300

Legends & Superstitions

OF THE

COUNTY OF DURHAM,

BY

WILLIAM BROCKIE,

Author of "The Confessional, and other Poems;" "A History of Shields;" etc., etc.

SUNDERLAND:
B. WILLIAMS, 129, HIGH STREET, AND 1 & 2, WILLIAM STREET.

1886.

CHAPTER I.

WITCHES AND WITCHCRAFT.

A belief in witchcraft has prevailed more or less in all ages, in civilised as well as in savage countries; and even yet it is far from being extinct, or seeming to border on extinction, in the most enlightened Christian countries. It is held, indeed, to rest on orthodox Scriptural authority, God himself having given this positive command to his chosen people—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."—a command as little fettered by conditions or exceptions as that other better known but too loosely observed one—"Thou shalt not kill." An intelligent old lady of my acquaintance once told me flatly, that if she were forced to give up her belief in the existence of witches, she would consider that one of the sure foundations of her faith was taken away. She was a consistent Hyper-Calvinist of the Rev. Samuel Turner's flock. But, as in the present little work I mean to confine myself to the region between the Tyne and the Tees, formerly known as the Patrimony of St. Cuthbert, and also as the County Palatine of Durham, with perhaps an occasional random "start and owerlowp," as the Scotch lawyers say, into the neighbouring counties, I shall not enter at all into any polemical, ontological, psychological, or other discussion on the subject, nor trench on the rich province of comparative

mythology, but keep within my prescribed narrow bounds. With a mere passing allusion, therefore, to the Witch of Endor, the Sorcerer Elymas, Simon Magus, Joan of Arc, the Swedish Witches on Mount Blockula, the New England Witches, the Scottish Witches, the Witches of Birtley, and the Newcastle Witches (the two latter being in Northumberland, and so beyond my strict limit) I proceed, without more preamble, to deal with the witches belonging to this particular district: and as it cannot matter much which of the redoubtable old dames we take first, I shall commence with:—

THE WITCH OF EASINGTON.

Mrs. Mary Shaw, who died about three years ago, at the age of eighty-five, and who went to live at Easington when she was forty years old, was told by the elderly people of that old village that, in their young days, whenever the neighbouring gentry went out with the harriers to hunt over any of the farms round about Easington or Castle Eden, it always occurred that a hare started up and carried the dogs off the right scent, straight towards the former place, and somehow or other, without any of the usual doublings and windings, always managed to throw them out and get clear away. This happened so often that it was plain to be seen that there was something uncanny about this crafty member of the leporine genus. Somebody at length suggested that it must certainly be a witch, for witches, according to common credence, often take out-door exercise, in the form

of such fleet creatures; and it was noticed that a certain cottage in the place used to be shut up on the days when the sports were held, as if its solitary inmate, an ill-natured wrinkled old hag, a regular Ettercop—had gone abroad somewhere. She usually worked, indeed, in the fields, so that this need not have been wondered at; but her sour temper and ill habits had rendered her hateful to all her neighbours, so it was noways unnatural that suspicion should fall upon her to the purport that she was a witch, and consequently the identical mysterious hare. In order to test the truth of this, the master of the hounds was advised to get a black bloodhound, which must have been suckled at a woman's breast, and set it on the uncanny creature's track next time it appeared, when he was assured that its capture would be certain. A hound answering this description was accordingly got, and next field day it led the hunt. The hare had never been so closely followed up before. It made, as usual, direct for Easington; but instead of the hound being thrown off the scent, it kept up the pursuit until the old woman's cottage door was reached. A little hole had been cut in that door, for the hens to go in and out at. The hare rushed forward to get through the hole, but the black hound was too close behind to let it get in unscathed. Just as it was darting through, he caught it on the haunch, and tore away a bit of the flesh. The huntsmen hurried up, and, finding the door fast barred, they burst it open. On entering they saw one of the strangest sights that ever human eye was set on. No

hare was to be seen, nor any other living brute beast, but there sat the witch, bathed in sweat and shivering in agony, with the blood streaming from her on to the floor. The poor creature, we are told, confessed her guilt, which indeed, she could not easily have denied under the circumstances; and she earnestly begged pardon and asked to be forgiven. Her charm had been broken by the drawing of the blood, and her power was henceforth gone, even if she had wished to exercise it. The gentlemen charitably took pity on her, and left her there alone, to staunch her wound as she best knew how. Never after that were the Easington and Castle Eden harriers thrown off the legitimate scent by any such diabolic means; and never again were the gentlemen of the hunt privileged—if I may use the phrase—to follow their game in through a miserable widow woman's bolted cottage door. Up to this time, when the crops of any of the neighbouring farmers failed, or when any mishap befel their cattle, the misfortune had always been set down to the witch-woman's discredit, although it was impossible to bring the charge home to her, as had been done in the hare case. It was by field labour she earned her poor daily pittance, but she had generally to work quite alone, for none of the other field workers would go near her if they could help it. In seed time, turnip time, weeding time, hay time, harvest time, and all through the year, she was generally left to work in a place by herself; yet scarcely a day elapsed in which she did not give somebody offence with her vile randy tongue, while

anyone who was rash enough to offend her—and not many did so willingly—were certain before long to repent what they had done. In short, like Nanny in Burns's Tam O' Shanter, she was a woman who was admirably endowed with all those unamiable qualities of the virago that are best calculated to "keep a country side in fear." She was a tall, lank, bony woman, with a masculine cast of features. She lived in the village for a few years after the great mishap befel her, shunned and detested more than ever. She never went to church or chapel, or performed any religious duty; yet when she died she was laid in consecrated ground in Easington churchyard, within the shadow of the lofty parish church, which, being situated on an eminence, serves as a sea-mark for passing mariners. But, strange to tell, after it was fondly hoped that she had thus been laid at rest, her "power of witchery," to use my informant's phrase, was still sometimes seen, in the shape of white sheep, rolling over and over on the top of the churchyard wall. This sight was actually witnessed by Mrs. Shaw herself, one night when she was going down past the miller's house to her own home at the Hall Walks. The cottage where the witch lived was situated in the Square, on the right hand side in going down from the church towards the sea, which is about two miles off. The door through which she darted to escape from the black hound was a great clumsy old-fashioned one.

A WITCH-HARE AT SEDGEFIELD.

A similar incident is said to have happened at the

small market town of Sedgefield, about seventy years ago. A party out coursing hares raised one in a field near that place, towards which they were astonished to see that it ran direct. It made for a certain house, in the bottom of the door of which there was, as in the last case, a small cut, so as to admit the cat, or probably hens. Before it could reach it, however, one of the dogs caught it by the leg, but could not keep its grip, so that Bawtie got through. The hunters came up as fast as they could, tried the door and finding that it was fastened inside, burst it open, by shoving the wooden bolt off. And when they had thus got in, there was the old wife, the occupant of the cottage, all in a broth of sweat, and puffing hard, with a broken leg.

LEDDY LISTER.

