold beer.

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HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW SERVED A TAPSTER FOR NICKING HIS POTS

There was a tapster, that with his pots' smallness, and with frothing of his drink, had got a good sum of money together. This nicking of the pots he would never leave, yet divers times he had been under the hand of authority, but what money soever he had [to pay] for his abuses, he would be sure (as they all do) to get it out of the poor man's pot again. Robin Good-fellow, hating such knavery, put a trick upon him in this manner.

Robin shaped himself like to the tapster's brewer, and came and demanded twenty pounds which was due to him from the tapster. The tapster, thinking it had been his brewer, paid him the money, which money Robin gave to the poor of that parish before the tapster's face. The tapster praised his charity very much, and said that God would bless him the better for such good deeds: so after they had drank one with the other, they parted.

Some four days after the brewer himself came for his money: the tapster told him that it was paid, and that he had a quittance from him to show. Hereat the brewer did wonder, and desired to see the quittance. The tapster fetched him a writing, which Robin Good-fellow had given him instead of a quittance, wherein was written as followeth, which the brewer read to him—

I, Robin Good-fellow, true man and honest man, do acknowledge to have received of Nick and Froth, the cheating tapster, the sum of twenty pounds, which money I have bestowed (to the tapster's content) among the poor of the parish, out of whose pockets this aforesaid tapster had picked the aforesaid sum, not after the manner of foisting, but after his excellent skill of bombasting[11], or a pint for a penny.

If now thou wilt go hang thyself,
Then take thy apron strings;
It doth me good when such foul birds
Upon the gallows sings.
Per me ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW.

At this the tapster swore Walsingham; but for all his swearing, the brewer made him pay him his twenty pounds.

HOW KING OBREON[12] CALLED ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW TO DANCE

King Obreon, seeing Robin Good-fellow do so many honest and merry tricks, called him one night out of his bed with these words, saying—

Robin, my son, come quickly, rise:
First stretch, then yawn, and rub your eyes;
For thou must go with me to-night,
To see, and taste of my delight.
Quickly come, my wanton son;
'Twere time our sports were now begun.

Robin, hearing this, rose and went to him. There were with King Obreon a many fairies, all attired in green silk; all these, with King Obreon, did welcome Robin Good-fellow into their company. Obreon took Robin by the hand and led him a dance: their musician was little Tom Thumb; for he had an excellent bag-pipe made of a wren's quill, and the skin of a Greenland louse: this pipe was so shrill, and so sweet, that a Scottish pipe compared to it, it would no more come near it, than a Jew's-trump doth to an Irish harp. After they had danced, King Obreon spake to his son, Robin Good-fellow, in this manner—

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When e’er you hear my piper blow,
From thy bed see that thou go;
For nightly you must with us dance,
When we in circles round do prance.
I love thee, son, and by the hand
I carry thee to Fairy Land,
Where thou shalt see what no man knows:
Such love thee King Obreon owes.

So marched they in good manner (with their piper before) to the Fairy Land: there did King Obreon show Robin Good-fellow many secrets, which he never did open to the world.

HOW ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW WAS WONT TO WALK IN THE NIGHT

Robin Good-fellow would many times walk in the night with a broom on his shoulder, and cry “chimney sweep,” but when any one did call him, then would he run away laughing *ho, ho, hoh!* Sometimes he would counterfeit a beggar, begging very pitifully, but when they came to give him an alms, he would run away, laughing as his manner was. Sometimes would he knock at men’s doors, and when the servants came, he would blow out the candle, if they were men; but if they were women, he would not only put out their light, but kiss them full sweetly, and then go away as his fashion was, *ho, ho, hoh!* Oftentimes would he sing at a door like a singing man, and when they did come to give him his reward, he would turn his back and laugh. In these humours of his he had many pretty songs, which I will sing as perfect as I can. For his chimney-sweeper’s humours he had these songs: the first is to the tune of *I have been a fiddler these fifteen years*.

Black I am from head to foot,
And all doth come by chimney soot:
Then maidens, come and cherish him
That makes your chimneys neat and trim.

Horns have I store, but all at my back;
My head no ornament doth lack:
I give my horns to other men,
And ne’er require them again.

Then come away, you wanton wives,
That love your pleasures as your lives:
To each good woman I’ll give two,
Or more, if she think them too few.

Then would he change his note and sing this following, to the tune of *What care I how fair she be?*[13]

Be she blacker than the stock,
  If that thou wilt make her fair,
Put her in a cambric smock,
  Buy her paint and flaxen hair.

One your carrier brings to town
  Will put down your city-bred;
Put her on a broker's gown,
  That will sell her maiden-head.

Comes your Spaniard, proud in mind,
  He'll have the first cut, or else none:
The meek Italian comes behind,
  And your Frenchman picks the bone.

Still she trades with Dutch and Scot,
  Irish, and the German tall,
Till she gets the thing you wot;
  Then her end's an hospital.

A song to the tune of *The Spanish Pavin*[14].

When Virtue was a country maid,
And had no skill to set up trade,
She came up with a carrier's jade,
  And lay at rack and manger.
She whiffed her pipe, she drunk her can,
The pot was ne'er out of her span;
She married a tobacco man,
  A stranger, a stranger.

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They set up shop in Honey Lane,
And thither flies did swarm amain,
Some from France, some from Spain,
  Train'd in by scurvy panders.
At last this honey pot grew dry,
Then both were forced for to fly
  To Flanders, to Flanders.

Another to the tune of *The Coranto*.

I peeped in at the Woolsack,
O, what a goodly sight did I
Behold at midnight chime!
The wenches were drinking of mulled sack;
Each youth on his knee, that then did want
A year and a half of his time.
  They leaped and skipped,
  They kissed and they clipped,
  And yet it was counted no crime.

The grocer's chief servant brought sugar,
And out of his leather pocket he pulled,
And culled some pound and a half;
For which he was suffered to smack her
That was his sweetheart, and would not depart,
But turned and lick'd the calf.
  He rung her, and he flung her,
  He kissed her, and he swung her,
  And yet she did nothing but laugh.

Thus would he sing about cities and towns, and when any one called him, he would change his shape, and go laughing *ho, ho, hoh!* For his humours of begging he used this song, to the tune of *The Jovial Tinker*[15].

Good people of this mansion,
  Unto the poor be pleased
To do some good, and give some food,
  That hunger may be eased.
My limbs with fire are burned,
  My goods and lands defaced;
Of wife and child I am beguiled,
  So much am I debased.
Oh, give the poor some bread, cheese, or butter,
  Bacon, hemp, or flax;

Some pudding bring, or other thing:
My need doth make me ax[16].

I am no common beggar,
Nor am I skilled in canting:
You ne’er shall see a wench with me,
Such tricks in me are wanting.
I curse not if you give not,
But still I pray and bless you,
Still wishing joy, and that annoy
May never more possess you.
Oh, give the poor some bread, cheese or butter,
Bacon, hemp or flax;
Some pudding bring, or other thing,
My need doth make me ax.

When any came to relieve him, then would he change himself into some other shape, and run laughing, *ho, ho, hoh!* Then would he shape himself like to a singing man; and at men’s windows and doors sing civil and virtuous songs, one of which I will sing to the tune of *Broom*[17].

If thou wilt lead a blest and happy life,
I will describe the perfect way:
First must thou shun all cause of mortal strife,
Against thy lusts continually to pray.
Attend unto God’s word:
Great comfort ’twill afford;
’Twill keep thee from discord.
Then trust in God, the Lord,
for ever,
for ever;
And see in this thou persever.

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So soon as day appeareth in the east
Give thanks to him, and mercy crave;
So in this life thou shalt be surely blest,
And mercy shalt thou find in grave.
The conscience that is clear
No horror doth it fear;
'Tis void of mortal care,
And never doth despair;
but ever,
but ever
Doth in the word of God persever.

Thus living, when thou drawest to thy end
Thy joys they shall much more increase,
For then thy soul, thy true and loving friend,
By death shall find a wished release
From all that caused sin,
In which it lived in;
For then it doth begin
Those blessed joys to win,
for ever,
for ever,
For there is nothing can them sever.

Those blessed joys which then thou shalt possess,
No mortal tongue can them declare:
All earthly joys, compared with this, are less
Than smallest mote to the world so fair.
Then is not that man blest
That must enjoy this rest?
Full happy is that guest
Invited to this feast,
that ever,
that ever
Endureth and is ended never.

When they opened the window or door, then would he run away laughing *ho, ho, hoh!* Sometimes would he go like a bellman in the night, and with many pretty verses delight the ears of those that waked at his bell ringing: his verses were these—

Maids in your smocks,
Look well to your locks,
And your tinder box,
Your wheels and your rocks,

Your hens and your cocks,
Your cows and your ox,
And beware of the fox.
When the bellman knocks,
Put out your fire and candle-light,
So they shall not you affright:
May you dream of your delights,
In your sleeps see pleasing sights.
Good rest to all, both old and young:
The bellman now hath done his song.

Then would he go laughing *ho, ho, hoh!* as his use was. Thus would he continually practise himself in honest mirth, never doing hurt to any that were cleanly and honest-minded.

HOW THE FAIRIES CALLED ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW TO DANCE WITH THEM, AND HOW THEY SHOWED HIM THEIR SEVERAL CONDITIONS

Robin Good-fellow being walking one night heard the excellent music of Tom Thumb's brave bag-pipe: he remembering the sound (according to the command of King Obreon) went towards them. They, for joy that he was come, did circle him in, and in a ring did dance round about him. Robin Good-fellow, seeing their love to him, danced in the midst of them, and sung them this song to the tune of *To him Bun*.

