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COLLECTANEA.

A STUDY OF FOLKLORE ON THE COASTS OF CONNACHT, IRELAND.

THOMAS JOHNSON WESTROPP.

(Continued from Vol. XXIX., p. 319.)

IV. (continued). *Fairies and Fairymounds.*

"TRANSLATION" AND CHANGELINGS. Probably long before the "dukedom" of Theseus, when the famous weaver was "translated," men and women were reputed to be carried off by spirits to supernatural palaces, caves and wilds. In my study of Co. Clare such stories were nearly absent, but they are far more plentiful in the islands of Connacht, notably Cliara (Clare), Bofin and Shark.

A Munster chief settled on Inishark (Shark) with his wife, children and nurse. One day the boy dreamed of a lovely land under the sea; his nurse was asleep and he induced the two other children to go to the shore, where they were drowned. The nurse, in her deep sorrow and self-reproach for her carelessness, secluded herself in a shore cave and spent her time in prayer and mourning. At last one day she found a bunch of strange, lovely flowers placed in her hand, and she at once died.¹ The children evidently had been spirited away to "Ladra" or some other under-sea paradise, for children who die young are really alive in the fairy hills.

On Bofin it is considered very dangerous for young girls to be let go about by themselves, as there is a very splendid fairy

¹ Lady Wilde, *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland*, 1919, i. p. 64.

court on the island. Should any one have the misfortune to be carried away, like Proserpina, to the underworld, he must be careful to eat no fairy food or the kidnapped person is held prisoner to the end of the world. One young man incautiously slept under a rick on a Friday night and was carried off to the palace and told to help the cook. To his horror he saw that the fairies were preparing as meat for the feast an old woman, whom they were skinning as she hung from a hook. He was told she was a miser and had a bitter tongue, hence her fate. When the feast was served he excused himself from eating on the pretence that no priest was there to bless the food, but, tempted by the wine, he drank off a cupful, became insensible, and (when he awoke) found himself under the rick. He never recovered, but pined away and died.

Another story on Inishark told how a girl whose lover had been killed was weeping for his loss one sunset when a woman approached. The stranger made her look through a ring of herbs¹ and a wreath, off which she was to pluck a leaf, without signing the cross. One day her mother saw her doing the spell and broke into prayer, when the girl screamed that the dead were coming for her and fell senseless. The priest was hastily brought and sprinkled her with holy water, when the evil spirits left her, but, like the hero of the Bofin tale, she withered away and soon died. The looking through a ring reminds one of a tale of the goddess fairy Aine at Knockainey, Co. Limerick, who showed a girl a ring through which she saw the holy hill covered with fairies.²

Otway³ tells of a man at Portacloy on the north coast of Mayo, who, returning to it from Porturlin, followed a guiding line of white stones over the intervening upland, a wild heathery plateau, even in my time haunted by eagles and regarded with awe. Despite his forebodings of danger from "Pookies" he got unmolested for half his journey to a hollow called the Granny Glen, a beautiful little lonely stream gully, as I saw it one

¹ I heard a very similar tale on Galway Bay before 1886. I think over the Clare border.

² *Revue Celtique*, iv. p. 287; *Proc. R.I. Academy*, xxxiv. pp. 59-60.

³ *Erris and Tyrauly* (1838), p. 134.

summer morning, in 1911, but weird and haunted in the gloom. He suddenly saw lights in every direction and could distinguish a great castle. He entered it and found large rooms lit by rainbow hues, as bright as the sun. A feast and rich plate were laid out in one and a crowd of servants and guests welcomed him to the table. He remembered that if he ate their food he should remain for seven years. So tempting seemed the food that he was about to yield when a woman stopped him, telling him she had flown from Donegal to save him. Then his host said, "I hope your friend O'Donnell liked his ramble the other night. Pray be so good as to present Capt. Green's compliments to Capt. — and tell him he hopes to have the pleasure of his company before many nights shall have passed." The man on his return to Portacloy told everyone, and great excitement was felt as to what might befall Capt. —; the latter, when telling it to Otway, said that, if he had happened to be lost, all the natives would have believed that he was carried off by the fairies.¹

Near Ballycastle, in Tirawley Barony, eastward from Portacloy, is a "giant's grave" of unusual form—a *vesica* of large stones with a small circle at each point; near it lay another circle. The peasantry believed that "some big body belonging to Finn mac Coul" was laid there. Lieut. Henri, before 1838, heard how a weaver, who lived between it and Beldearg, had married a young and pretty girl. She sickened and died unaccountably, and, as her sorrowing husband sat alone, he heard her voice. She told him she had been carried off by the "gentry," but if he came at full moon to the giant's grave and drove out of it a brindled cow and her calf, she would be restored to him. He came, the cow lowed, and so horrible an uproar arose of cursing and hooting that he ran home, and his wife, who had been taken to nurse the fairy children, was never seen again, whether in her own form or that of the brindled cow.²

Otway in *A Tour in Connaught*³ also notes beliefs among the people of Inishbofin which I found flourishing over seventy years later in that primitive place. It was firmly believed that the

¹ *Erris and Tyrrawly*, p. 134.

² *Ibid.* p. 274.

³ *Loc. cit.* p. 395.

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hills were full of fairies, "romping and carousing within," and that they carried off children and robbed milk and butter. The sprites could exercise malignant power on infants especially before baptism, stealing the handsome ones and replacing them by puny withered changelings. The only way to get rid of these was to set a pot on the fire and threaten to boil the fairy child, who then vanishes and the real child was brought back. Women who die in childbirth are believed to have been carried off to fairyland.