A retired farmer's wife at Hedworth, who went by the name of Leddy Lister, was commonly held by the people round about to be a witch. Nobody cared to offend her; neither did they care to be too kind with her; and if anything went wrong in the place it was always put down to her hellish craft. It was said she used to come out at night in different shapes, generally as a very tall woman. Sometimes, too, she appeared as a large sheet lying on the hedge, and when the folks went forward to lift it, it would rise up and walk away before them, in the form of a white lady. Then it would suddenly disappear. A young farmer was coming home one night, when the cry was raised "Leddy

Lister's out!" He and some other youngsters, lads and lasses, set off in pursuit at once. They traced her through one or two fields, until they came to a stile, where the two foremost stopped. Those behind immediately cried out, "She is on the stile, standing close behind you!" The lads of course jumped off, turned round, and seeing her still in front, a little way off, led the chase further on, till at last they were brought almost close to Leddy Lister's house door. There the apparition vanished. They knocked at the door, till her "Leddyship" herself came out. She was terribly excited, and panting with rage, and swore she would have them punished, for fastening such vile implications upon her. The mob saw nothing for it but to disperse for that night, but as not one of them believed a word she had said, in denial of its having been her they had seen, they determined they would continue to watch her, which they accordingly did; and she was afterwards seen and followed repeatedly, but was ever, as before, lost sight of at or near her own door. At length her husband, it seems, got her persuaded not to walk any more after nightfall. He had been too much annoyed by the mobs coming to the door, and kicking up such horrid rows, to be at all pleased with his wife's nocturnal perambulations. One night only, she ventured out again, when the mob traced her down to a neighbouring burn, and swore that they would drown her. They actually caught hold of her, shook her violently, dragged her home, and laid her on the steps at the door, nearly killing her. That, says

my informant, was her last "expert" from home. She afterwards settled down quietly, because she could not help herself, having been lamed through the ill treatment she had got; and she died a year or two afterwards, "to the great comfort," I was told, "of all the good people round about." My simple honest informant, I should add, when out one evening, going from the house where she lived to her mistress's mother's, met Leddy Lister walking silently past, arrayed in her usual white garb. She saluted her with "it's a fine night, Leddy Lister." But the witch, as she was supposed to be, was not even so polite as one would have expected of a vulgar ghost, which most assuredly would have said something in reply, after being civilly spoken to. The young woman chanced to meet Leddy Lister the next day, in broad daylight, when she said to her, "I met you last night as I was crossing the Green, going to Grandmother's' (that being the title her mistress's mother went by). "I spoke to you, but you never answered me, which I thought very strange." "See me, no," replied her Leddyship; "You must not believe all you see, if you think you saw me, for I was never out." I suspect, for my part, that the poor woman must have been a sleep walker, not a witch at all.

A WITCH CAT.

Mr. John Bonner, farmer at Beggar-Bush, between Easington and Castle Eden, and close beside the renowned Dene, was coming home one night in his cart,

when something rushed suddenly out of the hedge, leapt on to the cart behind him, and said, "Johnny Bonner, Johnny! when thou gets hyem, tell your cat Catherine Curley's deed." Turning round to see who it was that spoke, and seeing that it was a great big cat, he was terrified out of his wits. The cat leapt off the cart and he drove away furiously. When he reached home and got into the house and had thrown himself down on a seat, his wife saw he was in such a state, that she exclaimed in mortal fear "Johnny, what's the matter." As soon as he could speak, her husband gasped out "O Lass, sit down! there's something awful happened te neet. As I was coming hyem a cat leapt on te me cart, and says "Johnny Bonner, Johnny, when thou gans hyem, tell your cat Catherine Curley's deed." Nō sooner had the good man uttered these words, and his wife had not had time to speak, when their own cat, a great favourite, which had been lying asleep on the ledge behind the old-fashioned kitchen chimney-piece, jumped up and exclaimed "Aw mun awa." She instantly ran out of the house, and was seen no more. Mr. Bonner was succeeded in the farm by Mr. George Dobinson, the father of the woman who told me the tale, which she had often heard him tell.

ANOTHER WITCH CAT.

Mr. Hylton Longstaffe relates that a farmer of Staindrop was one night crossing a bridge near that place, when a cat jumped out, stood before him, and

looking him full in the face, said—

Johnny Reed, Johnny Reed!
Tell Madame Momfoot
That Mally Dixon's deed!

The farmer returned home, and in mickle wonder recited this awful stanza, when up started their black cat, saying, "Is she?" rushed out at the door, and disappeared for ever. It was supposed she was a fairy in disguise, and that she had run off to attend a sister's funeral; for in this part of the world, if not in all countries, fairies do die, and green shady spots used to be pointed out by the country folks as the cemeteries of the tiny people. Halliwell, in his "Rhymes and Popular Stories," points out that an analogous story is found in the popular literature of Denmark. "Near a town called Lyng is the hill of Brondhoe, inhabited by the trold-folk or imps. Among those trolds was an old sickly devil, peevish, and ill-tempered, because he was married to a young wife. This unhappy trold often set the rest by the ears, so they nick-named him Knurre-Murre, or Rumble Grumble. Now it came to pass that Knurre-Murre discovered that his young wife was inclined to honour him with a supplemental pair of horns; and the object of his jealousy, to avoid his vengeance, was compelled to fly for his life from the cavern, and take refuge, in shape of a tortoise-shell cat, in the house of goodman Platt, who harboured him with much hospitality, let him lie on the great wicker chair, and fed him twice a day with bread and milk out of a red earthenware pipkin. One evening the

goodman came home, at a late hour, full of wonderment:—'Goody,' exclaimed he to his wife, 'as I was passing by Brondhoe, there came out a trold, who spake to me, saying,

Hor du, Plat,
Sag til din cat
At Knurre-Murre er dod.

Hear thou, Platt,
Say to thy cat
That Knurre-Murre is dead.'

The tortoise-shell cat was lying on the great wicker chair, and eating his supper of bread and milk out of a red earthenware pipkin, when the goodman came in; but as soon as the message had been delivered, he jumped bolt upright upon his two hind legs, for all the world like a Christian, and kicking the red earthenware pipkin and the rest of the bread and milk before him, he whisked through the cottage door, mewing, "What! is Knurre-Murre dead? then I may go home again!"

TO COUNTERACT WITCHCRAFT.

A case occurred in old Dundas Street, Monkwearmouth, twenty-four years ago, of a child believed to be witched, so that it was shrivelled up to an "atomy." The afflicted mother procured a black hen's heart, stuck it full of pins and roasted it in the prescribed mode, and while the roasting was going on, the woman whom she blamed came in and asked for the loan of a "Bit o'Tea,"

to make herself a cup, as she felt so bad. The loan was granted, the spell was broken, and the child recovered.

THE WITCH'S CRADLE.

No one ever saw the Witch's Cradle in Durham Cathedral, but many have heard it rocked. We have it at second hand from one William Maughan, a native of Wolsingham, who, at the time when he told his experience was eighty years of age, but in full possession of his faculties and able to read without spectacles, that "he had heard it rock mony a time hissel. Mony a time and mony a time agyen! His feyther, too, believed it—never dooted it." William said the cathedral was positively set down all in one night, like the Holy House of Loretto. "Div aw believe't," he would say when questioned on the point. "Yes sartainly!" He had travelled in his prime between Stanhope and "Wissenham," as he called it, with money bags from the bank containing thousands of pounds. "Neebody ivver meddl't 'im," he answered, "they knaw'd better. They saw he wur a brave lish man—a bad un to tackle."