THE SONG

Round about, little ones, quick and nimble,
In and out wheel about, run, hop, or amble.
Join your hands lovingly: well done, musician!
Mirth keepeth man in health like a physician.
Elves, urchins, goblins all, and little fairies
That do filch, black, and pinch maids of the dairies;
Make a ring on the grass with your quick measures,
Tom shall play, and I'll sing for all your pleasures.

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Pinch and Patch, Gull and Grim,
Go you together,
For you can change your shapes
Like to the weather.
Sib and Tib, Lick and Lull,
You all have tricks, too;
Little Tom Thumb that pipes
Shall go betwixt you.
Tom, tickle up thy pipes
Till they be weary:
I will laugh, *ho, ho, hoh!*
And make me merry.
Make a ring on this grass
With your quick measures:
Tom shall play, I will sing
For all your pleasures.
The moon shines fair and bright,
And the owl hollos,
Mortals now take their rests
Upon their pillows:
The bat's abroad likewise,
And the night-raven,
Which doth use for to call
Men to Death's haven.
Now the mice peep abroad,
And the cats take them,
Now do young wenches sleep,
Till their dreams wake them.
Make a ring on the grass
With your quick measures:
Tom shall play, I will sing
For all your pleasures.

Thus danced they a good space: at last they left and sat down upon the grass; and to requite Robin Good-fellow's kindness, they promised to tell to him all the exploits that they were accustomed to do: Robin thanked them and listened to them, and one began to tell his tricks in this manner.

THE TRICKS OF THE FAIRY CALLED PINCH

"After that we have danced in this manner as you have beheld, I, that am called Pinch, do go about from house to house: sometimes I find the doors of the house open; that negligent servant that left them so, I do so nip him or her, that with my pinches their

bodies are as many colours as a mackerel's back. Then take I them, and lay I them in the door, naked or unnaked I care not whether: there they lie, many times till broad day, ere they waken; and many times, against their wills, they show some parts about them, that they would not have openly seen.

"Sometimes I find a slut sleeping in the chimney-corner, when she should be washing of her dishes, or doing something else which she hath left undone: her I pinch about the arms, for not laying her arms to her labour. Some I find in their bed snorting and sleeping, and their houses lying as clean as a nasty dog's kennel; in one corner bones, in another egg-shells, behind the door a heap of dust, the dishes under feet, and the cat in the cupboard: all these sluttish tricks I do reward with blue legs, and blue arms. I find some slovens too, as well as sluts: they pay for their beastliness too, as well as the women-kind; for if they uncase a sloven and not untie their points, I so pay their arms that they cannot sometimes untie them, if they would. Those that leave foul shoes, or go into their beds with their stockings on, I use them as I did the former, and never leave them till they have left their beastliness.

But to the good I do no harm,
But cover them and keep them warm:
Sluts and slovens I do pinch,
And make them in their beds to winch
This is my practice, and my trade;
Many have I cleanly made."

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THE TRICKS OF THE FAIRY CALLED PATCH

“About midnight do I walk, and for the tricks I play they call me Patch. When I find a slut asleep, I smutch her face if it be clean; but if it be dirty, I wash it in the next piss pot that I can find: the balls I use to wash such sluts withal is a sow’s pancake or a pilgrim’s salve. Those that I find with their heads nitty and scabby, for want of combing, I am their barbers, and cut their hair as close as an ape’s tail; or else clap so much pitch on it, that they must cut it off themselves to their great shame. Slovens also that neglect their masters’ business, they do not escape. Some I find that spoil their masters’ horses for want of currying: those I do daub with grease and soot, that they are fain to curry themselves ere they can get clean. Others that for laziness will give the poor beasts no meat, I oftentimes so punish them with blows, that they cannot feed themselves they are so sore.

Thus many tricks I Patch can do,
But to the good I ne’er was foe:
The bad I hate and will do ever,
Till they from ill themselves do sever.
To help the good I’ll run and go,
The bad no good from me shall know.”

THE TRICKS OF THE FAIRY CALLED GULL

“When mortals keep their beds I walk abroad, and for my pranks am called by the name of Gull. I with a feigned voice do often deceive many men, to their great amazement. Many times I get on men and women, and so lie on their stomachs, that I cause there great pain, for which they call me by the name of Hag, or Nightmare. ’Tis I that do steal children, and in the place of them leave changelings. Sometimes I also steal milk and cream, and then with my brothers, Patch, Pinch, and Grim, and sisters Sib, Tib, Lick, and Lull, I feast with my stolen goods: our little piper hath his share in all our spoils, but he nor our women fairies do ever put themselves in danger to do any great exploit.

What Gull can do, I have you shown;
I am inferior unto none.
Command me, Robin, thou shalt know,
That I for thee will ride or go:
I can do greater things than these
Upon the land, and on the seas.”

THE TRICKS OF THE FAIRY CALLED GRIM

“I walk with the owl, and make many to cry as loud as she doth hollo. Sometimes I do affright many simple people, for which some have termed me the Black Dog of Newgate. At the meetings of young men and maids I many times am, and when they are in the midst of all their good cheer, I come in, in some fearful shape, and affright them, and then carry away their good cheer, and eat it with my fellow fairies. ’Tis I that do, like a screech-owl cry at sick men’s windows, which makes the hearers so fearful, that they say, that the sick person cannot live. Many other ways have I to fright the simple, but the understanding man I cannot move to fear, because he knows I have no power to do hurt.

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My nightly business I have told,
To play these tricks I use of old:
When candles burn both blue and dim,
Old folk will say, Here's fairy Grim.
More tricks than these I use to do:
Hereat cried Robin, *Ho, ho, hoh!*"

THE TRICKS OF THE WOMEN FAIRIES TOLD BY SIB

"To walk nightly, as do the men fairies, we use not; but now and then we go together, and at good housewives' fires we warm and dress our fairy children. If we find clean water and clean towels, we leave them money, either in their basins or in their shoes; but if we find no clean water in their houses, we wash our children in their pottage, milk, or beer, or whate'er we find: for the sluts that leave not such things fitting, we wash their faces and hands with a gilded child's clout, or else carry them to some river, and duck them over head and ears. We often use to dwell in some great hill, and from thence we do lend money to any poor man or woman that hath need; but if they bring it not again at the day appointed, we do not only punish them with pinching, but also in their goods, so that they never thrive till they have paid us.

Tib and I the chiefest are,
And for all things do take care.
Lick is cook and dresseth meat,
And fetcheth all things that we eat:
Lull is nurse and tends the cradle,
And the babes doth dress and swaddle.
This little fellow, called Tom Thumb,
That is no bigger than a plum,
He is the porter to our gate,
For he doth let all in thereat,
And makes us merry with his play,
And merrily we spend the day."

She having spoken, Tom Thumb stood up on tip-toe and showed himself, saying—

My actions all in volumes two are wrote,
The least of which will never be forgot.

He had no sooner ended his two lines, but a shepherd (that was watching in the field all night) blew up a bag-pipe: this so frightened Tom, that he could not tell what to do for the present time. The fairies seeing Tom Thumb in such a fear, punished the shepherd with his pipes' loss, so that the shepherd's pipe presently brake in his hand, to his great

amazement. Hereat did Robin Good-fellow laugh, *ho, ho, hoh!* Morning being come, they all hasted to Fairy Land, where I think they yet remain.

My hostess asked me how I liked this tale? I said, it was long enough, and good enough to pass time that might be worser spent. I, seeing her dry, called for two pots: she emptied one of them at a draught, and never breathed for the matter: I emptied the other at leisure; and being late I went to bed, and did dream of this which I had heard.

* * * * *

THE ROMANCE OF THOMAS OF ERCELDOUNE

FYTTE I

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As I me went this endris[1] day,
  Full fast in mind making my moan,
In a merry morning of May
  By Huntlie banks myself alone,
I heard the jay and the throstle-cock;
  The mavis meaned[2] her of her song;
The woodwale bered[3] as a bell,
  That all the wood about me rong.
Alone in longing thus as I lay
  Underneath a seemly tree,
Saw I where a lady gay
  Came riding over a longe lea.
If I should sit to Doomesday
  With my tongue to wrable and wry[4],
Certainly that lady gay
  Never be she described for me!
Her palfrey was a dapple-gray,[5]
  Swilk[6] one ne saw I never none;
As does the sun on summer's day,
  That fair lady herself she shone.
Her saddle it was of roelle-bone[7];
  Full seemly was that sight to see!
Stiffly set with precious stone
  And compast all with crapotee[8]—
Stones of Orient great plenty;
  Her hair about her head it hang;
She rode over that longe lea;
  A while she blew, another she sang.
Her girths of noble silk they were;
  The buckles were of beryl-stone;
Her stirrups were of crystal clear,
  And all with pearl overbegone[9];
Her paytrell[10] was of iral-stone;
  Her crupper was of orphare[11];
And as clear gold her bridle shone;
  On either side hang belles three.
She led three grew-hounds in a leash,
  And seven raches[12] by her they ran;
She bare an horn about her halse[13],
  And under/her belt full many a flane[14].
Thomas lay and saw that sight
  Underneath a seemly tree.
He said "Yon is Mary most of might,[15]

That bare that child that died for me.
But-if[16] I speak with yon lady bright,
I hope my heart will break in three!
Now shall I go with all my might
Her for to meet at Eildon tree[17].”
Thomas rathely[18] up he rase,
And he ran over that mountain high;
If it be as the story says,
Her he met at Eildon tree.
He kneeled down upon his knee,
Underneath that greenwood spray,
And said “Lovely lady, rue on me,
Queen of heaven, as thou well may!”
Then spake that lady mild of thought,
“Thomas, let such wordes be;
Queen of heaven ne am I nought,
For I took never so high degree.
But I am of another country,
If I be ’parelled most of price;
I ride after these wilde fee[19];
My raches runnes at my device.”
“If thou be ’parelled most of price,