I met everywhere, from Ballycastle to Inishbofin, beliefs as to the existence of changelings. Lady Wilde gives several from Inishark which seem to be good local tales.¹ I must only give the shortest condensation of the beliefs. (1) An old woman came into a house and looked at a child without saying "God bless you"; it got ill, a strange "wise woman" told the parents that it had been changed and directed them to get a bit of the old woman's cloak. This made the elf sneeze and the true child was brought back. (2) A man saw the fairies carrying off a boy, and, signing the cross, rescued the infant. He found the mother weeping over the supposed corpse, which he made her throw into the fire, where it came to life and flew up the chimney. He then gave her the real baby. (3) A man, whose young wife had long been childless, taunted her, and she soon after bore a lovely boy. One day to his horror it suddenly grew a long beard, and he beat his wife, at whose screams two red-capped women came and beat him till he asked pardon. The real child sent a tuft of rushes to the mother, and she was able to enter the fairy palace. An old woman brought her to the king and said she was the nurse of his own son. He restored her own child and said the man who beat her was a fairy disguised as her husband. She invoked God's name and fell senseless, eventually recovering and returning home to find she had been three years absent. She found that her husband had detected the changeling and put it on the fire, when it shrieked and flew up the chimney. (4) Mary Callan of Shark while sitting alone with her

¹ *Ancient Cures, Charms and Usages of Ireland* (1890), p. 141; *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland* (1887), vol. i. pp. 38, 73, 119.

newborn child was wrapped in a cloak by two men and carried away to the Fairy Hall. She touched her eye with the fairies' ointment and saw a crowd of her neighbours' supposed-dead children who told her that they could not return till Doomsday. One also told her that the men were waiting to steal her child till the candle she had lit should go out, and bade her tell his mother that he was alive. He gave her a leaf to crush when in trouble, and she found herself outside of the Hill, returning home, to find her child dying, she crushed the leaf and the infant recovered. The leaf was put into an amulet. (5) A changeling, found playing pipes behind a tub of meal, was put on a shovel over the fire and vanished. (6) The wife of a man named Dermot¹ seemed to die of a fever; her daughter died a year and a day after and eventually her son got ill of a similar fever. A girl went to the well to get water for him and saw a dark shadow resembling the boy's mother. The shade told her to go home and she would see a black cock on the bed. She was to get the blood of a crowing hen (I hope to give some notes on these ominous birds in Section XVIII.) gather ten straws, throw away one and stir the blood and lay it by the boy. This was done and the child recovered. (7) A wilder tale was told where a similar charm was done; the child's mother had killed a kitten to use its blood as a cure. Then two great black cats appeared asking how the woman dared kill their only child to save her own. They attacked and tore the family and some neighbours who came to help in a fierce fray and routed them badly torn. Suddenly the cats stopped and said, "You are punished enough, your baby will live, for death can only take one child, and this we swear by the blood and by the power of the great king of the cats"—they vanished, and the child recovered. I found no similar story in the islands, but, in a Co. Limerick tale, weasels attempt to avenge their young and yet act with strict moderation and justice. Supernatural cats are common in Irish mythology, and I have found belief in "King Cats," one dwelling in the *sidh* or holy mound of Rathcroaghan in Co. Roscommon and one in the tumulus of Dowth in Co. Meath. The first appears to have been worshipped, like the divine horse, at a mound in

¹ *Ancient Cures*, p. 131.

eastern Co. Louth, but much can be found in early Irish literature about such beings.

FAIRY KINGS. Fiachra and Finvarra seem to be the chief fairy kings in Co. Mayo and Galway, as Donn Dumhach is in Co. Clare and Donn Firinne in Co. Limerick. I have noted no outstanding banshee, such as Aibinn, Aine and Clidna are in Munster or the Hag of Black Head in Co. Clare. Fiachra may be the famous king Fiachra Foltsnatach (a semi-historic prince, late in the fourth century) or Fiachra, of the fort of Dun Fiachrach in the Mullet named in the wars of Queen Medbh in the *Tain bó Flidhais*.¹ He protects ancient hawthorns and "forts" and loves those who do the same. At Dun Fiachrach he is the owner of a remarkable water horse on which he used to leap over the chasm of that promontory fort. In the poem Fiachra (in one text Fiacha) "of the keen blade, son of Faobhar," was summoned, just before our era, to the aid of Oilioll Finn, husband of Flidais Foltchain,² against the great invasion of Medbh to release Fergus and carry off the famous cow from Dundomhnaill. The cliff forts of the Mullet and its neighbourhood are all named there—Port, Dunmore (Dunnamo), Dun an Acinphir, Dunaneanir and Dundearg, Dunkirtaan and Duniver.³

The "high king," Finvarra,⁴ with his queen and court was seen on November Eve (*Samain*, when the *Sid* mounds open) by a fisherman on Inishark. Among the train were a girl and other deceased friends of the spectator. The man was (very imprudently on such a night) standing in an old rath or circle and fell insensible; a similar sight came to a poor woman at the same place, but she died of the shock. Finvarra rides on a horse with fiery red nostrils and is on special terms of friendship

¹ *Journal Roy. Soc. Ant. Ir.*, vol. xlii. p. 197; vol. xliii. p. 148.

² Flidais Foltchain was regarded as mother of the "slabra" (earth god) Nia Segamon (B.C. 150 to 70) in the ninth century pedigrees of the Cashel and Thomond princes. She was probably a mother goddess or milk goddess famous for a wonderful cow.

³ Most of these forts are described *Journal Roy. Soc. Anth. Ireland*, xlii. pp. 132-139, 197-216; for the tale see Professor Mackinnon's version in *Celtic Review*, I.-IV.