BEWITCHED CHILDREN.

It is far from uncommon, in Sunderland, Shields, Durham, Hartlepool, and other towns and villages, for mothers whose children are not thriving to think them bewitched. They then get a sheep or bullock's heart from the butcher, stick it full of pins, and roast it before the fire. This breaks the charm, and the child afterwards

thrives. A servant girl, Elizabeth Bell, told me her grandfather once assisted at this ceremony, and while the heart was being slowly consumed, the woman whom the mother suspected of having bewitched her child came in and asked them to give her a drink of water for God's sake, as she felt as if her heart was on fire. The child got rapidly better.

G. W., an old farmer, emigrated from Sedgefield to Sunderland, and took up his residence in Dunning-street. His daughter Hannah married a foreign sailor, to whom she had a child. This child took ill and fell into a "decline." One day an old woman who lived in the neighbourhood came in, as an act of kindness, to assist them in house-cleaning. The child happened to be very restless that day, and kept crying without intermission. The woman said she believed it was bewitched. Now the old farmer, his wife Peggy, his daughter, and her husband (a Portuguese), were all alike full of witchcraft. So they at once concluded this was the case. And when the old woman went out, after finishing her job of cleaning, and mending her gown which she had happened to tear, they began eagerly to speculate who the witch could be. A little patch of stuff, which their next door neighbour had cut off when repairing her upper garment, was found lying in the cradle. The conclusion instantly flashed upon them that this was the fatal charm. So the rag was burnt with certain mysterious ceremonies, which my informant, an eye-witness, then a boy, cannot now specify. But he remembers that they wished they

could have got a black hen's heart to burn along with the stuff, which would infallibly have broken the spell. The supposed witch was never allowed to enter the house, from that day forward.

A young married woman at Wearmouth Colliery, whose initials were A. J., had a child that had been pining away till it was reduced to a skeleton. A neighbour came in one day and advised her to consult a gypsy woman then in the neighbourhood. The gypsy said the child had been bewitched by a female relative to whom the mother had given some sort of offence; and Mrs. J. was advised to get a black hen, cut it open alive, pull out its heart, stick it full of pins, and burn it in the fire, at twelve o'clock at night precisely. "Then," said the sybil, "the witch will not be able to rest, but will come in, and ask for the loan of something, and your husband must be ready with a stick wherewith to fell her, that is, knock her down, which if he does, the spell will be broken and your child will recover." Meanwhile the mischief-making neighbour went away and told the supposed witch, whose name was D.K., what fate was impending over her if she went to visit her relatives across the way. She therefore took care not to go. She had had a quarrel with the mother sometime before, and though nearly related, they were not on speaking terms. Mr. and Mrs. J. sat up that night, till long past the witching hour, the husband holding the rolling pin in his hand; but no witch made her appearance. The

spell was not broken, therefore, and the child died. This took place about ten years ago, say 1875.

A poor woman, the wife of a pitman, was brought some years ago (say fifteen) before the city of Durham bench of magistrates on the charge of stealing a fowl. She made no attempt to deny the fact: indeed, she had previously admitted it to the policeman who apprehended her, saying that she had committed the theft for the purpose of working out a charm which was to restore her sick child to health. The child, it appeared, had long been ailing, and was now fast pining away, when its mother, full of uneasiness about it, consulted a witch who lived near. The witch solemnly charged her to steal a hen, take out the heart, stick it full of pins, and roast it at midnight over a slow fire, first closing up every communication with the open air. If this were only done, the hag promised that as the heart was gradually consumed, health would return to the suffering child. The magistrates, considering the delusion under which she had acted, dismissed the case.

THE BEWITCHED FARMER'S WIFE OF EDMUNDBYERS.

The following marvellous story, illustrative of the prevalent belief in witchcraft in this part of the country two hundred years ago, is told in a curious pamphlet printed in 1641, under the following title:—

"Most fearefull and strange newes from the Bishoppricke of Durham; being a true relation of one Margaret Hooper, of Edenbyers, neere the River Darwent in the

said Bishoppricke, &c., &c. London: Printed for John Thomas.

Upon the 15 day of November now last past, 1641, there is a yeo-man of good and honest reputation, dwelling in the Towne of Edenbyres, upon Darwent Water in the Bishoppricke of Durham, whose name is Stephen Hooper, a man of good wealth and also welbeloved of his neighbours, who being sicke, and lying in a weake estate, sent his wife, whose name was Margaret Hooper, to a farm which hee had in a village called Hanstonueth [Hunstonworth], some 3 miles off, at whose comming thither, it seemed all things were not according to her minde. Thus continuing there one day and something more shee returned home to her husband, partly agreeved at such thingsas she thought her husband might reforme; if God lent him life. Now when she was come home to Edenbyres she found her husband recovered to an indifferent health, to whom shee began to use very much idle talke, as weel concerning the same farm, as also concerning an old groat, which her sonne, being a little boy, had found about a week before. Thus she continued as she had been one bewitched, or haunted with an evil spirit, until the Wednesday at night following, which night she tooke her rest, some indifferently until the morning, at which time she began with much vaine speech to disquiet her husband, and to use much idle talke, but her husband seeing her in such a mind, and finding that she was, as it were desperate, he perswaded her to cal upon God, and that being the creature of God,

she should not forget to cal upon her Creator in the day of truble, wherefore he councelled her to pray with him, and to say the Lord's Prayer after him, which shee partly did, but the devil, who always doth build the Chapell, so much as he may to vex God's Church, began to withdraw her from prayer, and to put her in minde to cal in a most fearful kind for the groat, which her sonne had lately found, as also for her weding-ring, desiring to see them with all speed. Her husband made no great haste thereunto, but continued in prayer that it would please God to send her a more quiet spirit, and to strengthen her that faith might speedily vanquish such vanitie in her, but the more he prayed and perswaded her to prayer, the more shee seemed to be as it were troubled with some evil spirit, calling for the old groat, which her husband neglected to show her, whereat she began with a very sterne and staring countenance to looke on her husband in most wonderfull sort, that he was sore affrighted. Then he called for her sister, for that he was not able to keepe her in the bed, which when her sister and others were come into the chamber they kept her down violently in her bed, and forth with shee was so sore tormented that shee foamed at the mouth, and was shaken with such forse that the bed and the chamber did shake and move in most strange sort, her husband continued praying for her deliverance, so that within one halfe houre after her shaking was past, shee began to tell them shee had beene in the Towerne to beat away the beare which followed her into the yard, when she came from Hunsten-

worth, which to her thinking had no head. Then her husband and frinds wished her to leave those vaine imaginations, perswading her that it was verya Idle for want of rest; wherefore her husband and frinds exhorted her to say the Lord's Prayer with them, which shee did, and after tooke some rest, and thus she continued until the Satterday following, in which time she continued raging, as it were distract of her memory, which came by fits, to the great grief of her husband, frinds, and neighbours, yet upon the Satterday there was some hopes of her recovery, for that she took some reasonable rest, to the comfort of her husband and frinds, and upon the Sunday she seemed to be very patient and comfortable until midnight, at which time the candle set burning in the same chamber, was burned. She then suddenly awaking called to her husband, and crying out, saying, that she did see a strange thing like unto a snale carrying fire in a most wonderfull sort, whereat her husband was amazed, and seeing the candle was cleene burnt out, called to his Brothers and Sisters that were in the house, with other of their frinds, watching and sitting up to comfort her, if her extreme fit should any way molest her, who hearing him call, come in, and brought a candle lighted, and set it upon the table, which stood neere where the woman lay. She began to wax very fearfull, saying to her husband and the rest—Doe you not see the Devill? Whereat they desired her to remember God, and to call for grace that her faith might onely be fixed upon him,