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And here rides thus in thy folly,
Of love, lady, as thou art wise,
Thou give me leave to lie thee by!”
She said “Thou man, that were folly;
I pray thee, Thomas, thou let me be;
For I say thee full sekerly[20],
That sin will fordo all my beauty,”
“Now, lovely lady, rue on me,
And I will evermore with thee dwell;
Here my troth I will plight to thee,
Whether thou wilt in heaven or hell.”
“Man of mould, thou wilt me mar;
But yet thou shalt have all thy will;
And, trow it well, thou ’chievest the ware[21],
For all my beauty wilt thou spill.”
Down then light that lady bright
Underneath that greenwood spray.
And, as the story tells full right,
Seven times by her he lay.
She said “Man, thee likes thy play;
What byrde[22] in bower may deal with thee?
Thou marrest me all this longe day;
I pray thee, Thomas, let me be!”
Thomas stood up in that stead[23],
And he beheld that lady gay;
Her hair it hang all over her head;
Her eyne were out, that ere were gray;
And all the rich clothing was away
That he before saw in that stead;
Her one shank black, her other gray,
And all her body like the lead.
Then said Thomas “Alas, alas!
In faith this is a duleful[24] sight;
How art thou faded thus in the face,
That shone before as the sun so bright!”
She said, “Thomas, take leave at sun and moon,
And also at leaf that grows on tree;
This twelvemonth shalt thou with me gone[25],
And Middle-earth[26] shalt thou none see.”
He kneeled down upon his knee,

Underneath that greenwood spray,
And said “Lovely lady[27], rue on me,
Mild queen of heaven, as thou best may!
Alas!” he said, “and woe is me!
I trow my deeds will work me care;
My soul, Jesu, beteach[28] I thee,
Whithersoever my bones shall fare.”
She led him in at Eildon hill
Underneath a derne[29] lea,
Where it was dark as midnight mirk,
And ever the water till his knee.
The mountenance[30] of dayes three
He heard but swoughing of the flood;
At the last he said “Full woe is me!
Almost I die for fault of food.”
She led him intill a fair herbere[31]
Where fruit was growing great plenty;
Pear and apple, both ripe they were,
The date, and also the damasee,
The fig, and also the wine-berry;
The nightegales bigging[32] on their nest;
The papejoys[33] fast about gan fly,

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And throstles sang, would have no rest.
He pressed to pull fruit with his hand,
As man for food that was near faint.
She said “Thomas, thou let them stand,[34]
Or else the fiend thee will attaint!
If thou it pluck, soothly to say,
Thy soul goes to the fire of hell;
It comes never out or Doomesday,
But there in pain aye for to dwell.
Thomas, soothly, I thee hight[35],
Come lay thy head down on my knee,
And thou shalt see the fairest sight
That ever saw man of thy country.”
He did in hight[36] as she him bade;
Upon her knee his head he laid,
For her to pay[37] he was full glad,
And then that lady to him said:
“Seest thou[38] now yon fair[39] way,
That lieth over yon high mountain?
Yon is the way to heaven for aye
When sinful souls are past their pain.
Seest thou now yon other way,
That lieth low beneath yon rise[40]?
Yon is the way, thee sooth to say,
Unto the joy of Paradise.
Seest thou yet yon thirde way,
That lieth under yon greene plain?
Yon is the way, with teen and tray[41],
Where sinful soules suffer their pain.
But seest thou now yon fourthe way,
That lieth over yon deepe dell?
Yon is the way, so wellaway!
Unto the burning fire of hell.
Seest thou yet yon fair castel,
That standeth over yon highe hill?
Of town and tower it bears the bell,
In earth is none like it untill.
For sooth, Thomas, yon is mine own,
And the king’s of this country;
But me were lever[42] be hanged and drawn

Or that[43] he wist thou lay me by.
When thou com’st to yon castle gay,
I pray thee courteous man to be,
And whatso any man to thee say,
Look thou answer none but me.
My lord is served at each mess
With thirty knightes fair and free;
I shall say, sitting at the dess[44],
I took thy speech beyond the sea.”
Thomas still as stone he stood,
And he beheld that lady gay;
She came again as fair and good
And also rich on her palfrey.
Her grewhounds filled with deer-blood;
Her raches coupled, by my fay;
She blew her horn with main and mood[45];
Unto the castle she took the way.
Into the hall soothly she went;
Thomas followed at her hand;
Then ladies came, both fair and gent,
With courtesy to her kneeland[46].
Harp and fithel both they fand[47],
Gittern and also the sawtery[48],

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Lute and ribib[49] both gangand[50],
And all manner of minstrelsy.
The most marvel that Thomas thought,
When that he stood upon the floor,
For fifty hartes in were brought,
That were bothe great and store[51].
Raches lay lapping in the blood;
Cookes came with dressing-knife;
They brittened[52] them as they were wood;
Revel among them was full rife.
Knightes danced by three and three,
There was revel, gamen, and play;
Lovely ladies, fair and free,
That sat and sang on rich array.
Thomas dwelled in that solace
More than I you say, parde;
Till on a day, so have I grace,
My lovely lady said to me[53];
“Do busk thee, Thomas; thee buse[54] again;
For thou may here no longer be;
Hie thee fast with might and main;
I shall thee bring till Eildon tree.”
Thomas said then with heavy cheer[55],
“Lovely lady, now let me be;
For certes, lady, I have been here
Nought but the space of dayes three!”
“For sooth, Thomas, as I thee tell,
Thou hast been here three year and more;
But longer here thou may not dwell;[56]
The skill[57] I shall thee tell wherefore.
To-morn[58], of hell the foule fiend
Among this folk will fetch his fee;
And thou art mickle man and hend[59],
I trow full well he would choose thee.
For all the gold that ever may be
From hethen[60] unto the worldes end,
Thou beest never betrayed for me;
Therefore with me I rede[61] thou wend.”
She brought him again to Eildon tree,
Underneath that greenwood spray.

In Huntlie banks is merry to be,
  Where fowles sing both night and day.[62]
"Farewell, Thomas, I wend my way,
  For me buse[63] over the bentes brown."
—Lo, here a fytte; more is to say[64] 235
  All of Thomas of Erceldoune.

* * * * *

REGINALD SCOT

DISCOVERY OF WITCHCRAFT (1584)

From "To the Readers."

I should no more prevail herein [*i.e.* in securing attention] than if a hundred years since I should have entreated your predecessors to believe, that Robin Goodfellow, that great and ancient bull-beggar, had been but a cozening merchant and no devil indeed.... But Robin Goodfellow ceaseth now to be much feared, and popery is sufficiently discovered.

Book I, chap. iv.—"What miraculous actions are imputed to witches by witchmongers, papists, and poets."

[Quoted here to show that certain attributes of Shakespeare's fairies belong also to witches.]

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[They] raise hail, tempests, and hurtful weather, as lighting, thunder, &c.... These can pass from place to place in the air invisible.... These can alter men's minds to inordinate love or hate.... Ovid affirmeth that they can raise and suppress lighting and thunder, rain and hail, clouds and winds, tempests and earthquakes. Others do write that they can pull down the moon and the stars.... They can also bring to pass, that, churn as long as you list, your butter will not come.

Book III, chap. iv.

The Fairies do principally inhabit the mountains and caverns of the earth, whose nature is to make strange apparitions on the earth, in meadows or on mountains, being like men and women, soldiers, kings, and ladies, children and horsemen, clothed in green, to which purpose they do in the night steal hempen stalks from the fields where they grow, to convert them into horses, as the story goes.... Such jocund and facetious spirits are said to sport themselves in the night by tumbling and fooling with servants and shepherds in country houses, pinching them black and blue, and leaving bread, butter, and cheese sometimes with them, which, if they refuse to eat, some mischief shall undoubtedly befall them by the means of these Fairies; and many such have been taken away by the said spirits for a fortnight or a month together, being carried with them in chariots through the air, over hills and dales, rocks and precipices, till at last they have been found lying in some meadow or mountain, bereaved of their senses and commonly one of their members to boot.

Book III, chap. xvi.

It may not be omitted that certain wicked women ... being seduced by the illusion of devils, believe and profess that in the night-times they ride abroad with Diana, the goddess of the Pagans, or else with Herodias, with an innumerable multitude, upon certain beasts, and pass over many countries and nations in the silence of the night, and do whatsoever those fairies or ladies command.

Book IV, chap. x.

Indeed your grandam's maids were wont to set a bowl of milk before him and his cousin, Robin Goodfellow, for grinding of malt or mustard, and sweeping the house at midnight; and you have also heard that he would chafe exceedingly, if the maid or goodwife of the house, having compassion of his nakedness, laid any clothes for him, besides his mess of white bread and milk which was his standing fee. For in that case he saith: What have we here? Hemton hamton[1], here will I never more tread nor stampen.

Book V, chap. iii. "Of a man turned into an ass, and returned again into a man, by one of Bodin's witches: S. Augustine's opinion thereof." (See p. 30.)

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It happened in the city of Salamin in the kingdom of Cyprus, where there is a good haven, that a ship loaden with merchandise stayed there for a short space. In the meantime many of the soldiers and mariners went to shore, to provide fresh victuals; among which number a certain Englishman, being a sturdy young fellow, went to a woman's house, a little way out of the city, and not far from the sea-side, to see whether she had any eggs to sell. Who, perceiving him to be a lusty young fellow, a stranger, and far from his country (so as, upon the loss of him, there would be the less miss or enquiry), she considered with herself how to destroy him; and willed him to stay there awhile, whilst she went to fetch a few eggs for him. But she tarried long, so as the young man called unto her desiring her to make haste; for he told her that the tide would be spent, and by that means his ship would be gone, and leave him behind. Howbeit, after some detracting of time, she brought him a few eggs, willing him to return to her, if his ship were gone when he came.

