
Review

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real magic, not mere machinery. This and other peculiar qualities of the Celtic tale may be readily appreciated if one takes the trouble to read Hans Andersen after the *Sons o' Cormac*. In Andersen's stories the spell of great elemental conceptions is absent, the imagination is not so ethereal, so spiritual as in the Celtic tales, the supernatural magic is not so awe-inspiring and impressive.

Mr. Dunbar's best tales are those in which the material of old legend is worked up; those with a modern *motif* are less convincing. The great conception of Len the Smith, who controls the winds and forges armour for heroes in his sun-fire smithy under the rainbow, is powerfully treated. The story of the lovely Darthuil is charmingly given in one of the chapters. She is created through the power of Len, like the Greek Aphrodite, 'from the wave and foam of the sea and the wanthering flame of the sunrise.' The belief in the fairies and in their interference for good or evil in human affairs is attractively handled in several of these tales.

It is interesting to think that in such old legends as these with their ever-recurring note of elemental mystery, our ancestors have been putting their ideas into an imaginative form, while we may read in it to some extent our own modern feeling of the deep unsolved mysteries of Nature and Man. To many of their readers these tales may perchance be as

' Magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.'

A Handbook of the Cornish Language. By HENRY JENNER. London: David Nutt. 4s. net.

Most of us have been accustomed to regard Cornish as a dead language, but Mr. Henry Jenner of the British Museum assures us that it is by no means dead, though it has been taking a long and sound sleep. It is now beginning to stretch itself, and to open its eyes, and to speak, and unless it turns over on the other side and goes to sleep again, like the well-known storied sluggard, we shall soon meet it singing in its native bye-ways. Meantime, to prove its existence, Mr. Jenner has issued a book which will interest many who have no immediate intention of learning the language. From cover to cover the book is good. The author begins with a poetical dedication (which elsewhere he assures us is not a sonnet, though it looks like one), in Cornish, to his wife. It is one of several specimens of recent poetry which go to show that Cornish is renewing acquaintance with the muses. Following an informing preface Mr. Jenner begins what will perhaps be to many people the most interesting part of his book, namely, the history of the Cornish Language and Literature. He indicates the connection of Cornish with other Celtic tongues, and gives the date of the first printed Cornish as 1542, or one hundred and sixty years before Edward Llyud's grammar appeared—for Llyud was an authority on Cornish as on

other Celtic languages. The Reformation, according to the author of the Handbook, did much to kill the language of Cornwall, and we find the Cornwall and Devon insurgents presenting a *demand* to Edward VI. for their old form of service, and saying: 'We, the Cornish, *whereof certain of us understand no English*, do utterly refuse the new service.' About the year 1600, when Carew wrote his *Survey of Cornwall*, the well-known miracle plays were still acted in Cornish, and 'the people flocked to them in large numbers, and evidently understood them.'

In the gradual process of extinction it seems as difficult to locate the 'last speaker of Cornish' as to locate the 'last wolf killed in Scotland,' or the 'last man hanged in England for sheep-stealing!' Apparently, however, there were isolated persons alive in 1875 who knew it as a living language.

The account of the literary remains of the language is instructive and interesting, dealing as it does in detail and of personal knowledge with the extant Cornish literature. Although we have had some Cornish given in the *Grammatica Celtica* and in the *Revue Celtique*, and though we have had Cornish 'finds' and translations from that most indefatigable and versatile of Celtists—Dr. Whitley Stokes—and from Professor Loth of Rennes (of whom Mr. Jenner says that they 'probably know more about Cornish between them than any one else ever did'), and from Dr. Edwin Morris and others, yet we have had till now no succinct account of the literature.

Mr. Jenner's book, however, leaves us no excuse for ignorance on the subject, for he has given us comprehensive information. Cornish literature was probably never very abundant—it is now of small quantity—yet in its plays it contains a form of literature not at that time attempted by any other part of the Celtic race.

In the second part of the Handbook grammar is dealt with, and here we feel inclined to say that Cornish seems almost a Volapuk of Celtic languages, for it bears traces of all the others in varying degrees. Not many Handbooks give the student a chapter on 'Swear-words and Expletives,' but this book is altogether more racy and individual than any similar work; and, after all, the 'swear-words' are not very naughty, consisting, as many of them do, of pious exclamations and saints' names. Indeed, the author confesses that from this point of view the language is 'disappointing,' but accounts for it by explaining that the Cornish 'were the most gentleman-like race, except the Scottish Highlander, in all Christendom!' The 'swear-word,' quoted from the drama of St. Meriaseh, *mollath Dew en gigen!* (the curse of God in the kitchen!)—is probably a wish that one's enemy may be visited with indigestion—and reminds one by contrast of 'the blessing of the kitchen' contained in the *Liber Hymnorum*, and also in the *Egerton MS.* A chapter on Prosody, with several examples of metres, and one on Cornish place-names, close the main part of a book which will prove attractive to many varied minds. An appendix gives a useful list of modern books and articles relating to the language of 'the Duchy.'