to the vanquishing the Devil and his assaults. Hell! (quoth she) if you see nothing now you shall see something by and by, and forthwith they heard a great noise in the streets, as if it had been the comming of foure or five carts, and presently they in the chamber cried out saying—Lord helpe us! what manner of thing is this that cometh here? Then her husband looking up in his bed espied a thing comming to the bed, much like a beare, but it had no head nor taile, halfe a yard in height, and halfe a yard in length; her husband seeing it come to the bed rose up, and tooke a joynt stoole, and strooke at the same thing. The stroke sounded as though he had strucken upon a feather bed; then it came to the woman, and strooke her three times upon the feet, and tooke her out of the bed, and so rouled her to and fro in the chamber, and under the bed. The people then present, to the number of seaven persons were so greatly amazed at this horrible sight that they knew not what to doe, yet they called still upon God for his assistance, but the candle was so dimmed that they could scarcely see one another. At the last this Monster, which wee suppose to be the Devill, so rouled her in a round compasse, like an hoope, through the other chambers, downe an high pair of staires into the hall, where he kept her the space of a quarter of an houre. Her husband and they in the chamber above durst not come downe to her, but remained in prayer, weeping at the top of the stairs head, greivously lamenting to see her so carried away. There was such an horrible stinke into the Hall, and

such fiery flames, that they were glad to stop their noses with cloathes and napkines. Then the woman cried out calling to her husband,—Now he is gone! Then quoth he, in the Name of God come up to me; and so even upon the suddaine she was come up so quickly, that they greatly marveilled at it. Then they brought her to bed, and continued in prayer about her. The candle could not burn clear, but was very dimme, and suddenly the woman was got out of the bed, and the window at the bed's head opened. Whether the woman unpin'd the window, or how it come to passe, they knew not, but it was opened; and the woman's leggs after a miraculous manner thrust out of the window. The people of the chamber heard a thing knock at her feet as if had beene upon a tubb, and they saw a great fire, as it seemed to them at her feet, the stinke thereof was horrible!"—After describing the solemn manner in which by prayer they invoked the aid of the Almighty, the account concludes by saying:—"At last they espied a thing like unto a little child, with a very bright shining countenance, casting a great light in the chamber, and the candle burned very brightly, so that they might see one another. Then they fell flat to the ground, and prayed the Lord that he had so wonderfully assisted them, and so the child vanished away. Then the woman being in better feeling of her selfe, was laid in her bed and asked forgivenesse at God's hands, and of all shee had offended, acknowledging that it was for her sinnes that she was so sore tormented of the evill spirit,

and God be thanked she hath beene ever since in some reasonable order, for there hath beene with her many godly learned men, from divers places of the countery. These are the names of the witnesses that it is most true :—Steven Hooper, Iohn Hooper, Iohn Iley, Alexander Eagleston, Anthony Westgarth, Alis Eagleston."

It is said that the names of five of these six are to be met with in registers and other writings in connection with one or other of the above parishes about the period when the tract was printed.

THE WISE MAN OF STOKESLEY.

The name of this personage, who was long the oracle of South Durham, as well as of Cleveland, was Wrightson. He flourished about eighty years ago ; and such ascendancy did he obtain in the neighbourhood that he was at once resorted to in cases of sickness, distress, or loss of property, and this not by the lower orders alone. His private character is said to have been very bad ; still his influence in Stokesley was so great that he was constantly in request as godfather to the people's children ; and on these occasions he used to attend church in a scarlet coat, a long white waist-coat, a full-starched shirt-frill, crimson knee-breeches, and white stockings. He used always to say that he had no power or knowledge beyond other men except when fasting, that he owed his powers to his being the seventh son of a seventh daughter, and that he was quite unable to transmit them to his own son. The following stories, if true, go towards

proving the man to have been a natural clairvoyant. On one occasion, when an old man at Danby, who used to tell the story, was young, a relation of his had a cow, which fell ill of a disease which baffled the skill of every cow-leech in the neighbourhood. The lad was therefore mounted on a horse, and despatched to Stokesley to consult the wise man. On opening the door—before he had time to explain his message—the wizard said, "I know what has brought you here; You have come about a cow; and if I cannot tell you as much about the creature as you can tell me, it is not likely that I can help you." He then proceeded to describe the cow, her color and appearance, her symptoms,—constant restlessness, and uneasy movements, and a peculiar sound she uttered; also her position in the cow house. "The door opened," he said, "right upon her rump." The wise man went on to specify the disease, and added that nothing could save her. She died accordingly, and a post-mortem examination verified all that "Aud Wrightson" had said. Another time, some pitmen were working together at the Try-up Trough Pits, and left clothes above, as usual, on descending to their work. In the afternoon, when work was over, one of them missed his shirt and could not find it anywhere. Borrowing one from a friend, the man started straight from the pits to Stokesley to consult "Aud Wrightson," taking with him a comrade whose christian name was Elijah. They passed a place called West House, and there Elijah deposited his overcoat, which was hot and

heavy, observing to his friend that they should be able to trust the wise man in the matter of the shirt by seeing whether he knew where the coat was. Here, too, he forestalled all enquiries by announcing to the men what they had come about ; and turning to the comrade, addressed him thus by his Christian name, "What hast 'ee deean wi thy coat Elijah ? I think thee'st lossit a' West House. Think'st 'ee t' wise man knaws aught about t' shart' ?" As these were the very words the man had used, he was struck dumb with astonishment. The wizard then described the shirt, saying it had been made by a left-handed person, which was true, and finally said its owner would find it at home on his return. He added a warning as to giving salt out of the house, a most dangerous thing, and one which the pitman's mother had done that day. Returning home, they found the shirt had been left there by a fellow workman, who had carried it away in mistake, and the house-mother had been guilty of the "dangerous act" of giving salt away. The next Stokesley story is as follows :—A miller named W——, lost a set of new weights very mysteriously, and all his searchings and enquiries ended in disappointment ; he could make out nothing about them. So he applied to the wise man. The wizard, after consulting his books announced that the weights should be restored ; at present they were concealed in an "ass-midden." Accordingly, in the course of a night or two, the weights appeared as mysteriously as they had vanished, being placed at the miller's door, and "all clammed wi' ass,"

which of course was satisfactory. Again, a young bull, belonging to an inhabitant of the district, was attacked by sickness, and in spite of all remedies was soon at what appeared the point of death—too weak to stand, and slung up by ropes to keep it from falling. The wise man was sent for and in due time arrived at the house, but declined to speak of the animal, saying, in his usual way, that unless he could tell them all they could tell him and a little more it was not likely he could be of much use. At last he condescended to light his pipe, and stroll out to the "beast house." After a little time curiosity prompted one or two men who were standing about to follow him, and approaching the byre, they were surprised to see the bull apparently as well as ever, standing without any aid from slings, and eating his provender with a hearty appetite. The mode of cure remained a secret. The last story we have concerning him suggests a notion that, consciously or unconsciously, this worthy practised something like electro-biology. Two men, one of them bearing the name of Bob Bennison, and brother to a person living not long ago (perhaps still) at Danby, were on their way to Stokesley fair, when one of them proposed to turn aside in order to "see and Wrightson an' hev a bit o' sport wi' him." On reaching the wise man's house he gave them an apparently cordial welcome, seated them in front of the fire and proceeded to mend it by heaping on fuel. Fiercer and fiercer it blazed up, and Wrightson's guests, feeling somewhat too warm, tried to edge their chairs backwards

but their efforts were vain. They found themselves immoveably fixed in their seats, and the seats immoveably fixed in front of the fire, which all the time was burning hotter and hotter. After giving the men such a roasting as he deemed sufficient, the wizard at length set them free, scornfully bidding them go to the fair, and there tell their friends "the sport they had had wi' aud Wrightson."