The young fellow returned towards his ship, but before he went aboard, he would needs eat an egg or twain to satisfy his hunger; and within short space he became dumb and out of his wits, as he afterwards said. When he would have entered into the ship, the mariners beat him back with a cudgel, saying, "What a murrain lacks the ass? Whither the devil will this ass?" The ass, or young man—I cannot tell by which name I should term him—being many times repelled, and understanding their words that called him ass, considering that he could speak never a word and yet could understand everybody, he thought that he was bewitched by the woman at whose house he was. And therefore, when by no means he could get into the boat, but was driven to tarry and see her departure, being also beaten from place to place as an ass, he remembered the witch's words, and the words of his own fellows that called him ass, and returned to the witch's house; in whose service he remained by the space of three years, doing nothing with his hands all that while, but carried such burthens as she laid on his back; having only this comfort, that, although he were reputed an ass among strangers and beasts, yet that both this witch and all other witches knew him to be a man.

After three years were passed over, in a morning betimes he went to town before his dame, who upon some occasion ... stayed a little behind. In the meantime being near to a church, he heard a little sacring-bell ring to the elevation of a morrow mass; and not daring to go into the church, lest he should have been beaten and driven out with cudgels, in great devotion he fell down in the churchyard upon the knees of his hinder legs, and did lift his forefeet over his head, as the priest doth hold the sacrament at the elevation. Which prodigious sight when certain merchants of Genoa espied, and with wonder beheld, anon cometh the witch

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with a cudgel in her hand, beating forth the ass. And because, as it hath been said, such kinds of witchcrafts are very usual in those parts, the merchants aforesaid made such means as both the ass and the witch were attached by the judge. And she, being examined and set upon the rack, confessed the whole matter, and promised that if she might have liberty to go home, she would restore him to his old shape; and being dismissed she did accordingly. So as notwithstanding they apprehended her again, and burned her; and the young man returned into his country with a joyful and merry heart.

Book VII, chap. ii.

“Know you this by the way, that heretofore Robin Goodfellow and Hobgoblin were as terrible, and also as credible to the people, as hags and witches be now: and in time to come a witch will be as much derided and contemned, and as plainly perceived, as the illusion and knavery of Robin Goodfellow. And in truth, they that maintain walking spirits with their transformation, &c, have no reason to deny Robin Goodfellow, upon whom there hath gone as many and as credible tales as upon witches; saving that it hath not pleased the translators of the Bible to call spirits by the name of Robin Goodfellow, as they have termed diviners, soothsayers, poisoners, and cozeners by the name of witches.”

Book VII, chap. xv.

“But certainly some one knave in a white sheet hath cozened and abused many thousands that way; specially when Robin Goodfellow kept such a coil in the country.... They [our mothers’ maids] have so fraid us with bull-beggars, spirits, witches, urchins, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, fauns, sylens, Kit with the canstick[2], tritons, centaurs, dwarfs, giants, imps, calkers, conjurors, nymphs, changelings, Incubus, Robin Goodfellow, the spoorn, the mare, the man in the oak, the hell-wain, the fire-drake, the puckle, Tom Thumb, hobgoblin, Tom tumbler, boneless, and other such beings, that we are afraid of our own shadows.”

Book XIII, chap. xix. [To set an horse’s or an ass’s head on a man’s neck and shoulders.] (See p. 30.)

The words used in such case are uncertain, and to be recited at the pleasure of the witch or cozener. But at the conclusion of this, cut off the head of a horse or an ass (before they be dead, otherwise the virtue or strength thereof will be the less effectual), and make an earthen vessel of fit capacity to contain the same, and let it be filled with the oil and fat thereof, cover it close, and daub it over with loam; let it boil over a soft fire three days continually, that the flesh boiled may run into oil, so as the bare bones may be seen; beat the hair into powder, and mingle the same with the oil; and anoint the heads of the standers by, and they shall seem to have horses’ or asses’ heads.

Discourse upon Devils and Spirits, chap. xi.

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“The Rabbins and, namely, Rabbi Abraham, writing upon the second of Genesis, do say that God made the fairies, bugs, Incubus, Robin Goodfellow, and other familiar or domestic spirits and devils on the Friday; and being prevented with the evening of the Sabbath, finished them not, but left them unperfect; and that therefore, that ever since they use to fly the holiness of the Sabbath, seeking dark holes in mountains and woods, wherein they hide themselves till the end of the Sabbath, and then come abroad to trouble and molest men.”

Discourse, &c., chap. xxi.

“*Virunculi terrei* are such as was Robin Goodfellow, that would supply the office of servants—specially of maids: as to make a fire in the morning, sweep the house, grind mustard and malt, draw water, &c.; these also rumble in houses, draw latches, go up and down stairs, &c.... There go as many tales upon this Hudgin[3] in some parts of Germany, as there did in England of Robin Goodfellow.”

* * * * *

STRANGE FARLIES

Strange farlies[1] fathers told
Of fiends and hags of hell;
And how that Circes, when she would,
Could skill of sorcery well;

And how old thin-faced wives,
That roasted crabs by night,
Did tell of monsters in their lives
That now prove shadows light;

And told what Merlin spoke
Of world and times to come;
But all that fire doth make no smoke,
For in mine ear doth hum

Another kind of bee,
That sounds a tune most strange,
A trembling noise of words to me
That makes my countenance change.

Of old Hobgobling’s guise,
That walked like ghost in sheets,
With maids that would not early rise
For fear of bugs and sprites.

Some say the fairies fair
Did dance on Bednall Green,
And fine familiars of the air
Did talk with men unseen.

And oft in moonshine nights,
When each thing draws to rest,
Was seen dumb shows and ugly sights
That feared[2] every guest

Which lodged in the house;
And where good cheer was great,
Hodgepoke would come and drink carouse
And munch up all the meat.

But where foul sluts did dwell,
Who used to sit up late,
And would not scour the pewter well,
There came a merry mate

To kitchen or to hall,
Or place where sprites resort;
Then down went dish and platters all
To make the greater sport.

A further sport fell out
When they to spoil did fall;
Rude Robin Goodfellow, the lout,
Would skim the milk-bowls all,

And search the cream-pots too,
For which poor milk-maid weeps.
God wot what such mad guests will do
When people soundly sleeps!

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. . . . . .

These are but fables feigned,
Because true stories old
In doubtful days are more disdained
Than any tale is told.

THOMAS CHURCHYARD

from *A Handfull of Gladsome Verses* (1592).

* * * * *

THE MAD MERRY PRANKS OF ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW

(To the Tune of *Dulcina*.)

From Oberon, in fairy land,
The king of ghosts and shadows there,
Mad Robin I, at his command,
Am sent to view the night-sports here.
What revel rout
Is kept about,
In every corner where I go,
I will o'ersee
And merry be,
And make good sport, with ho, ho, ho!

More swift than lightning can I fly
About this airy welkin soon,
And, in a minute's space, descry
Each thing that's done below the moon,
There's not a hag
Or ghost shall wag,
Or cry, ware Goblins! where I go,
But Robin I
Their feats will spy,
And send them home, with ho, ho, ho!

Whene'er such wanderers I meet,
As from their night-sports they trudge home;
With counterfeiting voice I greet
And call them on, with me to roam
Thro' woods, thro' lakes,

Thro’ bogs, thro’ brakes;
Or else, unseen, with them I go,
All in the nick
To play some trick
And frolic it, with ho, ho, ho!

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 hedge and lands,
Thro’ pools and ponds
I whirry, laughing ho, ho, ho!

When lads and lasses merry be,
With possets and with junkets fine;
Unseen of all the company,
I eat their cakes and sip their wine;
And, to make sport,
I sniff and snort;
And out the candles I do blow:
The maids I kiss;
They shriek—Who’s this?
I answer nought but ho, ho, ho!

Yet now and then, the maids to please,
At midnight I card up their wool;
And while they sleep and take their ease,
With wheel to threads their flax I pull.
I grind at mill
Their malt up still;
I dress their hemp, I spin their tow,
If any wake,
And would me take,
I wend me, laughing ho, ho, ho!

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When house or hearth doth sluttish lie,
I pinch the maidens black and blue;
The bed-clothes from the bed pull I,
And lay them naked all to view.
'Twixt sleep and wake,
I do them take,
And on the key-cold floor them throw:
If out they cry,
Then forth I fly,
And loudly laugh out ho, ho, ho!

When any need to borrow ought,
We lend them what they do require:
And for the use demand we nought;
Our own is all we do desire.
If to repay
They do delay,
Abroad amongst them then I go,
And, night by night,
I them affright
With pinchings, dreams, and ho, ho, ho!

When lazy queans have nought to do,
But study how to cog and lie;
To make debate and mischief too,
'Twixt one another secretly:
I mark their gloze,
And it disclose,
To them whom they have wronged so:
When I have done,
I get me gone,
And leave them scolding, ho, ho, ho!

When men do traps and engines set
In loop-holes, where the vermin creep,
Who from their folds and houses, get
Their ducks and geese, and lambs and sheep;
I spy the gin,
And enter in,
And seem a vermin taken so;
But when they there
Approach me near,
I leap out laughing ho, ho, ho!

By wells and rills, in meadows green,
We nightly dance our heydeguys;
And to our fairy king and queen
We chant our moon-light minstrelsies.
When larks 'gin sing,
Away we fling;
And babes new-born steal as we go,
And elf in bed
We leave instead,
And wend us laughing, ho, ho, ho!