⁴ He is named in the *Leabhar Gabhala* in its present form of the eleventh century but in substance far earlier.

with the Kirwans of Castle Hackett, who claim descent from a beautiful fairy, whose loveliness is sometimes renewed in the family. Finvarra helps himself freely to wine, but he cannot be called an extravagant guest as he keeps the cask full to the brim. The story is alluded to (1839) in the Ordnance Survey Letters, and I found a variant on Galway Bay.¹

In one version it is the fairies of *Cnoc Meadha* near Burrishoole, Co. Mayo, that are friends with the Kirwans, not Finvarra of the southern *Cnoc Meadha* or Knockmaa near Tuam.

PUCA. The *Púca*, or *Phuca*, is generally suspected, from his name and his absence from our ancient literature, to be a parvenu in Ireland, for his origin and provenance have never been established. The name *Pook* of goatish shape and the mischievous *Puck* immortalized by Shakespeare, appear in English sources.² Elsewhere than in our district he is a shaggy goat or black horse, who bewilders and carries off belated persons. Here (and it supports the suspicion of his late introduction) he is of human shape, some even confuse him with the Banshee.³ James Hardiman publishes an old poem *Abhann an phuca*, by a bard MacSweeney, of Doon Castle, the foundations of a peel tower on a high rock on the mainland opposite to Omev Island. In a note, the editor says that it is believed that the *Púca* survived the deluge and is a mischievous, hairy spirit, who exerts his power on November Eve (*Samain*) whence many avoid going out that night after sunset.

Lochaunaphuca on Cliara⁴ is haunted (I heard) by "a sort of spirit"; Professor Eoin MacNeill heard that "the *Púca* was seen there and might be seen yet." On Achill, "Puca" was one of four human tyrants who broke a stone cross on

¹ *Ancient Cures, etc.*, p. 148; *Ancient Legends, etc.*, i. pp. 145, 149; ii. pp. 102, 217. *cf.* p. 214.

² "The Pouke nor other evil sprite" in Spenser; "that same Pooke hath goatish body" in Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, 1537, p. 126; Croker's *Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland*, p. 153.

³ As on Clare Island, Mayo. "Pook" is not uncommon in place names, but in at least some is a "buck goat."

⁴ Misprinted "Sochaunaphuca" *supra*, xxix. p. 307; the other names are Owennaphuca near Omev Island, Galway, and Foheraphuca in Achill.

Slievemore. Iron, fire and salt are the surest weapons against the *Púca* on November Eve among the people of North Mayo. Everywhere there I heard of him as a ghostly man, never as of animal form. His usual place is taken by the Water Horse.

Síd Mounds. I have hope that the very important subject of the *síd* or god's mounds of the ancient Irish may be studied scientifically and as it deserves.¹ There is much information accessible, and when it is brought together (it and its kindred subject, the early *óenach* and "cemetery" of each district) we shall begin to know the distribution of the religious centres or "temples" ² of later Irish paganism. The gods having degenerated to fairies I include this note with the other fairy lore of Western Connacht.

Cnoc Meadha, or *Síodh Murbhigh*, was a levelled mound on Clew Bay and, unlike most of its congeners, enjoyed the best reputation, for its inmates were "the gentlest and kindest of the good people" of Umhall or indeed in Connacht. "*Sídh* murbhaigh of the waves, a *síd* never guilty of treachery; a delightful *síd* of fair haired damsels." ³

"Cruikeen na sheehoge," near Portacloy, is known to the old people, but, in that lonely place, I failed to find it, though I was evidently close to the site; one said it was a natural mound. There are two mounds, each reputedly a *sídhán* or fairy place, on Cliara (Clare Island); one yielded a bronze sword. On Inishturk are two more, which I shall describe; Inishbofin had one "full of fairies" which I could not get located, but suspect to be a small ring mound near Dunmore fort. In 1878, I was told that the large tumulus on the lake shore opposite to Recess Hotel was a "fairy mound." In the *Life of St. Cormac* we hear of *Síth Badha* (? *Badbha*) in Tirawley ⁴; the exploded school of antiquaries who follow Henry O'Brien in their dis-

¹ See my various attempts to elucidate it in *Journal Roy. Soc. Anth. Ireland*, vol. xl. p. 291; *Proc. R.I. Acad.*, xxxiv. pp. 57-67 and pp. 152-3; xxxv. pp. 372-5, 382. For those of the god Lug's famous sanctuary at Talilthiu, Co. Meath, see *Folk-Lore*, xxxi. pp. 138-9.

² Sanctuaries and platforms for sacred rites not actual temples, i.e. buildings.

³ "Ordnance Survey Letters," *R.I. Acad.*, Mayo, vol. ii. p. 9.

⁴ *Vita Sanctorum Hlib.*, Colgan, p. 754.

covery of the worship of Buddha and the phallus or *Bod* call this Sith Budha! Another important sacred mound was the inauguration place of *Forradh mac n Amalgadh* in Tirawley. A cairn or tumulus and stone circle near Killala and Rathfran is still called "Forry." The cairn at Kilgallighan near Dookegan and a mound in Aranmore may be of this nature. I was told as much of the last, but on uncertain "authority."