WILLIE DAWSON.

When the Wise Man of Stokesley shuffled off this mortal coil, one William Dawson, who rented a farm at Quaker's Grove, near the same place, and who inherited some of the wizard's books, took up the trade of soothsaying. Like his predecessor, he soon got in great repute and was even consulted by persons of a respectable position in life. But his powers, such as they were, failed to help him to fortune, or even to sustain him in his original independence. For he gradually sank into poverty, and ended his days in South Durham in very reduced circumstances. Mr. Henderson, in his excellent "Folk Lore of the Northern Counties" gives the following instances of his mode of treatment:—"A substantial Yorkshire farmer, having sustained heavy and continued losses among the stock, consulted this William Dawson, and was instructed by him how to find out whether witchcraft was really the cause of the mischief. The farmer was to take six knots of bottree (bore-tree or elder) wood, and placing them in orderly arrangement

beneath a new ashen bowl or platter, was so to leave them. If, on looking at them some little time afterwards, they were found all in confusion, "all squandered about," as he phrased it, there could be no doubt the beasts were perishing from the effects of witchcraft. This was done, and on inspection the knots were found in utter confusion. So the farmer was directed to take the heart of one of the dead beasts, and stick in it nine new nails, nine new pins, and as many new needles. The heart thus prepared was to be burnt on a fire made and fed with witch-wood (rowan tree), a little before midnight, at which hour a certain verse of the Bible was to be read over the flames and the spell would be broken. All was made ready and the doors of the farm-house secured with bolts and bars, to say nothing of chairs and tables heaped against them for additional security. The heart lay on the mystic fire; as midnight approached, the operator touched it with the poker, and it burst asunder into many pieces. Gathering them together upon the hot embers, that they might be thoroughly consumed, he read the appointed verse, and at the same moment a rushing and clattering was heard down the paved causey which led from the house to the turnpike (the high-road) in front, as if a carriage and pair came driven down it furiously. Next began a terrible knocking and hammering, first at the front door, then at the back; but as the embers of the heart wasted in the fire, as the last spark disappeared, the noise ceased; and from that time no further harm befel the stock." On another

occasion the object was "to restore to health a young man said to be bewitched. A fire was made at midnight as before, and the doors and windows closed. Clippings from every finger and toe nail of the patient, with hair from each temple, and the crown of his head, were stuffed into the throat of a pigeon which had previously been placed between the patient's feet, and there had died at once, thus attesting the witchery from which he was suffering. The bird's bill was rivetted with three pins, and then the wise man thrust a pin into its breast, to reach the heart, everybody else in the room in turn following his example. An opening was then made in the fire, and the pigeon dropped into it. The wise man began to read aloud Psalms from the Prayer Book, and a loud scratching and whining began outside. All in the house, said Mr. H.'s informant, were satisfied that the young man's enemy had appeared outside, perhaps in the form of a dog; he alone attributed the sounds to the wizard's own dog, which had not been allowed to enter the house. His scepticism, however, annoyed the wizard and his dupes so much that the lad was fain to keep it to himself.

BLACK WILLIE OF HARTLEPOOL.

The Rev. H. B. Tristram communicated to Mr Henderson the following case from the neighbourhood of Greatham:—"In November of this year (1861) I was sent for by a parishioner, the wife of a small farmer, who complained that she had been scandalised by her

neighbours opposite, who accused her of witchcraft. These neighbours had lost two horses during the last year and therefore consulted 'Black Willie' at Hartlepool, who assured them that they had been bewitched. Acting on his advice, they adopted the following means for discovering the witch. Having procured a pigeon and tied its wings, every aperture in the house even to the key holes, was carefully stopped, and pins were run into the pigeon whilst alive by each member of the family, so as to pierce the poor bird's heart. The pigeon was then roasted, and a watch kept at the window during the operation, for the first person who passed the door would of course be the guilty party. The good woman who appealed to me (Mr. Tristram), had the misfortune to be the first passer-by and the family were firmly convinced she had exercised 'the evil eye' upon the dead horses, though she was a comely matron, not yet fifty years of age."

NANNIE SCOTT, THE SUNDERLAND WITCH.

In a communication to Mr. Henderson, the late Mr. F. H. Johnson, of Fawcett Street, Sunderland, wrote as follows respecting an old witch who flourished in Sunderland some half-century ago:—"We find in this locality many relics of the Scandinavian superstitions, varied and mixed up with modern customs and phraseology. The old keelmen (once numbering some hundreds) on the Wear were brimful of superstitious stories and legends, and their nightly rambles on shore and

river, to seek their vessels and bring them in with the tide, are very amusing. I remember, when a boy, a witch who resided in a little hovel near us, in Sunderland, and with whom I was on most friendly terms, much to the disgust of my nurse. She told fortunes by the stars, practised the black art, and sold a compound of treacle, &c., called by us 'claggum.' Her hatred was considered certain death; and children once under her protection were sure to be lucky in life. She had a black cat and a black dog, both unmitigated savages and thieves (the poor animals, being deemed familiars, were pelted and prosecuted into ferocity), and few women were more coaxed and toadied than was Nannie Scott. She prayed for fair winds for sailors' wives; she sold love-charms to bring together sulking sweethearts; and she did all with an air of solemn strong-mindedness that bore down any approach to discredit. She lived to a very great age, and died about twenty years ago.'

A WITCH IN A GALE OF WIND.

An old witch named Mally, who lived at Hylton, wished particularly to come down to Sunderland one very stormy day, and asked a keelman named Jock to take her down in his keel. Jock replied that it was impossible; he durst not for his life; did she not see all the keels lying fast moored? Not a man would venture to go down. "Don't be afraid," said she; "There's no danger, I tell you. Not a hair of your head will be hurt. You *must* take me down. And run along full

sail. Don't take in a reef. Never fear; you'll make your passage." By dint of strong persuasion, Jock, who was a brave hardy fellow, consented to go. The old woman got into the huddock at the stern of the keel, and lay there snug. The keel went on as if it flew, sometimes in the water, and sometimes out of it, the wind blowing great guns. Jock swore afterwards that he saw a black cat sitting on the top of the mast. He had put on full sail, and not taken in a reef. They got down safely.

A CHURN BEWITCHED.