From hag-bred Merlin's time have I
Thus nightly revell'd to and fro:
And for my pranks men call me by
The name of Robin Good-fellow.
Fiends, ghosts, and sprites,
Who haunt the nights,
The hags and goblins do me know;
And beldames old
My feats have told;
So *Vale, Vale*; ho, ho, ho!

A black-letter broadside, XVIIth cent.

* * * * *

QUEEN MAB

Satyr

This is Mab, the mistress fairy,
That doth nightly rob the dairy,
And can hunt or help the churning
As she please without discerning.
. . . . . .
She that pinches country wenches
If they rub not clean their benches,
And with sharper nails remembers
When they rake not up their embers;
But if so they chance to feast her,
In a shoe she drops a tester.
. . . . . .
This is she that empties cradles,

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Takes out children, puts in ladles;
Trains forth midwives in their slumber,
With a sieve the holes to number,
And then leads them from her boroughs
Home through ponds and water-furrows.
. . . . . .
She can start our franklins' daughters,
In her sleep, with shrieks and laughters,
And on sweet St. Anna's night
Feed them with a promised sight—
Some of husbands, some of lovers,
Which an empty dream discovers.

BEN JONSON, masque of *A Satyr* (1603).

* * * * *

A Proper New Ballad, intituled

THE FAIRIES' FAREWELL: OR GOD-A-MERCY WILL

(To be sung or whistled to the Tune of the *Meadow Brow* by the learned; by the unlearned, to the Tune of *Fortune*.)

Farewell rewards and Fairies!
  Good housewives, now you may say;
For now foul sluts in dairies
  Do fare as well as they;
And though they sweep their hearths no less
  Than maids were wont to do,
Yet who of late for cleanliness
  Finds sixpence in her shoe?

Lament, lament old abbeys,
  The fairies' lost command;
They did but change priests' babies;
  But some have changed your land;
And all your children sprung from thence
  Are now grown Puritans,

Who live as changelings ever since
For love of your demesnes.

At morning and at evening both
You merry were and glad,
So little care of sleep or sloth
These pretty ladies had.
When Tom came home from labour,
Or Ciss to milking rose,
Then merrily, merrily went their tabour,
And nimbly went their toes.

Witness those rings and roundelays
Of theirs, which yet remain,
Were footed in Queen Mary's days
On many a grassy plain.
But since of late Elizabeth
And later James came in,
They never danced on any heath,
As when the time hath bin.

By which we note the fairies
Were of the old profession;
Their songs were *Ave Maries*,
Their dances were procession.
But now, alas! they all are dead,
Or gone beyond the seas,
Or farther for religion fled,
Or else they take their ease.

A tell-tale in their company
They never could endure;
And whoso kept not secretly
Their mirth, was punished sure:
It was a just and Christian deed
To pinch such black and blue:
O how the common-wealth doth [need][1]
Such justices as you!

Now they have left our quarters;
A Register they have
Who looketh to their charters,
A man both wise and grave.
An hundred of their merry pranks
By one that I could name
Are kept in store; con twenty thanks
To William for the same.

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* * * * *

To William Churne of Staffordshire
Give laud and praises due,
Who every meal can mend your cheer
With tales both old and true:
To William all give audience,
And pray ye for his noddle:
For all the fairies evidence
Were lost, if it were addle.

RICHARD CORBET (1582-1625),
from *Poetica Stromata* (1648)

* * * * *

THE FAIRY QUEEN

Come, follow, follow me,
You fairy elves that be,
Which circle on the green,
Come follow me your queen;
Hand in hand let's dance around,
For this place is fairy ground.

When mortals are at rest,
And snorting in their nest,
Unheard and unespied
Through keyholes we do glide:
Over tables, stools, and shelves.
We trip it with our fairy elves.

And if the house be foul,
Or platter, dish, or bowl,
Upstairs we nimbly creep
And find the sluts asleep;
There we pinch their arms and thighs;
None escapes nor none espies.

But if the house be swept,
And from uncleanness kept,
We praise the household maid
And surely she is paid;

For we do use, before we go,
To drop a tester in her shoe.

Upon a mushroom's head
Our table we do spread;
A corn of rye or wheat
Is manchet which we eat,
Pearly drops of dew we drink
In acorn cups filled to the brink.

The brains of nightingales
With unctuous dew of snails
Between two nutshells stewed
Is meat that's easily chewed;
And the beards of little mice
Do make a feast of wondrous price.

On tops of dewy grass
So nimbly do we pass,
The young and tender stalk
Ne'er bends when we do walk;
Yet in the morning may be seen
Where we the night before have been.

The grasshopper and fly
Serve for our minstrelsy.
Grace said, we dance awhile,
And so the time beguile;
And when the moon doth hide her head,
The glow-worm lights us home to bed.

From *The Mysteries of Love and Eloquence* (1658); with a preface signed E[dward] P[hillips].

* * * * *

NYMPHIDIA:

THE COURT OF FAIRY

Old Chaucer doth of Topas tell,
Mad Rab'lais of Pantagruel,
A later third of Dowsabel,
With such poor trifles playing;
Others the like have laboured at,
Some of this thing and some of that,

And many of they know not what,
But that they must be saying.

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Another sort there be, that will
Be talking of the Fairies still,
Nor never can they have their fill,
    As they were wedded to them;
No tales of them their thirst can slake,
So much delight therein they take,
And some strange thing they fain would make,
    Knew they the way to do them.

Then since no Muse hath been so bold,
Or of the later, or the old,
Those elvish secrets to unfold,
    Which lie from others' reading,
My active Muse to light shall bring
The Court of that proud Fairy King,
And tell there of the revelling:
    Jove prosper my proceeding!

And thou, Nymphidia, gentle Fay,
Which, meeting me upon the way,
These secrets didst to me bewray,
    Which now I am in telling;
My pretty, light, fantastic maid,
I here invoke thee to my aid,
That I may speak what thou hast said,
    In numbers smoothly swelling.

This palace standeth in the air,
By necromancy placed there,
That it no tempests needs to fear,
    Which way soe'er it blow it;
And somewhat southward toward the noon,
Whence lies a way up to the moon,
And thence the Fairy can as soon
    Pass to the earth below it.

The walls of spiders' legs are made
Well mortised and finely laid;
He was the master of his trade
    It curiously that builded;
The windows of the eyes of cats,
And for the roof, instead of slats,
Is covered with the skins of bats,
    With moonshine that are gilded.

Hence Oberon him sport to make,
Their rest when weary mortals take,
And none but only fairies wake,
    Descendeth for his pleasure;
And Mab, his merry Queen, by night
Bestrides young folks that lie upright[1]
(In elder times, the mare that hight),
    Which plagues them out of measure.

Hence shadows, seeming idle shapes,
Of little frisking elves and apes
To earth do make their wanton scapes,
    As hope of pastime hastes them:
Which maids think on the hearth they see
When fires well-near consumed be,
There dancing hays[2] by two and three,
    Just as their fancy casts them.

These make our girls their sluttery rue,
By pinching them both black and blue,
And put a penny in their shoe
    The house for cleanly sweeping;
And in their courses make that round
In meadows and in marshes found,
Of them so called the Fairy Ground,
    Of which they have the keeping.

These when a child haps to be got
Which after proves an idiot
When folk perceive it thriveth not,
    The fault therein to smother,
Some silly, doating brainless calf
That understands things by the half,
Say that the Fairy left this aulfe[3]
    And took away the other.

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But listen, and I shall you tell
A chance in Fairy that befell,
Which certainly may please some well
    In love and arms delighting,
Of Oberon that jealous grew
Of one of his own Fairy crew,
Too well, he feared, his Queen that knew
    His love but ill requiting.

Pigwiggen[4] was this Fairy Knight,
One wondrous gracious in the sight
Of fair Queen Mab, which day and night
    He amorously observed;
Which made King Oberon suspect
His service took too good effect,
His sauciness and often checkt,
    And could have wished him starved[5].

Pigwiggen gladly would commend
Some token to Queen Mab to send,
If sea or land him aught could lend
    Were worthy of her wearing;
At length this lover doth devise
A bracelet made of emmets' eyes,
A thing he thought that she would prize,
    No whit her state impairing.

And to the Queen a letter writes,
Which he most curiously indites,
Conjuring her by all the rites
    Of love, she would be pleased
To meet him, her true servant, where
They might, without suspect or fear,
Themselves to one another clear
    And have their poor hearts eased.

"At midnight the appointed hour,
And for the Queen a fitting bower,"
Quoth he, "is that fair cowslip flower
    On Hipcut hill that bloweth;
In all your train there's not a fay
That ever went to gather may
But she hath made it, in her way;
    The tallest there that groweth."

When by Tom Thumb, a Fairy Page,
He sent it, and doth him engage
By promise of a mighty wage
    It secretly to carry;
Which done, the Queen her maids doth call,
And bids them to be ready all:
She would go see her summer hall,
    She could no longer tarry.

Her chariot ready straight is made,
Each thing therein is fitting laid,
That she by nothing might be stayed,
    For naught must be her letting;
Four nimble gnats the horses were,
Their harnesses of gossamere,
Fly Cranion her charioteer
    Upon the coach-box getting.

Her chariot of a snail's fine shell,
Which for the colours did excel,
The fair Queen Mab becoming well,
    So lively was the limning;
The seat the soft wool of the bee,
The cover, gallantly to see,
The wing of a pied butterflee;
    I trow 'twas simple trimming.