On Inishturk¹ Mr. Tim Toole (Austin) in 1911 showed me two fairy palaces. The first (called Shee or *Síd*) was a hill fort of large blocks, on a bold rocky knoll, like the fairy fort of Croaghatecaun (*Cruach an t sídéan*) near Ballinalackin, Co. Clare.² Only part of the foundation of the ring wall of great white quartz blocks remains. The second *síd* is a notable natural rock called "Campulnamuckagh." It has been asserted that this is *Teampul na muice*, but I was told on the spot "no, there was no church here," so leave the word "campul" for further discussion by philologists. The pig may be supernatural, like the "boar" from which the island (Turk Island and Inishturk) seems to be named.³

There were two shallow lakes down a long slope, the outer first cut a drain through its lower ridge, then a stream cut down the inner ridge, in a straight face with a doorway-like recess. The whole is strangely artificial in aspect; I hear there is a chimney-like shaft on the top of the pinnacle above the "door." A young man foolishly threw some sods of turf (peat) down the first in bravado. Not long after his leg began to swell and a dull pain developed. He had to take to bed and was pining away in cruel agony. A poor "wise woman" called to ask for charity, and being well treated (when do the Irish peasants refuse to aid those poorer than themselves?), she undertook to cure the lad. She went out gathering herbs, made a hot poultice and soon the swelling broke open and "she took out a thing like a blade of grass," bound up the limb and he soon

¹ Described fully in "Clare Island Survey," *Proc. R.I. Acad.*, vol. xxxi. part 2.

² *Folk-Lore*, xxi. p. 198.

³ Or the Matal wild boar from which Inismatall or Illaunmattle on the coast of Co. Clare was named.

recovered. Similar cases of necrosis of the bone have been treated elsewhere without suggestion of fairy origin or cure!¹

Over thirty years before (about 1880) a young man had his coat left at Campulnamuckagh saying he would fetch it away by night. He set off in the dark, but got a sudden panic and fled to a friend's house. "Whatever he saw," his terror was so evident that no one dared go and tell his relatives that he was safe. Meanwhile, alarmed at his non-appearance, his people set out in a crowd to rescue him—they only found the coat and hurried home regarding him as carried off into the *Std.* He returned by daylight, a sadder and wiser man, and I could see that jest or defiance of the powers of the air in the Campulnamuckagh was even still regarded as dangerous in the extreme.

Near Ballycroy we heard of a man who built an addition to his house which encroached on a fairy hill. Soon afterwards he was drowned and his brother died, for the "gentry" love to dwell in these old earthworks, and it is most unlucky to injure an old rath even when in the midst of cultivated land.

I will only add that on Galway Bay, about Ards and Carna, I found in 1899 beliefs that the good people were the less wicked of the fallen angels and caused diseases in infants and cattle, playing mischievous tricks and substituting changelings for human children. The people carry a lit pipe or a "coal" of burning turf in the dark for security. Mr. P. Mongan of Carna and Mr. Cahill at Mace Harbour told us several stories. Unfortunately on the occasion of our stay a local "fairy man" saw fit to warn his clients against answering our enquiries, so we got less information than usual. However, at Gorumna and Lettermullen, not far to the east, on the same bay, Dr. C. Browne got fuller particulars of all these beliefs and a few others already given. Aran has ceased to be safe ground since my early visit in 1878; even by 1885 caution was very necessary, and, since then, a crowd of tourists and students of Irish have overlaid the genuine tradition, and it seems almost a point of honour among the peasantry to mislead incautious enquirers.

¹ I recall a nearly disastrous "cure" by an herb doctor and astrologer in N.E. Co. Limerick about 1886.

V. *Will o' the Wisps and Corpse Lights.*

There can be no doubt but that luminous natural phenomena are very common on the islands and in the Mullet. Luminous insects and the St. Elmo's fire, balls of light at sea and on the hillside or blue phosphorescent sparks clinging to a mast, or whip, or horse's mane, have been seen by some persons with whom I have spoken,¹ indeed (but I speak with reserve) I have seen unaccounted lights out at sea myself from the shore.

Though true fire is everywhere so inimical to fairies and ghosts, its imitation often accompanies them. About 1838 Otway tells how Mr. George Crampton and a clergyman, Rev. Mr. Stack, were riding in the sandhills near Termoncarra glebe in the Mullet on a stormy winter evening when the darkness was lit up and their horses, Crampton's stick and Mr. Stack's clothes were fringed with fire. Lieut. Henri had seen a ball of fire light on his flagstaff at Dookeeghan and throw out innumerable pencillings of brilliant rays. A fairy ball appeared on a ship's mast in Blacksod Bay, and several floated through the sandhills near Binghamstown in recent times. There are said to be luminous insects² in the bogs above Portacloy and on to Beldearg in Erris and "humming globes" of pale flame have been seen, and are mentioned in many tales from Portacloy to Binghamstown. Sometimes travellers in the dark have seen their feet covered with light. Belief in Cliara rather inclines to regard such fires as of worse origin "got by the Devil himself." They are sometimes corpse candles foreboding death, usually at sea, but as a rule they are attributed to fairies³ both in the Mullet and on Cliara.

VI. *Satan.*

The Prince of all evil spirits may be reckoned among the supernatural beings seen in Co. Mayo. Satan appeared as a

¹ *Erris and Tyrawly*, p. 94. For bog-mirage see *ibid.* p. 343.

² Like the "luminous owls" attested on the "Drum" ridge in Decies Barony, Co. Waterford.