A farmer's wife at Hylton, who had done something to displease a neighbour who had the evil eye, one day churned, and churned, and better churned, but could get no butter. At length, about midnight, the malignant hag rapped at her door, came in, and asked what was the matter. "We can get no butter," was the reply. Why, woman," rejoined the witch, "you have the churn too far from the fire." The churn was shifted, and the butter came in a "jiffy."

MEETING WOMEN OR HARES.

If a pitman of the old school meets a woman on his way to work, he will turn and go home for the day, being sure that something would happen to him in the pit if he were to go down the shaft. He would be disposed to do the same thing if he met a hare, which is, however, now a very unlikely occurrence. We never heard any reason given why the hare should be an un-

lucky beast, except that, in the mythical good old times before the first Reform Bill was passed, witches used to make a vile practice of taking this innocent-looking shape, when abroad at nights on their mysterious errands. If shot at, as they sometimes were, the lead drops would glance off their hides without ever ruffling the fur. There was no way of crippling them but by firing a piece of silver at them. One witch, in a village I know, not far from St. Boswell's, frisking about in the moonlight in an honest man's cabbage garden, was shot at by him with a silver button, off his right shirt sleeve, and next morning blood drops were traced all the way to her cottage door, and old Nanny was found inside with her "chafts" tied up, she having, it seems, been hit on the cheek. Had the case occurred two centuries instead of fifty years ago, the alleged witch would undoubtedly have ended her days on a pile formed of tar barrels.

WITCHES IN GATESHEAD.

Gateshead was a comparatively small place in the days of the Great Rebellion and the Commonwealth, and therefore the number of reputed witches in it could not then be very great. But the local magistrates nevertheless found something to do, as well as their brethren across the water, when these worthy men were burning witches by the score, on the information of a noted witch-finder from Scotland. For, under date, 1649, the following entry appears in Gateshead parish books :—

"Paid at Mrs. Watson's when the justices sate to examine the witches, 3s. 4d.; for a grave for a witch, 6d.; for burying the witches, £1 5s."

THE ADDER-STONE.

The adder-stone, holy-stone, or holed-stone, is a stone with a perforation in it, imagined to have been made by the sting of an adder. Stones of this kind are hung up in stables, over the horses' heads, to secure them from being hag-ridden, or made use of during the night by witches. Such beasts as sweat in their stalls are supposed to be cured by the application to them of such a stone. Brockett says he has also seen them suspended from the tester of a bed, as well as placed behind the door of a dwelling-house, attached to a key—to prevent injury from the midnight hags of "air and broom.' Hung up at the bed's head, they prevent the night-mare, which is caused by some witch turning the unlucky sleeper into a horse or mare, and scampering along the sky on his or her back, to the appointed place of infernal rendezvous. They must be self-bored stones, that is, naturally holed; otherwise they are thought to have no efficacy. The mode of their formation is well known to naturalists. They are formed in the bed of a running stream, through one stone getting embedded in another and grinding a hole through it.

THE VIRTUE OF THE MOUNTAIN ASH.

I may conclude this chapter with a short account of a case which my friend Mr. Henry Kerr, of Bacup,

Lancashire, says fell under his own observation in Sunderland, more than twenty years ago. The first child of a young couple of my acquaintance, which had been puny and ailing from birth, was supposed by its mother to be bewitched. The child became worse, and the credulous mother, despite every remonstrance, insisted that the child had actually been bewitched by her sister-in-law, between whom and the mother there was bad blood at the time. In order to have the spell removed, she consulted a certain "wise woman," residing in the classic region of the Low street. The hag, as it suited her purpose and brought grist to her mill, encouraged the mother in the belief that her child was bewitched. As a counter charm, she was told to procure a sprig of mountain ash, and stitch it inside the clothing of the afflicted child. The mother followed the directions of the sybil. A piece of mountain ash was procured and placed according to directions. The child, however, died, and was buried in Sunderland churchyard. The credulous mother has long since gone over to the majority, and to Mr. Kerr's certain knowledge she died in the ineradicable belief that her child had been bewitched to death by the arts of her sister-in-law. Old superstitions, like old and cherished customs, die hard, despite the much vaunted "march of intellect."

CHAPTER II.

NORTH COUNTRY BOGGLES.

Fetch the boggle bo!—*North Country Song.*
There was a boggart in't. —*Tennyson's Farmer.*
Swith beggar boggle, haste thee away—*Sir David Lindsay.*

In Akenside's "Pleasures of Imagination," we read how—

The Village matron, round the blazing hearth, by night,
Suspends the infant audience with her tales,
Breathing astonishment.

This old custom, "more honoured in the breach than the observance," has been gradually wearing away for the last four or five generations. Still, there are many old crones, in all parts of the country, who are standard authorities in ghost-lore; and though the local sprites by which most lonely places were haunted in the olden time have all fled away before the light of science, there are yet thousands of gallant fellows who are not superior to panic terrors, such as these airy phantoms were wont to inspire, and who would rather go a mile round about, when they chance to be belated, than walk past an old deserted churchyard, through a haunted wood, or along a bridge that has a bad reputation, and where, though their common sense tells them they will meet with nothing "uncanny," or "worse than themselves," an

irresistible feeling of "eeriness" makes them painfully sensitive, so that a black dog crossing their path looks like a foul fiend, and an owl hooting in the wood calls up the idea of some murder. The whole surface of the terraqueous globe, so far as it has been inhabited and explored by man, is infested more or less by supernatural beings, mostly confined to and identified with particular spots. The territory so long known as the Patrimony of St. Cuthbert abounds as much as any known region with these creatures of the imagination, and I mean to collect in this chapter some of the best authenticated accounts of the boggles, boggarts, or bogeys that are either peculiar to the district or are local representstives of that class of supernatural beings which is confined to no particular country, but found wherever man exists; and as I am not aware they stand on any "order of going," to use a Shakesperian phrase, I shall take them just as they occur to me. First then

THE HEDLEY KOW.

The people in the neighbourhood of Hedley, on the skirts of Blackburn Fell, west of Ravensworth, on the road to Tanfield, were frequently annoyed, during the last century, by the pranks of a boggle of this name. He belonged to a class of goblins rather mischievous than malignant. He did nobody any serious injury, but took delight in frightening them. To whomsoever he appeared, he usually ended his frolics with a hoarse laugh at their fear or astonishment after he had played

them some sorry trick. To an old woman, for instance, gathering sticks, like Goody Blake, by the hedgeside, if not actually out of the hedge, he would sometimes appear as a *fud* or truss of straw, lying on the road. If, as was natural, the beldame was tempted to take possession of this *fud*, in carrying it home her load would become so heavy that she would be obliged to lay it down. The straw would then appear as if *quick*, the truss would rise upright, like the patriarch Joseph's sheaf, and away it would shuffle before her along the road, swinging first to one side and then to another. Every now and then it would set up a laugh, or give a shout, in the manner of a rustic dancer when he kicks his heels and snaps his fingers at the turn of the tune; and at last, with a sound like a rushing wind, it would wholly vanish from her sight. Two young men belonging to Newlands, near Ebchester, a place now rendered famous in connection with the self-styled Countess of Derwentwater, went out one night about the beginning of the present century, to meet their sweethearts. On arriving at the appointed place, they saw, as they supposed, the two girls walking at a short distance before them. The girls continued to walk onward for two or three miles, and the young men to follow, without being able to overtake them. They quickened their pace, but still the girls kept before them; and at length, when the pair found themselves up to their knees in a mire, the girls suddenly disappeared, with a most unfeminine Ha, ha! The young men now perceived that they had

