

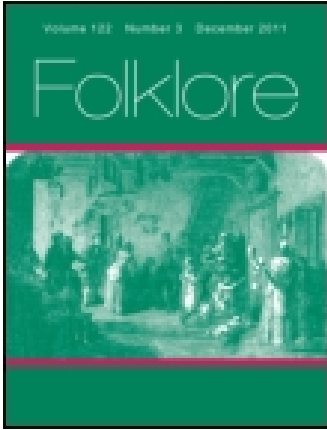
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Notes on Irish Folklore

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COLLECTANEA.

NOTES ON IRISH FOLKLORE.

(Continued from Vol. XXVII. p. 426.)

Legends of Ardmore, Co. Waterford.

THE legends and superstitions that cluster round the venerable and beautiful ruins of Ardmore Abbey, with its Round Tower and the halo of sanctity which illuminates the memory of its saintly founder and his learned successors, are most quaint, but no doubt have already been collected and printed. Nevertheless it may be well to set down very shortly the beliefs which not many years ago caused crowds of the country people to collect on the patron day at the pretty seaside place, and bring their sick people and those who were in trouble to the holy places to be rid of their griefs, whether of mind or body.

St. Declan was the founder of the original ecclesiastical settlement. The Round Tower of Ardmore is unique among all others for being ornamented by a series of three string courses. St. Declan miraculously built the basal portion in one night, in the second night he raised it to the second string course, and on the third he carried it to the third. But an old woman would not give the saint any credit for this "tour de force," and cried out, "Will you never be done?" and St. Declan immediately completed the final portion of the structure and finished the whole with the conical cap, which is still perfect.

The saint on one occasion went on a pilgrimage to Rome, and on his return, when the ship was approaching Ardmore, some gigantic pagans attempted to prevent his landing and ran out into the sea in a threatening manner; whereupon St. Declan turned

them into rocks, and they are there to this day, and form a reef where formerly was a secure landing-place.

Another phenomenon happened on this occasion, evidence of which still remains in the shape of a large glacial boulder resting on an outcrop of the local rocks on the shore. This erratic, evidently foreign to the neighbourhood, had been swimming patiently after the ship all the way from Italy; but "a stern chase" is well known to be a "long chase," and so it never overtook the saint, but followed in his wake to Ardmore and lodged itself safely on a ridge near the ship, crying out "The Clerk forgot the Bell" ("*Dearmhad an chléirigh ar an chlog*"), and sure enough they found upon it his bell and his vestments that had been left behind at Rome! This holy stone, as it is called, works miracles of healing; both to those that rub their backs against it, but more especially to those that creep under it in the hollow between the two supporting ribs of rock. But if anyone attempts this cure wearing a stolen garment or having unabsolved sins on their conscience, the stone presses down and prevents their passage through.

The practice of creeping beneath stones is exemplified in an old churchyard beside L. Gill, near Col. Wood Martin's place. Here is a tombstone under which childless women creep who wish to become mothers.

Colloquial Phrases.

If you enter a dairy or any place where an industry is going on it is not right to praise the results without first saying "God bless the work" or "God bless you." (In the south of Ireland.)

And among the upper classes, I was told in Co. Waterford, it was the habit if you praised anything to touch *wood* of any sort at once, or commence the remark by saying "o' good time be it spoken," etc.

This superstition seems on all fours with the expression of "tempting Providence" in its underlying apprehension of an evil result from a malign power.

Water Horses and other Monsters.

There are two small lakes in the neighbourhood of Mohill, Co. Leitrim, which I have been often assured contain water horses—Drumdart L. and one near Drumard. These are generally seen grazing on the shore in the early morning before people are astir, and when disturbed throw themselves into the lake and disappear.

When I visited Coole Park, Lady Gregory's place near Gort, I was told by a gamekeeper that not long since his father, early one morning coming down to the lake from the high ground, saw on the side of a hedge on the lake shore a short stout animal grazing, just like a thick-set horse of moderate size. He managed to get very near it before it took alarm, and throwing itself into the water disappeared into its depths. My informant, a very intelligent man, asked if I could tell him if there was any such fresh-water animal known, or if what his father had seen was supernatural.

References to the Scottish Gaelic folklore of water horses are given in the note on Tale VIII. of No. III. Argyleshire series of *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition* (David Nutt, London). It is described as similar to a real horse, except its wild staring eyes, slimy skin, and webbed feet. He sometimes grazes on the lake margin and tempts the wayfarer to get on his back, upon which he plunges into the depths, and feasts upon the unhappy rider. Seen in the day-time the water horse is a black ùsp or shapeless mass moving through the water, but at the setting of the sun or before sunrise he ventures out on the land.

