Goblins

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wife of a considerable landowner, and from what I have heard I presume had received a good education. She had five or six children, and there were in the household many servants, as Mr. Wells was a farmer on a large scale. She told my father, evidently without having any notion that she was exposing her ignorance, that she kept by her two bottles, into one of which she poured what was left of the doctor's medicine which had been prescribed to be taken internally, and into the other the remainder of such lotions as had been sent. She assured my father that she herself and those dependent on her had many times profited by the use of these strange blends. (Cf. *supra*, p. 73.)

I do not think that the practice of mixing medicines intended for different diseases was at all uncommon in Lincolnshire in former days, and from remarks which I have heard, I believe it to be still not infrequently done, though I confess that I have not satisfactory evidence in proof thereof.

EDWARD PEACOCK.

GOBLINS.

I. *In Chitral.*

I received the following lately from a young officer who was quartered at Chitral for some time. It is interesting to meet again with the "back-footed" beings on whom M. Gaidoz bestowed so much learning in *Mélusine*.

A. LANG.

"Fairies in that part of the world [the Chitral valley] are only of one sort—bad; which rather limits the field. Their abode was on the slope of a gigantic snow-peak, 26,000 feet above the sea, Tirich Mir by name. This they made their headquarters, and many of the inhabitants of the valley 'allowed' they had seen them flitting to and fro on their marauding expeditions, some on horseback, some on foot, of both sexes, and usually clad in white.

Strange to say, they had no knee or ankle-joints, and their feet grew to the rear instead of to the front.

"There appears also to be a kind of Banshee in Chitral, which wails round the walls of Shoghrot Fort, a week or so before the death of the Melitar or King of Chitral, and differs from the Irish variety in not being [? haunting] a residence of the doomed man."

II.—*In the Farøe Islands.*

[The following notes are from the pen of an American lady who has been spending the last ten or twelve months in one of the most northerly and inaccessible of the Farøe Islands. The allusion in the opening sentence is to her correspondent's previous reference to the Rev. J. G. Campbell's *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, p. 191, where he classes "the Niägruisar of the Farøe Islands" with the Scottish Brownie, as a "drudging goblin."—ED.]

I think your Niägruisar must be the same word as our Niðagrísur, but the Farøe creature is *not* a Brownie. A Brownie is a *Vattnir*; he lives about houses and cow-stalls, and comes out in the twilight and sits under the eaves, and careful housewives when they throw out the dishwater call out a warning to him and his fellows. Like the Brownie he, if well-treated, will perform little friendly services for the family.

A Niðagrísur is the spirit of an unbaptised child (generally a murdered illegitimate child), that takes the shape of a round-bodied creature that often goes on all-fours and is as a rule malignant, lying in wait for people in the dark and doing them harm, though just how I have not learned. Sometimes they haunt a pastor, begging to be given a name, and to be buried in sanctified earth; a former pastor here was haunted in that way. Long ago, a servant-girl here had an illegitimate child, killed it, and buried it in a stocking belonging to a serving-man called Píslí (he was not the father). Some time afterwards she married Píslí; and the bride's dance was under way in the big kitchen

when suddenly a Niðagrísur rolled into the circle, and danced about, singing :—

“ My mother bears gold,
I dance in wool,
I dance in Píslí's hose.”

(It rhymes in *Faröese*). Then he ran on all-fours to his mother; but she fainted, and the festivities were at an end. I think this little tale must go back to the days when brides wore at the wedding dresses embroidered with gold thread, as they do still in Iceland.

Your black dog is common here.¹ He can be a *Nikkur* (a wicked water-spirit) who has taken that shape, or a Troll, or the spirit of a dead enemy who has come to haunt or avenge a wrong. He often carries a light at the end of his tail. Somehow that light seems a very chilling touch.

On “Old Holy Kings' Night” [Old Twelfth Night] black troll-bulls come up from the sea and visit the byres. Dreka was afraid to go to milk that night, and had to ask Joanna to go with her.

If a girl wishes to know the name of her future true-love, she must go out some very dark night quite naked, taking with her her *sark*, dip it into running water (there is always a little burn close by), wring it out, and put it, rolled up, under her pillow. Then she will dream of him.

ELIZABETH TAYLOR.

Videreide i Videro (*Faröe Islands*),
January 29th, 1902.