been beguiled by the Hedley Kow; and after getting clear of the bog, they ran homeward as fast as their legs would carry them, while the boggle followed close at their heels, hooting and laughing. In crossing the Derwent, between Ebchester and Hamsterley Hall, the one who took the lead fell down in the water, and his companion, who was not far behind, tumbled over him. In their panic, one mistook the other for the Kow, and loud were their cries of terror as they rolled over each other in the stream. They, however, managed to get out separately, and on reaching home, each told a painful tale of having been chased by the Hedley Kow, and nearly drowned by him in the Derwent. A farmer of the name of Forster, who lived near Hedley, went out into the field very early one morning, as he intended driving into Newcastle, so as to be there as soon as the shops were opened. In the dim twilight, he caught, as he believed, his own grey horse, and brought it home, and harnessed it with his own hands. But after yoking the beast to the cart and getting up on the shaft to drive away, the horse (which was not a horse at all, but the Kow), slipped away from the limmers like a knotless thread, leaving the farmer dumbfounded, and set up a great "nicker" as he flung up his heels, and scoured away "like mad" out of the farm yard. The Kow was a perfect plague to the servant girls at farm houses all round the Fell. Sometimes he would call them out of their beds by imitating the voice of their lovers at the window. At other times during their

absence he would overturn the kail-pot, open the milk-house door, and invite the cat to lap the cream, let down "steeks" in the stockings they had been knitting, or put their spinning wheel out of order. Many a time, taking the shape of a favourite cow, he would lead the milk maid a long chase round the field before he would allow himself to be caught, and after kicking and "rowting" during the whole milking time, "as if the deil was in Hawkie," he would at last upset the pail, and, slipping clear of the tie, give a loud bellow and bolt off tail on end, thus letting the girl know she had been the sport of the Kow. This trick of his was so common that he seems to have got his name from it, though, for distinction's sake, the C was hardened into K. It is related that he very seldom visited the house of mourning—a clear evidence that, demon as he was, he was not quite destitute of tender sympathetic feeling. But on the occasion of a birth he was rarely absent, either to the eye or to the ear. Indeed, his appearance at those times was so common as scarcely to cause alarm. The man who rode for the midwife was, however, often sadly teased by him. He would appear, for instance, to the horse, in a lonely place, and make him take the "reist," or stand stock-still. Neither whip nor spur would then force the animal past, though the rider saw nothing. Horses see ghosts at times when men cannot see them—a fact known to the learned world from a very early date, and one of the commonest things in the times we now write of was for a belated traveller to have to give

his beast its own way, it being impossible to get it to ride over an invisible ghost, probably standing in the middle of the road, at a narrow pass, with a drawn sword in its hand, and a circumbendibus became therefore imperative. It frequently happened that the messenger was allowed to make his way without let or hindrance to the house where the midwife lived, to get her safely mounted behind him on a well-girt pillion or "sodds," and to return so far with her unmolested. But as they were crossing some stank, or fording some stream, the "ill-willy" kow would come up and begin to play his cantrips, causing the horse to kick and plunge in such a way as to dismount his double load of messenger and "howdy." Sometimes, when the farmer's wife, impatient for the arrival of the latter, was groaning in great pain, the Kow would come close to the door or window and begin to mock her. The farmer would rush out with a stick to drive the vile creature away, when the weapon would be clicked out of his hand before he was aware, and lustily applied to his own shoulders. At other times, after chasing the boggle round the farmyard, he would tumble over one of his own calves, and the Kow would be off before he could regain his feet. One of the most ridiculous tales connected with this mischievous sprite is told by Mr Oliver in his "Rambles in Northumberland."

"A farmer riding homeward late one night observed as he approached a lonely part of the road where the Kow used to play many of his tricks, a person also on horseback a short distance before him. Wishing to have company in a part of the road where he did not like to

be alone at night, he quickened the pace of his horse. The person whom he wished to overtake, hearing the tramp of the horse rapidly advancing and fearing that he was followed by someone with an evil intention, put spurs to his steed and set off at gallop, an example which was immediately followed by the horseman behind. At this rate they continued whipping and spurring as if they rode for life or death, for nearly two miles, the man who was behind calling out with all his might 'Stop! Stop' The person who fled, finding that his pursuer was gaining upon him and hearing the continued cry the words of which he could not make out, began to think that he was pursued by something unearthly, as no one who had a design to rob him would be likely to make such a noise. Determined no longer to fly from his pursuer, he pulled up his horse and thus adjured the supposed evil spirit, 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, who art thou?' Instead of an evil spirit, a terrified neighbour at once answered the question and repeated it, 'I'se Jemmy Brown o' the High Field. Whe's thou?' "

It is almost needless to say that, since the introduction of total abstinence societies into the regions watered by the Team and Derwent, the appearances of the Hedley Kow have been much fewer and further between.

THE PICKLED PARSON.

The Rev. John Garnage, A.M., rector of Sedgefield, died in the second week of December 1747, about a week before the tithes became due; and it is said that his widow, who was a woman with all her wits about her, resorted to the bold expedient of laying his body in salt, and keeping it in a private room, till after the 20th of the month, the day on which the tithe-farmers came to

pay their rents. Her scheme succeeded. She received the emoluments of the living for that year, which would otherwise have gone into the Bishop of Durham's hands, as patron. And after she had got the money safe, she made public the fact of her husband's decease. This clever piece of trickery does not seem to have been pleasing, however, to the ghost of the departed, who was doubtless an honourable as well as a reverend man, and therefore, the parsonage for many years became a haunted house. "The Pickled Parson," as he was irreverently termed, infested the neighbourhood for the better part of half a century, "making night hideous." At length on the morning of the year 1792, a fire broke out in one of the lodging-rooms of the rectory-house, and before it could be extinguished the greater part of the building was destroyed. From that day and hour the apparition was never more seen.

THE GHOSTLY BRIDAL OF FEATHERSTONHALGH.

Featherston Castle, long the seat of the ancient family of the Featherstonhalghs or Featherstonhaughs, stands about two and a half miles south-west from Haltwhistle, in a little sequestered haugh on the south side of the Tyne, fronting the narrow vale of Hartley Burn, through which are seen the high and heathy summits of Tindale and Byers Fells. Hodgson tells us it has its name from the stone in the bed of the river at Hartley Burn Foot, being stratified featherwise. It belongs to the carboniferous limestone. Probably all our readers have

heard of the deceptions practised by Surtees, the historian, on the too credulous antiquarian enthusiasm of Sir Walter Scott, with his wholly factitious "Raid of Featherstonhaugh". But there is a legend of a different sort connected with the old Northumbrian peel It is that of a ghostly bridal. Abigail Featherstonhalgh, it seems, was a great beauty, who had bestowed her heart on a youth of slender fortune. The old baron set his face against such a mean match for his only daughter, and sought out for her to be her husband, a man of high degree and competent wealth, but of no great personal or other attractions. Her true love being "banished from castle and hall," as the ballad runs, the wedding took place at the baron's behest, and as soon as the ceremony was over, the marriage party, including

> The bride and bride's ladies, and bridegroom all gay,
> With numerous lords,—

sallied forth on horseback from the castle, to perambulate its "far-spreading lands" by the Brooms, and the Ramshaws, and over Conewood Row, till the banqueting hour should summon them home. Evening and night came, but the party had not come back. The minstrels were waiting the signal to strike up; and the menials were vexed to think the viands would be spoiled; and the baron himself, pacing the hall with undefinable misgivings, despatched one messenger after another to see what had become of the truants and hasten them in to dinner. The castle's deep bell "tolled out midnight's slow tone," but the dreary sound did not bring home

the perambulators. The morning breeze at length arose, and "here they are at last!" The trampling of horses was heard. It grew nearer and more near. The party came in sight. They entered the avenue. They crossed the moat. They passed through the gateway. They moved into the hall through the wide door at its nether end.