³ "Ethnography of the Mullet, etc.," *Proc. R.I. Acad.*, vol. iii. ser. iii. p. 632; "Ethnography of Clare Island and Inishturk," *ibid.* vol. v. p. 63.

black ram to St. Brendan on Inisglora. The saint rushed at his ghostly enemy, who ran away, assuming his proper form in the flight. The saint, who had been praying and blessing the ground as he ran, was startled and stopped, so the last spots on which Satan sprang are burned bare patches to this day. Once the Devil had the hardihood to appear to a woman in a chapel (I think at Ballycroy—somewhere near Achill), but he explained that he went to the church because people were so careless and the women went to criticize each other's clothes. Demoniacal possession is a matter of practical belief, and a circumstantial tale is told of one case, between Portacloy and Bangor Erris, at Mount Jubilee, about a possessed man.¹ Most of the appearances of the Devil are connected with local saints; he is more usually there, as in the less retired parts of the earth, seen in the works of evil. Despite the piety and usual kindness of the peasantry, malignant rites have been performed in his name. Roderic O'Flaherty in 1684 records such usage of the *Casán Flainín* (or *Pleimhín*) to wreck a boat; usually it is an innocent charm for fishing. On Inishark a woman went to St. Leo's well because she had been called a bad name by a neighbour. She poured water on the ground in the Devil's name, with the terrible malediction "so may he be poured out like water," and went round it "against the sun." She then threw a stone at each station ejaculating "so may the curse fall upon him and the power of the devil crush him." The victim soon after was lost at sea in a gale. The woman had little cause to rejoice at her unhallowed success for, as she stood on a rock, gloating over her victim's end, his corpse rose in the water and she was blown into the sea and never seen again.

Another woman, by a similar charm, broke her enemy's leg. I was told of "winnowing weights of nothing in the Devil's name" somewhere in Connemara, but not on good authority, or with details, or the actual place. I see no reason to believe the statement that boys are dressed in petticoats to deceive the Devil as to their sex. The people of Inishturk denounce with horror charms done in the Devil's name by smiths' turning

¹ *Proc. R.I. Acad.*, vol. iv. ser. iii. pp. 104-5.

an anvil and boring a hole in a coin. I reserve a case of dealing with the Devil on one of the islands of North Galway, probably Shark or Bofin, and connected with the *dubh dael* beetle or "Devil's coachhorse."

VII. *Underground Folk.*

It seems as if some of the mound dwellers are not true fairies, but, as in my notes on Co. Clare, I have little to bear this out, and merely mark the section to attract the better study of local workers to that point.

VIII. *Water Spirits and Mer Folk.*

Greatest of all the water spirits, the sea god, Manannán mac Lir, has occasionally appeared, usually on some errand of mercy on the coast of Co. Mayo and he, or his son (or double), Oirbsen,¹ of Loch Oirbsen (Loch Corrib), on the coast of Galway Bay. He has sometimes come to warn of the approach of a storm. No doubt the pagan ancestors of the shore dwellers worshipped him of old; and his reverence lingered when his godhead was forgotten. The people live by the gifts of the sea, its fish, timber and seaweed, so naturally the gracious side of the god was most felt, but there are also suggestions that his fierce cruelty was once felt. Anything that falls into the sea should not be retrieved: a hat blows off and Aran boatmen have refused to go after it. A curious ceremony where young men naked on horseback are driven into Galway Bay and for some time kept from coming to land is very suggestive of a symbolic sacrifice. I am told that this has been in use near Spiddal, to the west of Galway, in very recent years. Some fifty years ago I heard from Lord Kilannin that his father and others had to go to the rescue of some shipwrecked men whom the peasantry would neither help nor permit to land. His relatives were

¹ As in the case of the god Nuada Necht and his son Nechtan so Manannán and Oirbsen vary as father and son, or as the same person in the folk tales. I would refer to a note on Manannán in *Proc. R.I. Academy*, xxxiv. pp. 149-151.

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eagerly warned of the disasters to which they might be liable for saving anyone from the sea.¹

There are several tales about storm spirits collected by Lady Wilde and by Otway, but I found none in my journeyings on that coast.

Of the mer-folk, most of the tales merge into those about seals, under which heading they are best treated. A local wise woman, Biddy Toole, near Portacloy, living at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, used to tell how she got some fishermen to row her to a rocky islet to gather *duileasg* (edible seaweed, "dulse" or "dillisk"). They carried her out to sea for mischief and to enjoy her sarcastic and witty talk, she being a very merry and pleasant woman. They let down their lines, got a strong bite and pulled up a green "fishy looking child," a boy, in every respect save its colour like a human child. The terrified captor, when all had looked at his "catch," threw back the creature into the water, but, whether from imagination or some other cause, he pined and died before the end of the year, though apparently in robust health² on the ill-fated expedition. The fishermen at Lettermullen and Gorumna on Galway Bay tell much of a local merman.³ He was a drowned fisherman, and more than one person claimed to have seen him. He had long black hair, a flat face, a double chin and webbed hands. Far more attractive seems to have been a local mermaid who came to the more western coast to announce the coming of the three magic cows *Bo finn* (whence *Inishbofin*), *Bo ruad* (whence the "Red Cow's path," a spear's-cast wide, along the coast and the "Borua well"⁴ on *Ardillán*), and the "Bo duff," of which I heard no local legends. She was very beautiful and named "Berooch."

At *Inishark* low music is heard under the water before an accident or a wreck. The best preservative is for the fishers

¹ I have to thank Miss Matilda Redington of Kilcornan for several notes on the subject.

² Some fifty years since I often heard my mother argue girls among the Limerick peasantry into hope and recovery from some imagination or superstition, a simple "remedy" and much faith sufficed.

³ "Brian Boru's well" is a surveyor's "little learning" foisted on to the maps both in *Ardillan* and near *Corofin*, Co. Clare.

to sing, or have music on board the boat, as the sea people love to hear men sing and forget to perform their spells till the fated moment has gone by.