The wheels composed of crickets' bones,
And daintily made for the nonce;
For fear of rattling on the stones
    With thistle-down they shod it;
For all her maidens much did fear
If Oberon had chanced to hear
That Mab his Queen should have been there,
    He would not have abode it.

She mounts her chariot with a trice,
Nor would she stay for no advice,
Until her maids that were so nice
    To wait on her were fitted;
But ran herself away alone,
Which when they heard, there was not one
But hasted after to be gone,
    As she had been diswitted.

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Hop and Mop and Drop so clear,
Pip and Trip and Skip that were
To Mab, their sovereign, ever dear,
    Her special maids of honour;
Fib and Tib and Pink and Pin,
Tick and Quick and Jill and Jin,
Tit and Nit and Wap and Win,
    The train that wait upon her.

Upon a grasshopper they got
And, what with amble and with trot,
For hedge nor ditch they spared not,
    But after her they hie them;
A cobweb over them they throw,
To shield the wind if it should blow;
Themselves they wisely could bestow
    Lest any should espy them.

But let us leave Queen Mab awhile
(Through many a gate, o’er many a stile,
That now had gotten by this wile),
    Her dear Pigwiggen kissing;
And tell how Oberon doth fare,
Who grew as mad as any hare
When he had sought each place with care
    And found his Queen was missing.

By grisly Pluto he doth swear,
He rent his clothes and tore his hair,
And as he runneth here and there
    An acorn cup he greeteth,
Which soon he taketh by the stalk,
About his head he lets it walk,
Nor doth he any creature balk,
    But lays on all he meeteth.

The Tuscan poet doth advance
The frantic Paladin of France,[6]
And those more ancient do enhance
    Alcides in his fury,
And others Ajax Telamon,
But to this time there hath been none
So bedlam as our Oberon,
    Of which I dare assure ye.

And first encount'ring with a Wasp,
He in his arms the fly doth clasp
As though his breath he forth would grasp
    Him for Pigwiggen taking:
"Where is ny wife, thou rogue?" quoth he;
"Pigwiggen, she is come to thee;
Restore her, or thou diest by me!"
    Whereat the poor Wasp quaking,

Cries, "Oberon, great Fairy King,
Content thee, I am no such thing:
I am a Wasp, behold my sting!"
    At which the Fairy started;
When soon away the Wasp doth go,
Poor wretch was never frighted so;
He thought his wings were much too slow,
    O'erjoyed they so were parted.

He next upon a Glow-worm light
(You must suppose it now was night),
Which, for her hinder part was bright,
    He took to be a devil,
And furiously doth her assail
For carrying fire in her tail;
He thrasht her rough coat with his flail;
    The mad King feared no evil.

"Oh!" quoth the Glow-worm, "hold thy hand,
Thou puissant King of Fairy-land!
Thy mighty strokes who may withstand?
    Hold, or of life despair I!"
Together then herself doth roll,
And tumbling down into a hole,
She seemed as black as any coal;
    Which vext away the Fairy.

From thence he ran into a hive:
Amongst the bees he letteth drive,
And down their combs begins to rive,
    All likely to have spoiled,
Which with their wax his face besmeared,
And with their honey daubed his beard:
It would have made a man afeared
    To see how he was moiled.

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A new adventure him betides;
He met an Ant, which he bestrides,
And post thereon away he rides,
    Which with his haste doth stumble,
And came full over on her snout;
Her heels so threw the dirt about,
For she by no means could get out,
    But over him doth tumble.

And being in this piteous case,
And all be-slurried head and face,
On runs he in this wild-goose chase,
    As here and there he rambles;
Half blind, against a molehill hit,
And for a mountain taking it,
For all he was out of his wit
    Yet to the top he scrambles.

And being gotten to the top,
Yet there himself he could not stop,
But down on th' other side doth chop,
    And to the foot came rumbling;
So that the grubs, therein that bred,
Hearing such turmoil overhead,
Thought surely they had all been dead;
    So fearful was the jumbling.

And falling down into a lake,
Which him up to the neck doth take.
His fury somewhat it doth slake;
    He calleth for a ferry;
Where you may some recovery note,
What was his club he made his boat,
And in his oaken cup doth float,
    As safe as in a wherry.

Men talk of the adventures strange
Of Don Quishott, and of their change,
Through which he armed oft did range,
    Of Sancha Pancha's travel;
But should a man tell everything
Done by this frantic Fairy King,
And them in lofty numbers sing,
    It well his wits might gravel.

Scarce set on shore, but therewithal
He meeteth Puck, which most men call
Hobgoblin, and on him doth fall
    With words from frenzy spoken:
“Ho, ho,"[7] quoth Hob, “God save thy grace!
Who drest thee in this piteous case?
He thus that spoiled my sovereign’s face,
  I would his neck were broken!”

This Puck seems but a dreaming dolt,
Still walking like a ragged colt,
And oft out of a bush doth bolt,
  Of purpose to deceive us;
And leading us makes us to stray,
Long winter’s nights, out of the way;
And when we stick in mire and clay,
  Hob doth with laughter leave us.

“Dear Puck,” quoth he, “my wife is gone:
As e’er thou lov’st King Oberon,
Let everything but this alone,
  With vengeance and pursue her;
Bring her to me alive or dead,
Or that vild[8] thief Pigwiggen’s head;
That villain hath defiled my bed,
  He to this folly drew her.”

Quoth Puck, “My liege, I’ll never lin[9],
But I will thorough thick and thin,
Until at length I bring her in;
  My dearest lord, ne’er doubt it.
Thorough brake, thorough briar,
Thorough muck, thorough mire,
Thorough water, thorough fire;
  And thus goes Puck about it.”

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This thing Nymphidia overheard,
That on this mad King had a guard,
Not doubting of a great reward
    For first this business broaching;
And through the air away doth go,
Swift as an arrow from the bow,
To let her sovereign Mab to know
    What peril was approaching.

The Queen, bound with Love's powerful'st charm,
Sate with Pigwiggen arm in arm;
Her merry maids that thought no harm,
    About the room were skipping;
A humble bee, their minstrel, played
Upon his hautboy; every maid
Fit for this Revels was arrayed,
    The hornpipe neatly tripping.

In comes Nymphidia, and doth cry,
"My sovereign, for your safety fly,
For there is danger but too nigh;
    I posted to forewarn you:
The King hath sent Hobgoblin out,
To seek you all the fields about,
And of your safety you may doubt
    If he but once discern you."

When, like an uproar in a town,
Before them everything went down;
Some tore a ruff, and some a gown,
    'Gainst one another justling;
They flew about like chaff i' th' wind;
For haste some left their masks behind;
Some could not stay their gloves to find;
    There never was such bustling.

Forth ran they, by a secret way,
Into a brake that near them lay;
Yet much they doubted there to stay,
    Lest Hob should hap to find them;
He had a sharp and piercing sight,
All one to him the day and night;
And therefore were resolved by flight
    To leave this place behind them.

At length one chanced to find a nut,
In th' end of which a hole was cut,
Which lay upon a hazel root,
    There scattered by a squirrel
Which out the kernel gotten had;
When quoth this Fay, "Dear Queen, be glad;
Let Oberon be ne'er so mad,
    I'll set you safe from peril.

"Come all into this nut," quoth she,
"Come closely in; be ruled by me;
Each one may here a chooser be,
    For room ye need not wrastle:
Nor need ye be together heapt";
So one by one therein they crept,
And lying down they soundly slept,
    And safe as in a castle.

Nymphidia, that this while doth watch,
Perceived if Puck the Queen should catch
That he should be her over-match,
    Of which she well bethought her;
Found it must be some powerful charm,
The Queen against him that must arm,
Or surely he would do her harm,
    For throughly he had sought her.

And list'ning if she aught could hear,
That her might hinder, or might fear,
But finding still the coast was clear,
    Nor creature had descried her;
Each circumstance and having scanned,
She came thereby to understand
Puck would be with them out of hand;
    When to her charms she hied her.

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And first her fern-seed[10] doth bestow,
The kernel of the mistletoe;
And here and there as Puck should go,
    With terror to affright him,
She nightshade straws to work him ill,
Therewith her vervain and her dill,
That hindreth witches of their will,
    Of purpose to despite him.

Then sprinkles she the juice of rue,
That groweth underneath the yew;
With nine drops of the midnight dew,
    From lunary[11] distilling:
The molewarp's brain mixed therewithal;
And with the same the pismire's gall:
For she in nothing short would fall,
    The Fairy was so willing.

Then thrice under a briar doth creep,
Which at both ends was rooted deep,
And over it three times she leap,
    Her magic much availing;
Then on Proserpina doth call,
And so upon her spell doth fall,
Which here to you repeat I shall,
    Not in one tittle failing.

"By the croaking of the frog,
By the howling of the dog,
By the crying of the hog
    Against the storm arising;
By the evening curfew bell,
By the doleful dying knell,
O let this my direful spell,
    Hob, hinder thy surprising!

"By the mandrake's dreadful groans,
By the lubrican's[12] sad moans,
By the noise of dead men's bones
    In charnel-houses rattling;
By the hissing of the snake,
The rustling of the fire-drake[13],
I charge thee thou this place forsake,
    Nor of Queen Mab be prattling!

“By the whirlwind’s hollow sound,
By the thunder’s dreadful stound,
Yells of spirits underground,
    I charge thee not to fear us;
By the screech-owl’s dismal note,
By the black night-raven’s throat,
I charge thee, Hob, to tear thy coat
    With thorns, if thou come near us!”

Her spell thus spoke, she stept aside,
And in a chink herself doth hide,
To see thereof what would betide,
    For she doth only mind him:
When presently she Puck espies,
And well she marked his gloating eyes,
How under every leaf he pries,
    In seeking still to find them.