Should one be killed, nothing is left but a pool of water; if buried, it gives rise to a spring!

Lake Coomshinaun, Co. Waterford.

Here an extraordinary phenomenon can be witnessed every seven years. A huge mass of some sort rises high above the water, no matter how calm the day, and then after a short time falls back with an enormous splash, making a commotion over the whole surface of the lake.

The Master Eel.

At a lake not very far from Mohill, Co. Leitrim, the following occurrence is said to have taken place.

The son of a farmer living alongside of its margin used to lay night lines for pike. But early one morning he went to examine his lines, and on trying to draw one of them in a monstrous eel with a mane hanging behind his head rose out of the water, and followed him over the land almost to his house, then turning back broke the line and dived to the bottom of the lake.

A story very circumstantially told lately appeared in the papers of a man being chased by a monstrous eel near Wattle Bridge on the Upper L. Erne.

Leprechauns and Loughrey-men.

In Monaghan and Tyrone the little dwarf sprites that frequent ancient woodlands and wild waste lands are called by the latter name.

The little wood of Creaghan, beside Favour Royal, belonging to me, which is a remnant of the old oak forest land of the country, is notoriously the resort of these "gentry." One of my employés, cutting scollops for thatch about the year 1860, stooping down with his knife in hand almost touched one that was sitting in the centre of the tuft of young shoots. Horridly scared at the little wizened face peering up at him crowned with a red pointed cap, he jumped back and cried out to his fellow. The two then returned, but, of course, the loughrey-man had vanished, for if you take your eyes off them they disappear in a moment. But the woodman assured me that they found "his little nest still warm in the heart of the bush." A woodkeeper also told me that he had himself never met with one, but frequently heard them walking alongside him in the evening, but hidden by the foliage.

At Lemaculla, about half-a-mile from Drumreaske, Co. Monaghan, a woman lived, named Mary M'Kenna. One day, returning to her cottage in full daylight (she lived alone), she saw a little loughrey-man sitting at the fire with a small pot in his hand full of gold pieces, which he was counting. He was

very old-looking and had a red cap on his head, and she was scared, and chased him out of the house. Many a time after she regretted the loss of her chances, for she never after met with another.

In the same townland (Lemaculla), James Dudgeon, a sturdy Orangeman, and one on whose word I should have complete reliance (he was in my service from 1863 till his death), told me that about the year 1850 he was returning home early one summer's evening, and coming to the ditch of a plantation he saw one of these little fellows with the red cap sitting beneath him in the "shough." He tried to catch him, but the loughrey-man jumped behind a tree, and peeped round it. Dudgeon chased him about from tree to tree for fully half-an-hour, he said, till tired out; so he wished him good-night, and left him grinning behind a tree.

Robert Loughy, when he was a small boy, lived with his parents on his father's farm, not far from Dungarvan, and remembers that leprechauns had been frequently seen near the cottage. His mother one morning went out of the door and found two beautiful little shirts of very fine and strong material, and admirably made, hanging on the hedge hard by. The family had never seen garments of such good quality, and Robert and his little brother wore them long enough. Wondering at the discovery she showed them to a neighbour woman, who advised her not to tell of her luck to the neighbours, for probably other valuable gifts would be left by the friendly donors. But she was so elated that she could not keep the secret, and every one about heard of her good fortune, and, of course, no more presents were left. He well remembered the beautiful shirts, he said.

The leprechauns appear to be about two feet high.

A Leprechaun in Leitrim.

Not far from Fenagh, whose ancient ecclesiastical and other remains are well known, there is a little hollow among the low hilly eminences, not far from the townland of Longstones, where the Druids were all turned into monoliths, and a small bog fills the bottom. In the middle of this patch of bog is a huge boulder.

Facing the bog stands a small cottage, and the owner was sitting one sunny day in the doorway, when he noticed what he thought was a small child with a red cap coming down the slope on the far side of the little marshy bog. His curiosity was not excited until the little figure advanced across the heather, and reaching the big stone was seen no more. He then crossed the hundred yards that intervened, and went round the stone, but could not find anyone, and there was no place of hiding.

