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SHETLAND BROWNIES.

THE following is copied from a little-known book called *A New Description of Orkney and Zetland*, by John Brand, Edinburgh, 1703, p. 112 (speaking of Zetland): "Not above 40 or 50 years ago, almost every family had a *Brouny* or evil spirit so-called, which served them, to whom they gave a sacrifice for his service; as when they churned their milk, they took a part thereof and sprinkled every corner of the house with it for Brounie's use, likewise when they brewed, they had a stone which they called *Brounie's Stone*, wherein there was a little hole, into which they poured some wort for a sacrifice to Brouny. My informer, a minister in the country, told me that he had conversed with an old man, who when young used to brew, and sometimes read upon his Bible, to whom an old woman in the house said, that Brouny was displeased with that book he read upon, which if he continued to do, they would get no more service of Brouny; but he being better instructed from that book, which was Brounie's eyesore and the object of his wrath, when he brewed, he would not suffer any sacrifice to be given to Brouny, whereupon the 1st and 2nd brewings were spilt, and for no use, though the wort wrought well, yet in a little time it left off working and grew cold; but of the 3rd Browst or Brewing he had ale very good, though he would not give any sacrifice to Brouny, with whom afterwards they were no more troubled. . . . Which cleareth that Scripture, *Resist the devil and he will flee from you*. They also had stacks of corn, which they called *Brounie's Stacks*, which, though they were not bound with straw ropes, or anyway fenced, as other stacks use to be, yet the greatest storm of wind was not able to blow any straw off them."

The same traveller collected stories of "Sea-monsters, the meer-men and meer-maids, which have not only been seen but apprehended and kept for some time." He writes: "About 5 years since, a boat at the fishing drew her lines, and one of them, as the fishers thought, having some great fish upon it, was with greater difficulty than the rest raised from the ground, but when raised it came more easily to the surface of the water,

upon which a creature like a woman presented itself at the side of the boat; it had the face, arms, breasts, shoulders, etc., of a woman, and long hair hanging down the back, but the nether part from below the breasts was beneath the water, so that they could not understand the shape thereof: the two fishers who were within the boat, being surprised at this strange sight, one of them unadvisedly drew a knife, and thrust it into her breast, whereupon she cried, as they judged, *Alas*, and the hook giving way she fell backward and was no more seen. The hook being big went in at her chin and out at the upper lip. The man who thrust the knife into her is now dead, and, as was observed, never prospered after this, but was still haunted by an evil spirit in the appearance of an old man, who, as he thought, used to say unto him, *Will ye do such a thing who killed the woman*; the other man then in the boat is yet alive in the isle of *Burra*" (p. 114).

F. C. CONYBEARE.