But once the circle got within,
The charms to work do straight begin,
And he was caught as in a gin;
    For as he thus was busy,
A pain he in his head-piece feels,
Against a stubbed tree he reels,
And up went poor Hobgoblin’s heels;
    Alas! his brain was dizzy!

At length upon his feet he gets,
Hobgoblin fumes, Hobgoblin frets;
And as again he forward sets,
    And through the bushes scrambles,
A stump doth trip him in his pace;
Down comes poor Hob upon his face,
And lamentably tore his case,
    Amongst the briars and brambles.

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“A plague upon Queen Mab!” quoth he,
“And all her maids where’er they be:
I think the devil guided me,
    To seek her so provoked!”
Where stumbling at a piece of wood,
He fell into a ditch of mud,
Where to the very chin he stood,
    In danger to be choked.

Now worse than e’er he was before,
Poor Puck doth yell, poor Puck doth roar,
That waked Queen Mab, who doubted sore
    Some treason had been wrought her:
Until Nymphidia told the Queen,
What she had done, what she had seen,
Who then had well-near cracked her spleen
    With very extreme laughter.

But leave we Hob to clamber out,
Queen Mab and all her Fairy rout,
And come again to have a bout
    With Oberon yet madding:
And with Pigwiggen now distraught,
Who much was troubled in his thought,
That he so long the Queen had sought,
    And through the fields was gadding.

And as he runs he still doth cry,
“King Oberon, I thee defy,
And dare thee here in arms to try,
    For my dear lady’s honour:
For that she is a Queen right good,
In whose defence I’ll shed my blood,
And that thou in this jealous mood
    Hast laid this slander on her.”

And quickly arms him for the field,
A little cockle-shell his shield,
Which he could very bravely wield,
    Yet could it not be pierced:
His spear a bent[14] both stiff and strong,
And well-near of two inches long:
The pile was of a horse-fly’s tongue,
    Whose sharpness nought reversed.

And puts him on a coat of mail,
Which was of a fish's scale,
That when his foe should him assail,
    No point should be prevailing:
His rapier was a hornet's sting:
It was a very dangerous thing,
For if he chanced to hurt the King,
    It would be long in healing.

His helmet was a beetle's head,
Most horrible and full of dread,
That able was to strike one dead,
    Yet did it well become him;
And for a plume a horse's hair
Which, being tossed with the air,
Had force to strike his foe with fear,
    And turn his weapon from him.

Himself he on an earwig set,
Yet scarce he on his back could get,
So oft and high he did curvet,
    Ere he himself could settle:
He made him turn, and stop, and bound,
To gallop, and to trot the round,
He scarce could stand on any ground,
    He was so full of mettle.

When soon he met with Tomalin,
One that a valiant knight had bin,
And to King Oberon of kin;
    Quoth he, "Thou manly Fairy,
Tell Oberon I come prepared,
Then bid him stand upon his guard;
This hand his baseness shall reward,
    Let him be ne'er so wary.

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“Say to him thus, that I defy
His slanders and his infamy,
And as a mortal enemy
    Do publicly proclaim him.
Withal that if I had mine own,
He should not wear the Fairy crown,
But with a vengeance should come down,
    Nor we a king should name him.”

This Tomalin could not abide
To hear his sovereign vilified;
But to the Fairy Court him hied
    (Full furiously he posted),
With everything Pigwiggen said:
How title to the crown he laid,
And in what arms he was arrayed,
    As how himself he boasted.

’Twixt head and foot, from point to point,
He told the arming of each joint,
In every piece how neat and quaint,
    For Tomalin could do it:
How fair he sat, how sure he rid,
As of the courser he bestrid,
How managed, and how well he did;
    The King which listened to it,

Quoth he, “Go, Tomalin, with speed,
Provide me arms, provide my steed,
And everything that I shall need;
    By thee I will be guided;
To strait account call thou thy wit;
See there be wanting not a whit,
In everything see thou me fit,
    Just as my foe’s provided.”

Soon flew this news through Fairy-land,
Which gave Queen Mab to understand
The combat that was then in hand
    Betwixt those men so mighty:
Which greatly she began to rue,
Perceiving that all Fairy knew,
The first occasion from her grew
    Of these affairs so weighty.

Wherefore attended with her maids,
Through fogs, and mists, and damps she wades,
To Proserpine the Queen of Shades,
    To treat that it would please her
The cause into her hands to take,
For ancient love and friendship's sake,
And soon thereof an end to make,
    Which of much care would ease her.

A while there let we Mab alone,
And come we to King Oberon,
Who, armed to meet his foe, is gone,
    For proud Pigwiggen crying:
Who sought the Fairy King as fast
And had so well his journeys cast,
That he arrived at the last,
    His puissant foe espying.

Stout Tomalin came with the King,
Tom Thumb doth on Pigwiggen bring,
That perfect were in everything
    To single fights belonging:
And therefore they themselves engage
To see them exercise their rage
With fair and comely equipage,
    Not one the other wronging.

So like in arms these champions were,
As they had been a very pair,
So that a man would almost swear
    That either had been either;
Their furious steeds began to neigh,
That they were heard a mighty way;
Their staves upon their rests they lay;
    Yet, ere they flew together,

Their seconds minister an oath,
Which was indifferent to them both,
That on their knightly faith and troth
    No magic them supplied;
And sought them that they had no charms
Wherewith to work each other's harms,
But came with simple open arms
    To have their causes tried.

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Together furiously they ran,
That to the ground came horse and man,
The blood out of their helmets span,
    So sharp were their encounters;
And though they to the earth were thrown,
Yet quickly they regained their own,
Such nimbleness was never shown,
    They were two gallant mounters.

When in a second course again,
They forward came with might and main,
Yet which had better of the twain,
    The seconds could not judge yet;
Their shields were into pieces cleft,
Their helmets from their heads were reft,
And to defend them nothing left,
    These champions would not budge yet.

Away from them their staves they threw,
Their cruel swords they quickly drew,
And freshly they the fight renew,
    They every stroke redoubled;
Which made Proserpina take heed,
And make to them the greater speed,
For fear lest they too much should bleed,
    Which wondrously her troubled.

When to th’ infernal Styx she goes,
She takes the fogs from thence that rose,
And in a bag doth them enclose,
    When well she had them blended.
She hies her then to Lethe spring,
A bottle and thereof doth bring,
Wherewith she meant to work the thing
    Which only she intended.

Now Proserpine with Mab is gone
Unto the place where Oberon
And proud Pigwiggen, one to one,
    Both to be slain were likely:
And there themselves they closely hide,
Because they would not be espied;
For Proserpine meant to decide
    The matter very quickly.

And suddenly unties the poke,
Which out of it sent such a smoke,
As ready was them all to choke,
    So grievous was the pother;
So that the knights each other lost,
And stood as still as any post;
Tom Thumb nor Tomalin could boast
    Themselves of any other.

But when the mist ’gan somewhat cease
Proserpina commandeth peace;
And that a while they should release
    Each other of their peril;
“Which here,” quoth she, “I do proclaim
To all in dreadful Pluto’s name,
That as ye will eschew his blame,
    You let me hear the quarrel:

“But here yourselves you must engage
(Somewhat to cool your spleenish rage.
Your grievous thirst and to assuage)
    That first you drink this liquor,
Which shall your understanding clear,
As plainly shall to you appear;
Those things from me that you shall hear,
    Conceiving much the quicker.”

This Lethe water, you must know,
The memory destroyeth so,
That of our weal, or of our woe,
    Is all remembrance blotted;
Of it nor can you ever think;
For they no sooner took this drink,
But naught into their brains could sink
    Of what had them besotted.

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King Oberon forgotten had
That he for jealousy ran mad,
But of his Queen was wondrous glad,
    And asked how they came thither:
Pigwiggen likewise doth forget
That he Queen Mab had ever met,
Or that they were so hard beset,
    When they were found together.

Nor neither of them both had thought
That e'er they had each other sought,
Much less that they a combat fought,
    But such a dream were loathing:
Tom Thumb had got a little sup,
And Tomalin scarce kissed the cup,
Yet had their brains so sure locked up,
    That they remembered nothing.

Queen Mab and her light maids, the while,
Amongst themselves do closely smile,
To see the King caught with this wile,
    With one another jesting:
And to the Fairy Court they went
With mickle joy and merriment,
Which thing was done with good intent:
    And thus I left them feasting.

* * * * *

NOTES ON TEXTS

The Legend of Pyramus and Thisbe.

See p. 31.

[1] P. 73, l. 12. *let*, hinder, prevent.

[2] P. 74, l. 18. *vouching safe*, vouchsafing.

[3] P. 75, l. 4. *parget*, plaster, roughcast.

[4] P. 78, l. 10. *stound*, position.

[5] P. 79, l. 1. *meint*, mixed.

[6] P. 79, l. 19. *belyve*, immediately.

[7] P. 80, l. 5. *sicker*, sure, certain.

[8] P. 80, l. 11. *bespect*, speckled.

* * * *

Robin Good-fellow.

See pp. 39, 63. The text here given is that of the reprint of the 1628 edition, edited for the Percy Society by J. Payne Collier in 1841. The original black-letter tract, there described as being "in the library of Lord Francis Egerton, M.P.," is still in that collection, which is now known as the Bridgewater House Library. Collier's introduction is characteristic; it contains a good deal of correct information, and an interesting note based on forgeries of his own in Henslowe's *Diary*.