¹ [“We had an old nurse, who was sixty years in the family, and when any of the nursery party showed signs of temper, she would exclaim: ‘Lord sake! there's that black dog again! Wait till I get haud o' him!’ After a protracted struggle at the child's back, which usually ended in a laugh, the ‘dog’ was flung downstairs and serenity restored. Mrs. ——— tells me that her old Barbadoes nurse had the same habit:” writes the Lowland Scottish lady to whom this interesting letter was addressed. “I think you have got the black dog on your back” is, or was, said in rebuke to cross or sulky (rather than passionate) children in some English nurseries also.—ED.]

III. *In the Isle of Man.*

I gathered the following folklore during a holiday in the Isle of Man in the summer of 1887. It has not, I believe, appeared in print before, except in a contribution of my own to the *Brighton Herald*, 31st December, 1887.

One evening during the summer months of 1884, the driver of the mail-cart from one of the towns in the island started on his rounds to collect the mail-bags from the surrounding district in the usual manner. He was due at his destination about half-past one o'clock in the morning, but did not arrive until nearly half-past five, when he appeared dreadfully scared and agitated. Being asked to account for his delay, he solemnly related that when about six miles from home he was beset by a troop of fairies, all of whom were particularly well-dressed in red suits and provided with lanterns. They stopped his horse, threw the mail-bags into the road, and danced around them in the well-known manner usual with fairies. The poor postman struggled with them in vain. No sooner did he succeed in replacing a bag than it was again immediately thrown out. This continued until the appearance of daylight, when the fairies apparently thought it was time for them to take their departure, which they eventually did, leaving the postman in a highly nervous and exhausted state. After resting a short time to collect his scattered wits, he succeeded in replacing the mails in his cart, and reached the end of his journey without further adventures. When I made acquaintance with him some little time afterwards, he did not strike me as a person likely to fall a victim to his own fertile imagination. As for doubts with respect to his condition at the time, it can only be said that he had left the post office that night in his usual condition of sobriety, and did not appear the worse for drink when he returned. Moreover, his character for sobriety and honesty was of many years' standing.

In another part of the island I was told the following story by an old inhabitant, who stated that he knew the parties to whom it occurred and that he received the account directly from their lips. Not far from Port Erin, a village on the south-west coast, a mountain called Cronk-ny-Irey-Lhaa, 1449 feet in height, slopes steeply to the sea. On the seaward side a chapel and cemetery are situated, both of which have now fallen into disuse. Some years back, as a fishing party were sailing one night near

this spot, they were startled and alarmed by hearing violent and distracting cries as of someone in great distress. This was told to others of their companions on arriving at home. They, with natural curiosity, determined to sail near the same spot, and if possible discover the cause of the sounds. They succeeded in hearing them, but failed to decide their origin. One night, however, one of the party, believing that they were uttered by the perturbed spirit of someone who had died without baptism, shouted in reply, "My she lhiannoo mac oo ta mee dy enmys oo Juan; as my she inneen oo ta mee dy enmys oo Junay." ("If thou art a boy child, I name thee John; if thou art a girl, I name thee Judith.") The cries were never heard again.

Not so very long ago, so other informants told me, a female spirit, commonly known as a *lanonshaa*, frequented the island.¹ The *lanonshaa* seems to have been a kind of unbidden familiar spirit, for it permanently attached itself to its victim, and nothing could be done to get rid of the unwelcome companion. In one case it attached itself to a big strong burly man, who was compelled to share his food with his *lanonshaa*. At other times he would place behind him the vessel from which he was about to drink, in order to satisfy its thirst. He was often seen when on horseback laughing immoderately, presumably with his ghostly companion, and throwing his hat into the air to catch it again. On some occasions he was heard carrying on conversations, seemingly with nobody. One night after he had retired to rest a party of curious boys gathered round his bedroom to catch, if possible, some portion of his solitary conversation. In this purpose, however, they were defeated, for no sooner had they got into position than the spirit informed its master, saying in Manx, "They are listening now." "Listening, are they?" replied he. "I will give them listening." Upon this he jumped from his bed and snatched up a stick to inflict summary chastisement upon the intruders, but the boys had fled before he could get near them. When these spirits are visible it is said that they appear as women dressed in white.

WILLIAM MARTIN, M.A., LL.D.

¹ [Spelt *Lhiannan-Shee* by Mr. A. W. Moore (*Folklore of the Isle of Man*, p. 50), who tells a similar story on the authority of Mr. J. F. Campbell.—Ed.]