Days passed away, and he had almost forgotten the occurrence when once more from his doorway he perceived the little figure dressed as before coming down the opposite slope. Throwing down his pipe, he ran to meet it, but when the leprechaun (for so it was) saw his object, he skipped across the grass and heather so rapidly that he reached the stone almost simultaneously with the man who told me the story, and in a moment got on the other side of it and disappeared! "Well," said my friend, "it was unlucky I could not catch him, or I might have got the crock of gold. But the little chap wasn't undacent, for when I got my spade and dug down close to the stone I found not far from the surface them quare stones and bits of things which I brought to your uncle, Mr. Beresford; and he, God bless him, got a nice little sum for them from the Royal Irish Academy for me." At this lapse of time, I cannot remember what the finds were, but there were some stone celts, and, I think, one or two bronze articles. This happened about the year 1860, and I have forgotten the man's name.

A Magic Cave.

There is a feeder to the River Aille which runs into L. Mask, Co. Mayo, which gathers on the foothills of the Partry Mountains, and as it reaches the lower slopes is blocked by a transverse outcrop of limestone cliff, beneath which it burrows, and after about half a mile or more of subterranean course rises from the ground in a large pool, and then joins the main stream. In heavy rains the entrance to the caves in the cliff becomes a raging whirlpool, which rises 15 or 20 feet up the face of the cliff, the subterranean passage being unable to give vent to the flood. But in ordinary weather one can penetrate some distance into the caverns which

receive the stream. The place in question is about 12 miles east of Westport on the way to L. Carra. I visited it, desiring to explore the cavern as far as it seemed safe, and took a guide from the nearest part of the main road. When we approached the hollow my guide refused to come further, and tried to dissuade me. He sat down on a height afar off, and would not even go near the entrance. I had to go alone to the foot of the low cliff, but found two of the side entrances choked with débris, and did not venture into the main opening, which did not offer a secure foothold, especially to anyone unaccompanied by a guide. I offered him half a crown, then five shillings, but he said that not for a pound note would he go near the foot of the cliff, and showed such terror that I induced him to give me his reason. He then explained that though persons had penetrated more than once by one of the side openings, he knew a man who having got in suddenly saw the vault lit up by the lights of some large building illuminated with numerous windows, and what he saw and heard was too dreadful to be described, and then he crossed himself and made for his home, leaving me alone on the slope of the hill.

The Phantom Coach

In Leitrim I have often heard of this visitation, and on one occasion was present when the apparition was believed to have occurred. At Mohill Castle, the residence of an uncle of mine, one calm winter's night the family, eight in number, were all sitting in the drawing-room which faced the carriage drive. Suddenly we all heard the wheels of a carriage and the beat of horses' hoofs approaching, and then stopping opposite the hall door. My uncle, wondering who could be arriving at so late an hour, stepped into the hall accompanied by myself, then a lad of about eighteen years of age. As we were unbolting the door the butler also appeared, and said no bell had rung, but that the servants and he had heard a carriage drive up to the door. When it was opened there was nothing to be seen. There was no wind, and we heard only the drip of a drizzling rain from a tree hard by. The drive ended in the sweep opposite the hall door, so it could

not have been a passing carriage. Next day a woman living opposite the entrance gate told the usual story of the black coach with horses having been seen driving over the bridge and up the approach.

Usually a headless coachman is on the box.

W. F. DE VISMES KANE.

SOME NATURE MYTHS FROM SAMOA.

(Continued from Vol. XXVI. p. 172.)

The Voyage of Kae.

Leau, a chief living in Haamea, built a boat to sail in his pond, the same pond that is still to be seen near Fatai. Great was the complaining of the people, for why was the boat not launched in the sea? What purpose in sailing in a pond?

And Leau, knowing that thus his people spake, bade them prepare to sail and see the talking buko tree and the other marvels of Bulotu. And so they set forth, but when Haapai appeared, and then Vavau, the sailors urged their chief to turn to land, saying that the boat was not fit for distant travel. But Leau refused, and on they sailed to the edge of the heavens.

At last they came to the shallow sea, and after that the sea that is covered with floating pumice fragments, and then they reached the place where the ancients say the sea is viscous. There they struck the sail, and leaping into the water dragged the boat till they came to the pandanus tree that stands on the edge of the world, and the mast becoming entangled in its branches, two of the crew, Kae and Longoboa, clambered into the tree and clung to a bough.

Now in this place the sky is open, and when Kae and Longoboa pushed the boat off strongly it darted through the heavens and disappeared, and therewith disappeared Leau and his companions. But Kae and Longoboa, left clinging in the branches of the pandanus tree, straightway determined that when the tide rose they would swim off, and each seek for himself a land.