[1] P. 81, l. 20. *Long-tails.* Cf, Fuller's *Worthies*, Kent (1811), i. 486: "It happened in an English village where Saint Austin was preaching, that the Pagans therein did beat and abuse both him and his associates, opprobriously tying fish-tails to their backsides; in revenge whereof an impudent author relateth ... how such appendants grew to the hind-parts of all that generation."—See Murray, *N.E.D.* s.v. Long-tail. The earliest reference is to Moryson's *Itinerary*, 1617. "Kentish-tayld" occurs in Nashe's *Strange News*, 1592, sig. E 4.

[2] P. 84, l. 22. *snite*, snipe,

[3] P. 88, l. 23. *presently*, immediately.

[4] P. 90, l. 11. *ho, ho, hoh!* This is Robin's traditional laugh. Cf. the refrain of the broadside, p. 144.

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[5] P. 93, l. 19. *bolt*, sift, pass through a sieve.

[6] P. 95, l. 5. *himpen, hampen.* Cf. “Hemton hamton” in Scot’s account of Robin, p. 135.

[7] P. 97, l. 18. *night-raven,* proverbially a bird of ill-omen.

[8] P. 98, l. 7. *starkled*, stiffened. A dialect word, still in use.

[9] P. 98, l. 22. *quills*, spools or “bottoms” on which weavers’ thread is wound.

[10] P. 101, l. 8. *the tune of Watton Town’s End*. See Chappell’s *Popular Music*, 218-20.

[11] P. 105, l. 18. *bombasting*, puffing up, frothing.

[12] P. 106, l. 1. *Obreon*. The 1639 edition spells the name in the ordinary way, but it may be noted that the Pepysian copy of the broadside ballad (p. 144), begins—

“From Obreon in fairyland.”

[13] P. 108, l. 16. *the tune of What care I how fair she be?* This is the tune to George Wither’s famous—

“Shall I wasting in despair
Die because a woman’s fair?”

See Chappell’s *Popular Music*, 315.

[14] P. 109, l. 5. *the tune of The Spanish Pavin*. (Pavin = Pavan.) See Chappell, op. cit., 240.

[15] P. 110, l. 13. *the tune of The Jovial Tinker*. See Chappell, op. cit., 187.

[16] P. 110, l. 25. *ax* = ask. The form “ax” was in use till the end of the sixteenth century, and continues in dialect.

[17] P. 111, l. 13. *the tune of Broom*. See Chappell, op. cit., 458; but this song does not fit the metre.

* * * *

The Romance of Thomas of Erceldoune.

(Fytte I.)

See pp. 45-7. In preparing the text, I have reduced in as simple a manner as possible the fifteenth-century spelling to modern forms. Dr. J.A.H. Murray's parallel texts (see note on p. 46) have been consulted, but mainly I have followed the oldest of them—that of the Thornton MS. in Lincoln Cathedral Library. The footnotes explain all words save those that are or ought to be familiar to every reader.

[1] l. 1. *endris*, last.

[2] l. 6. *meaned*, moaned.

[3] l. 7. *bered*, sounded. The woodwale is some kind of wood-bird.

[4] l. 14. *wrable and ivry*, ? wriggle and twist, *i.e.* in the attempt to describe her.

[5] l. 17. See p. 54.

[6] *Swilk*, such.

[7] l. 21. *roelle-bone;* a commonplace in early poetry, as the material for saddles; meaning unknown.

[8] l. 24. *crapotee*, toad-stone.

[9] l. 32. *overbegone*, overlaid.

[10] l. 33. *paytrell* = poitrail, breast-leather of a horse; *iral* (?).

[11] l. 34. *orphare* = orferrie, goldsmith's work.

[12] l. 38. *raches*, dogs.

[13] l. 39. *halse*, neck.

[14] l. 40. *flane*, arrow.

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[15] l. 43. See pp. 46-7 and note.

[16] l. 45. *But-if,* unless.

[17] l. 48. For an elaborate investigation of the circumstances concerning the *Eildon tree*, see the special section in Murray's edition.

[18] l. 49. *rathely*, quickly.

[19] l. 63. *fee*, beasts, cattle.

[20] l. 71. *sekerly*, truly.

[21] l. 79. *ware*, worse.

[22] l. 86. *byrde*, bride.

[23] l. 89. *stead*, place.

[24] l. 98. *duleful*, painful.

[25] l. 103. *gone* = go (old infinitive).

[26] l. 104. *Middle-earth* = Earth, the middle region in the old Northern cosmogony.

[27] l. 107. Thomas is here addressing the Virgin.

[28] l. 111. *beteach*, entrust, hand over to.

[29] l. 114. *derne*, secret.

[30] l. 117. *mountenance*, space.

[31] l. 121. *herbere*, garden.

[32] l. 126. *bigging,* building.

[33] l. 127. *papejoys*, popinjays, parrots.

[34] ll. 131-6. On the danger of eating fairy apples, see p. 53.

[35] l. 137. *hight*, command.

[36] l. 141. *hight* (MS. *hye*), ? pleasure.

[37] l. 143. *pay*, please.

[38] l. 145 et sqq. See p. 46.

[39] l. 145. *fair*, pronounced as two syllables.

[40] l. 150. *rise*, brushwood, undergrowth.

[41] l. 155. *teen and tray*, pain and trouble.

[42] l. 167. *me were lever*, I had rather.

[43] l. 168. *Or that*, ere that, before that.

[44] l. 175. *dess*, dais.

[45] l. 183. *main and mood*, might and main.

[46] l. 188. *kneeland* = kneeling. Cf. l. 191.

[47] l. 189. *fand*, found.

[48] l. 190. *sawtery* = psaltery.

[49] l. 191. *ribib*, rebeck, lute.

[50] l. 191. *gangand* = going.

[51] l. 196. *store*, plentiful.

[52] l. 199. *brittened* = brittled, cut up (the deer)

[53] l. 208. This sudden and momentary change to the first person is found in all the older MSS. See p. 47.

[54] l. 209. *thee buse*—it behoves thee. Cf. l. 234.

[55] l. 213. *cheer*, look, face.

[56] ll. 219-24. See p. 54; also Sir Walter Scott's introduction to the ballad of *The Young Tamlane*, in *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.

[57] l. 220. *skill*, reason.

[58] l. 221. *To-morn,* in the morning.

[59] l. 223. *hend*, noble, mighty.

[60] l. 226. *hethen* = hence. Cf. sithen = since.

[61] l. 228. *rede*, advise.

[62] l. 232. Four lines of the MSS. omitted here.

[63] l. 234. *buse*. See note on l. 209.

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[64] l. 235. Fyttes II and III are wholly concerned with the prophecies, and have nothing to do with the story of Thomas.

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Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft.

[1] P. 135, l. 13. (Book IV, chap, x.) *Hemton hamton.* Cf. "himpen hampen" in *Robin Good-fellow,* and note, p. 189.

[2] P. 138, l. 20. (Book VII, chap, xv.) *Kit with the canstick.* Christopher-with-the-candlestick is another name for Jack-o'-lantern. *calkers* = diviners. For *spoorn*, see Wright, *Dialect Dictionary*, s.v.

[3] P. 140, l. 8. (Discourse, chap. xxi.) *Hudgin* is more usually spelled Hodeken, the German familiar fairy. Cf. the French Hugon, a bugbear used to frighten children.

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Strange Farlies.

P. 141. This extract from Churchyard was first cited by E.K. Chambers in his edition of *M.N.D.* in the *Warwick Shakespeare*.

[1] *farlies*, marvels.

[2] *feared*, frightened.

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The Mad Merry Pranks of Robin Good-fellow.

P. 144. This broadside is found in various editions in the larger collections (Roxburghe Coll., I. 230; Pepys, I. 80; also in the Bagford); the text here given is Percy's collation (as printed in his *Reliques*) of one or two of the above. The tune of *Dulcina* was famous; it may be seen in Chappell's *Popular Music*, 142.

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The Fairies' Farewell.

[1] P. 153, l. 11. [*need*]. *Poetica Stromata* reads *want*.

* * * *

The Fairy Queen.

P. 155. The poem was given by Percy in his *Reliques* from *The Mysteries of Love and Eloquence*, a curious book of which the preface is signed E.P.; the British Museum Catalogue attributes these initials to Edward Phillips, the nephew of John Milton. But Rimbault pointed out that this song occurs in a tract of 1635, *A Description of the King and Queen of the Fairies*, attributed to Robert Herrick; a single copy of this pamphlet is known, and is in the Bodleian Library.

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Nymphidia.

P. 158. Michael Drayton's fairy-poem was first published in 1627, and perhaps owes a little of its charm to Shakespeare's play, though not so much as Drayton's sonnets to those of the elder poet.

[1] P. 160. *upright*, flat on the back. This is the older meaning, which Drayton would find in Chaucer.

[2] *hays*, dances. Cf. *heydeguys*, p. 148.

[3] P. 161. *aulfe*. Cf. "ouphs," *Merry Wives of Windsor,* V. v.

[4] *Pigwiggen*. "Piggy-widden" is a west-country dialect term, meaning a little white pig, used as an endearment for the youngest of a family.

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[5] P. 162. *starved*, *i.e*. killed.

[6] P. 166. *The Tuscan poet*, Ariosto; *the frantic Paladin,* Orlando Furioso.

[7] P. 170. "*Ho, ho.*" See note (p. 189) on *Robin Goodfellow*.

[8] *vild*, an old form of "vile."

[9] *lin*, stop.

[10] P. 174. *fern-seed.* A very common superstition, which still survives, is that the seeds of the fern have power to confer invisibility.

[11] *lunary,* a name given to several plants, here probably moonwort. It was supposed to open locks.

[12] P. 175. *lubrican*, the name of an Irish pigmy sprite, otherwise called *leprechaun*.

[13] *fire-drake,* a fiery dragon. The word also meant a meteor.

[14] P. 178. *bent*, grass-stalk.

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