IX. *Ghosts and Haunted Houses.*

In treating of the important subject of ghosts, I intend to include ghostly animals for, in local folk-lore, the people regard such as equal to the human phantom. This seems to imply that the beliefs are of very great, if not pre-Christian, antiquity in origin, just as the beliefs in magical stones are most archaic. Going round the Mayo coast from Ballina (Ballíná) it is hardly surprising to find that the beautiful "Abbey" of Moyne is haunted, though its lesser sisters of Rosserk and Rathfran (so far as I am aware) have no such tales. The Moyne story is a variant of "Mary the maid of the inn," which was a "loved terror" of my childhood. Peter Cumming, among convivial friends, in Killala, wagered a guinea that he would go to the Abbey and fetch a skull from it that night. The company accepted the bet and he set off alone on his long dark walk. Sobered and nervous he entered the aisle and finding a heap of bones groped for a skull and took one. A sickly groaning voice asked, "What are ye doing with my skull?" and he saw his grandfather's ghost, resembling the man in his last illness, even to the tobacco stains on his chin! The perturbed spirit rebuked the drunken descendant. Peter summoned up courage and asked for a loan of the skull to win the bet, and promising to bury it decently in his parents' grave and to pay for masses for the repose of its soul. The ghost vanished. "Silence gives consent," and Peter won the bet, telling his awesome tale and being famous ever after for bravery and clever mendacity.¹

Lieut. Henri told Otway how he himself had seen a Brocken spectre in a fog, which accounts for the ghost tales near Portacloy and Dookeghan about 1838. In my time a ghostly black dog had also been seen near the former place. Two ghosts of drowned men appear near Belmullet, one on Blacksod Bay; the latter ghostly sailor was seen as late as 1894. A ghost of

¹ *Erris*, pp. 181-250.

a headless young man is seen near this, sitting on a fence, near the little mound on the Mullet, where it is said certain peasants, massacred by the yeomanry, were buried in 1798. It glides from the fence to the mound, into which it vanishes. The ghost of Major Bingham (of equivocal legendary repute) rides on a ghostly horse and makes rings on the sward at Carn, not far to the west. Bingham is said to have lived and died hated, early in the last century. I also heard of his and other ghosts in the sandhills from Termoncarra to Binghamstown in 1910, and the place is indeed lonely and weird enough for ghostly gatherings.

Ghosts are often spoken of on Cliara and Inishturk, but I heard no details, even at the Abbey on the former island. Some belief in the ghost of Grania Uaile (Grainne O'Mailley) attaches to her castle there; one got the impression that the tales were dying out with the older people.

Some farmers, driving cattle from the fair of Ballina, into Erris, one evening, saw a crowd of people and cattle going in the same direction. One of the men named Paddy MacCormick was astonished to recognize in the crowd two of his own bullocks which had been lost in a boghole some time before, even seeing his own brand clearly marked on them. He separated them and was driving them from the rest of the herd when a man ran up and asked him what he was doing. The drover saw to his terror that it was one Terry Barrett, the first husband of his own wife. Despite MacCormick's terror he was angry at being called a thief, and pointing to his brand said Barrett had no right to the beasts. The ghost replied that MacCormick was an ignorant fellow for "I have as good a right to your cattle who died honestly in the boghole of Poulsesare as you have to my living wife." He struck the drover, who struck back, and a crowd of dead neighbours ran up and beat him soundly. Otway was told this near Bangor Erris in 1838, and his driver added that Pat was still alive but had not done much good since.¹

Near Ballycroy, Dr. Charles Browne was told that the ghosts of some people, who were killed in a faction fight, appear in a field between the two townlands of the name. They usually

¹ *Erris*, p. 33.

appear to the families of their slayers, who therefore fear to pass the spot in the dark.¹

In Connemara it is said that no Mayo man need fear a ghost or be harmed by it "on account of St. Patrick." At Carna I heard of several ghosts in 1899; a spectral horse and a black dog haunted two spots in that wild region. Two ghosts of policemen have appeared, one near the castle-like barrack, the other is seen on Loch Skannive, sinking in a spectral boat, showing how the missing man died. At Lettermullen we found the familiar belief that the ghost of the last person buried in a graveyard must keep watch till relieved by that of the next buried person. I am told this is believed of certain graveyards on the Mayo coast, but did not hear of it in those which I visited. It often leads to serious quarrels if two funerals arrive at the same time at a graveyard. This was told to Mr. Michael Lavelle, about 1894.

William Larminie was told by Michael Faherty of Renvyle, on the west coast of Co. Galway, opposite to Bofin, a strange story. A ghost left its skull on a lonely road near Renvyle, and a traveller despite his fear at the startling sight brought it to a neighbouring graveyard. As he returned a gentleman met him who said he was testing him and would reward him for his good-hearted act. He was brought to the graveyard and told to lift a stone, which he did, disclosing steps. The ghost brought him down to his house; two old women brought poor food and a beautiful woman richly dressed who gave them rich fare. Each had been wife to the ghost and had the food they gave to the poor till the Day of Judgment comes.²

The ghosts of drowned people are heard singing at sea in misty days off the Mayo Islands, and I think off Connemara. I have elsewhere told the tale of the ghostly nuns in Galway city.³

As I have as far as possible confined myself to the band of country a few miles deep round the coast I am precluded from

¹ "Ethnography of Ballycroy," *Proc. R.I. Acad.*, vol. iv. ser. iii. p. 105.

² *Folk Tales and Romances*, p. 31.

³ *Supra*, vol. xxviii. p. 446. A tale of the expulsion of the monks from Cong Abbey is given by Frank Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History*, ser. iv (1900), p. 316.

telling of the haunted houses in southern Co. Galway. No old houses of the gentry lie along the shores of which I heard tales of haunting, nor (strange to say) did I, among the freely told stories of the supernatural, hear of any haunted house among the peasantry. Those who live in the districts may be able to correct my impression.¹

X. *Supernatural Animals. Seals.*

I need not repeat any allusions to ghostly swans,² cattle, dogs and horses, and (as I have said) all tales of the *Púca* regarded him as of human shape. I will, however, separate the folk-lore and stories of the supernatural animals from the ordinary lore of nature about plants and animals in the case of the seals.

SEALS. On this wild coast with its shelving shores and endless reefs and skerries, it is natural that the seal (so familiar an object) should excite attention, and that, like all creatures that hover on the edge of two modes of life (like the bats, night birds and otters), it has gained a supernatural reputation.

Seals are accredited with human intelligence and more than human prescience. The MacConeely family claimed descent from a seal woman,³ and I have found this belief all down the coasts of Mayo, Galway and Co. Clare. Some fancy that seals were the people drowned in Noah's flood.

In 1839 Otway found that seal hunting had been stopped in N.E. Co. Mayo from Downpatrick Head to Kilcummin. Two boys had declared that, when killing seals in one of the caves of that reach of coast, a white seal sat up and cried, "Spare your old grandfather, Daniel O'Dowd"! They were naturally astonished, for O'Dowd had long before died and been buried in Dunfeeny (a venerable church with a lofty pillar in an earth-work and near a famous earthen *rath* of the O'Dowds famous

¹ I hope the members of the Galway Archaeological Society may now try to collect their traditions and folk-lore.

² *Supra*, xxvii. p. 182, where I give the tale of the god Lir and his swan children briefly. I may note by an unaccountable oversight I omitted the very interesting tale of Lug and Balor (told by Larminie), one of the versions of the very ancient story found from Achill to Torry.

³ "Il lar Connaught," James Hardiman's notes, p. 27.

now for its fairy dwellers),¹ so they argued with the seal who, however, convinced them that he was their relative. He had for his sins done in the body been condemned for a certain time to walk the night as a seal. He bade them to give up murdering seals "who may be nearer to yourselves than you think." The boys, especially his grandson, Tim O'Dowd, firmly believed all this and so convinced their neighbours that they gave the best proof of the faith that was in them by giving up their lucrative seal trade.²

One Owen Gallagher ("Tim") before that time used to go seal shooting and got lost at sea in a fog near Portacloy. As he deemed he drew near to some island, which he supposed to be Iniskea, he reached an unknown rock. An old man met him and accused him of being the cause of all his misery, having shot at and blinded him when in the form of a seal. The seal man further explained that his race was under enchantment, but could resume their human form on the island, he warned him (with more than Christian forgiveness) that he should leave before the seal's sons returned as they might avenge their parent's wrongs. "Tim" put out to sea, the fog cleared and he reached Portacloy in safety, ever after warning his neighbours to be cautious what they did for "seals were not natural."

The Portacloy caves, especially those at the great fortified headland of Dunminulla, are full of seals, and a quarter of a century since, Dr. Charles Browne heard there that a man was about to kill a seal in one of them when it turned into a large frog and escaped. His informant was a relative of the hunter, and told it to show how unlucky it was to kill a seal.³ I found the belief flourishing in 1911, but my hosts the Dohertys and others did not hesitate to kill seals as destructive to fish.

Maxwell tells us, in *Wild Sports of the West*,⁴ in 1832, of a noted seal in Erris called "Shawn a tra buoy," or "John of the yellow strand," who, like the "master otter," used to foretell the weather and bore a charmed life.

¹ *Journal Roy. Soc. Anth. Ireland*, xlii. pp. 113-6.

² *Erris*, pp. 229, 400.

³ "Ethnography of Portacloy," etc., *Proc. R.I. Acad.*, iii. ser. iii. p. 631; see also *Journal Roy. Soc. Anth. Ireland*, xlii. p. 126.

⁴ *Loc. cit.*, p. 61.

If we can trust the Halls (who, unlike Otway's friends and Maxwell, burned to "make a good story" of everything and rarely tell one naturally), there was a wild seal legend on Achill. Its resemblance to genuine legends inclines me to accept it at least in outline. Hall premises that seals embody the souls of those lost in the Deluge, doomed to bear this purgation till the world is burned, when they shall be purged and fit for Heaven. People in Achill believe that the animals can resume their human form once in a century. Usually, however, they are believed to be able to change always or at frequent intervals, usually in the dusk or night. John O'Glin of Achill hearing singing on the shore looked over a rock and saw a score of people dancing with a heap of sealskins beside them. A screeching arose and he and they ran to the skins, of which he secured one. Its owner, a fine and beautiful girl, in a loose dress, tied with golden strings, being unable to escape into the sea, was left weeping in his power. He cheered and comforted her, brought her home and got her to consent to marry him. They had several children; she used to eat raw fish, but cooked food for him and the children; she made him promise never to shoot at one of her people, and used to go and talk long with seals on the shore. One day, in his absence, she disappeared; the children grew up "yellow but clever," and the husband used to hear the lost wife singing to him under the sea. He used to sing back to her but, though she used to sob and cry at his song, he never saw her again.¹

People on Galway Bay, on Inishbofin and on Inishark believe firmly in the Mac Conghaile, or Conceelys, being of seal blood, and regard shooting a seal as murder and eating its flesh as cannibalism. The belief is strong at Lettermullen, Gorumna, Carna and Mace, but it does not (as I have seen) prevent anyone from firing at a seal.

In Aran we also find the belief, but folk wear a strip of sealskin against colic, to which they are very liable from their food. *The Book of Lismore*,² p. 57, tells a curious legend of St. Brigid

¹ *Ireland: its Scenery and Character*, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, iii. (Mayo), p. 408. The story is of course of the star maiden or swan maiden type. See Hartland, *Science of Fairy Tales*, p. 259.

² *Lives of the Saints from The Book of Lismore*, ed. Whitley Stokes.

sending a man to harpoon seals for seven holy bishops and of his perilous adventures when he strikes one of these animals.

XI. *Spectral Land and Cities.*

Each of the counties on the west of Ireland has its spectral island. Donegal has Tir Hudi; Mayo, the "Great Sunken Land" and Ladra; Co. Galway has Skerd; Co. Clare has Kilstuitheen and Kilstapheen; Kerry has the Island at Bally-heigue, while all have Hy Brasil.

LADRA. Opposite to Annagh and Scotch Port in the Mullet is a rocky shoal called Edye on which the sea boils at low water. Some called it Monaster Ladra, or Letteragh. The first name recalls the mythical Ladra who ("A.M. 1599," say some, B.C. 2348),¹ just before the Deluge, escorted Cesair, Noah's niece, to Ireland. He died and was the first person buried on the island. It is seen once in seven years, covered with houses and churches; no one has seen it a third time. Crampton calls it a "druid land." Its monarch was "King of the three kingdoms behind" (*i.e.* beyond Ireland). Some saw a great peak crowned with a castle on it. If anyone can drop a lighted coal on it it will become firm and habitable as Bofin has done.

THE SUNKEN LAND. This in the Mullet is now confused with Ladra. In 1839 it was reputed to lie between Donegal and Mayo from Teelin to the Stags and halfway to America. A woman named Lavelle saw it with its pleasant hills and valleys and cattle and sheep. A boatman at Ballycastle said he had seen it twice and he believed that if he saw it the third time, fourteen years after its first appearance, he could disenchant it. He became idle and useless and died, out of actual excitement, on the very eve of its expected appearance. Lieut. Henri's servant told him of one Gallagher who had landed on it in a fog. We have an account in 1636 of its appearance beyond Killybegs and Teelin.

It may be *Imaire Buidhe*, the cod bank, forty miles from land, which was believed to be an enchanted island and lay opposite

¹ Of course such chronology is not only late but contradictory, and was largely concocted after A.D. 1050 by Giolla Coemhain and other synchronizers.

to O'Maille's country. Some Bofin fishers used to tell of how they heard bleating of sheep and lambs and saw leaves of apples and oaks till the mist cleared and they only saw open sea and the porpoises rolling.

SKERD. In 1684 Roderic O'Flaherty tells of the apparition of a great city, full of flames and smoke, great ships and stacks or ricks, seen at the Skerd Rocks in Galway Bay. I heard no late legends of this. They are probably merged in those about Ily Brazil. But it closely resembles the towers I saw on the apparent island from Kilkee, Co. Clare, in 1872 and 1918.

BRASIL. The most famous of all the phantom islands is Ily Brazil or Brasil. It appears on the early Portolan maps from 1320 and was not removed from all later maps till after 1865. It is called "Berzel Island, an Island of Ireland called the Fortunate," in the map of Fra Mauro. I heard of it in Aran in 1878. I attest it of my own knowledge, but several deny that it was known to these islands, probably not finding it in later years. I did not hear of it in the Mayo Islands, but was told that in Aran it appeared once in seven years. Mention of it abounds, and I have collected what I could find in the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*; so will not repeat the matter here any further.¹

INISHNOFIN is said to have been once a spectral island. It was approached in a mist by certain fishermen who dropped a burning coal on it and disenchanted it. Giraldus Cambrensis tells a similar story, save that the western island "Phantastica" was pursued by fisherfolk in a boat and a red-hot arrow shot at it. The island then became stationary and habitable, for "fire is hostile to everything phantasmal." It used to appear as a heap of clouds. Since I wrote this paper, I saw again on June 18th, 1918, the dark hills, the southern falling steeply to the sea, and three towers against the setting sun from Kilkee, Co. Clare. It was certainly a bank of cloud and lay on the sea, as in 1878, when it was nearer than the horizon, and the

¹ For this section I refer to "Brasil and the Legendary Islands," *Proc. R.I. Acad.*, vol. xxx. p. 223; O'Flaherty's *Il Iar Connaught* (ed. Hardiman), pp. 68, 69, 72; Rev. Caesar Otway's *Erris and Tyrawly*, pp. 247, 400.

sky was clear but the illusion of a city was perfect. I especially noted the curls of smoke between the towers such as O'Flaherty saw at Skerd. I have sketches taken in July or August, 1872, and in June, 1918. I do not recall the date or appearance of the first occasions when I saw it from 1868 to 1872.

T. J. WESTROPP.

SCHEME FOR THE COLLECTION OF RURAL LORE IN WALES: THE
WELSH DEPARTMENT, BOARD OF EDUCATION, LONDON,
1920.

A WELCOME indication of the increasing desire to collect, before it is too late, the scattered folklore of the rural districts is the publication of this official scheme for investigation in Wales. The plan has been well conceived, and the syllabus defining the questions on which information is required from students in colleges and schools seems to have been judiciously prepared. The pamphlet should be in the hands of all who are interested in the subject, and we hope that the scheme will be adopted throughout the British Islands.

RAIN-MAKING IN INDIA.

THE following extract from a letter just received from an old pupil, Mr. Christopher Gimson, I.C.S., now in Manipur (between Assam and Burma), may interest you :

" Last year was a time of drought in Manipur, and the highly civilised and Hinduised Manipuris, headed by their English educated Maharaja, set to work to produce rain. One of the earliest attempts was the ordinary *pujā* on Nonmaijing Hill, where stands a stone shaped like an umbrella—the obvious residence of a rain god. This ceremony only resulted in about 0.5 inch of rain, and much more was needed. So 108 cows were collected and brought to the Palace, where they were milked on the ground in front of the temple of Govinda-ji. For some reason or other, this expensive remedy was a total