> First came the bridegroom, and then came the bride,
> Then followed the rest, taking seats on each side.

But never a word broke the silence; and when the baron, the menials, and the minstrels looked into the faces of the wedded pair and the wedding guests, they saw that the fresh ruddy gore streamed on the cheeks of all of them. The baron fainted, as well he might. The eyes of the minstrels seemed changed into stone. The servants shrunk back in horror. A strong rushing wind swept the hall, and when Sir Albany and his people came to their senses the company had departed. Search was of course made on the skirts of Conewood Row, and the dead bodies of bride and bridegroom, bridesmen and bridesmaids, lords and ladies and all, were found in a secluded dell called Penkyn Cleugh, lying just as they had been slaughtered. Who were the murderers was never known, but who was the leader of them was shrewdly guessed. What became of the banished lover we cannot tell, but some say he committed suicide. At all events, the legend has it that—

> Still from the rocks at Penkyn Cleugh
> The blood of the murdered flows anew;

And that of the murderer drops alone
Into the pool 'neath the Raven's Stone

Every year, as the time comes round, the bridal throng may still be seen, by those who have eyes to see such visions, wending their way to the old tower of Featherstonhalgh.

THE DOBIE OF MORTHAM.

The romantic glen, or rather ravine, through which the Greta finds a passage between Rokeby and Mortham, is supposed to have been haunted by a female spectre, called the Dobie of Mortham. The cause assigned for her appearance is a lady's having been whilom murdered in the wood, in evidence of which her blood used to be shown upon the stairs of the old tower at Mortham. But whether she was slain by a jealous husband, or by savage banditti, or by an uncle who coveted her estate, or by a rejected lover, are points upon which the traditions of Rokeby do not enable us to decide. Other Dobies there are, located in sundry places; Mr. Henderson believes them to have been what a poor woman called her husband's ghost, "mortal heavy spirits." Hence the common Border phrases, "O ye stupid Dobie!" or "Hout, he's just a Dobie!" Sir Walter Scott speaks of some families of the name, who carried in their armorial bearings a phantom or spectre passant. Brockett holds that there were different kinds of Dobies. "Some," says he, "attached to particular houses or farms, are represented as good humoured in disposition, and (though naturally lazy), in cases of trouble and difficulty are said

to make incredible exertions for the advantage of the family, such as stacking all the hay, or housing the whole crop of hay in one night." These, it is plain, are of the same species with the Scottish Brownie. "Others," he goes on to say, "residing in low granges or barns, or near antiquated towers or bridges, have a very different character imputed to them. Among other pranks, they will sometimes jump behind a horseman, and compress him so tightly that he either perishes before he can reach his home, or falls into some lingering and direful calamity." These, it is equally plain, correspond to the Brags and Kows. The Dobie is, we are inclined to think the Celtic Dovach, the black, mournful, or sorrowful one.

THE POWRIE OR DUNTER.

The Powries, or Dunters, are sprites who inhabit forts, old castles, peel-towers, or dungeons; and they constantly make a noise there as of beating flax, or bruising barley in the hollow of a stone. If this sound is longer or louder than usual, it portends a death or misfortune. Popular tradition reports that the foundations of these old Border Castles were bathed in human blood by their builders the Picts; no wonder, then, that they were haunted in some way or other. The bloody superstition, that, in order to have a place of strength watched by a guardian spirit, and so rendered impregnable, the foundation-stone, if not also the cope-stone, must be sanctified by a human sacrifice, seems to have been a widely-spread one. Thus, when Hiel the Bethelite re-built Jericho, in

the days of Ahab, king of Israel, "he laid the foundations thereof in Abiram, his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub."

THE BIG HUNTSMAN.

During the episcopate of Sir Anthony Beck, bishop, count palatine, patriarch, and king, who held the see of Durham from 1283 to 1310, and was "the maist prowd and masterfull busshop in all England," one of the "lewd persons" entertained at the prelate's court was one Hugh de Pontchardon, who, for his many evil deeds and manifold robberies, had been driven out of the court of the King of England and had come to the North to seek a little bread and to live by stealing. To this Hugh, whom the lord-bishop employed to good purpose in the war in Scotland, the lands of Thickley, since from him called Thickley Punchardon, about three and a half miles south-east of Bishop Auckland, were granted on cornage tenure. His ecclesiastico-military patron likewise made him his chief huntsman. "Black Hugh," as he was nicknamed, died before the bishop; and some time after his decease, when his eminence was chasing the wild deer in Galtres Forest, near the hill of Craike, in Bulmere Wapentake, in North Yorkshire, granted to St. Cuthbert with the surrounding territory for three miles, by Egfrid King of Northumberland, suddenly Pontchardon galloped past him, on a white horse, and looking on him, the bishop asked him, "Hugh, what makest thou here?" Hugh answered never a word, but lifted up his cloak,

and showed Sir Anthony his ribs "set in bone, and nothing more." None of the varlets, we are told, saw Sir Hugh, but the bishop only, "And the said Hugh," adds the legend, "went his way, and Sir Anthony took courage, and cheered the dogs;" and shortly afterwards he was made Patriarch of Jerusalem, and "he saw nothing more." This Hugh is he, concludes our authority, "that the silly people of Galtres call the Big Huntsman (le gros veneur). He was twice seen after that, by simple folk, before the forest was felled, in the time of Henry VII."

THE SHOTTON DOBBY AND CLOGGY OF STAINDROP.

In the *Newcastle Magazine* for June, 1872, an account was given of two local sprites, the Shotton "Dobby" and "Old Cloggy" of Staindrop. The writer states that he was indebted for his information to a Mrs. Brook, then (and perhaps still) living at Oakland, a place not far from Darlington, where she carried on the business of dressmaking. Mrs. B. used to employ, it seems, several young persons as apprentices and assistants; and on the 23rd of January, 1868, she had occasion to send one of them upstairs. The young lady had barely had time to ascend the stairs when she was heard to shriek aloud, and she presently returned to the workroom, greatly agitated. She explained that when she had reached the first landing she noticed a figure dressed in white standing in the doorway of one of the rooms, and which beckoned to her with its finger. Whether it were

the figure of a man or woman she could not say, "as it had no cap on:" but (inconsistently enough with her terror of it) its face "was the most pleasing one she had ever seen."

As there was certainly no person at the time in the place who could have caused the girl's fright, it was settled by them all to have been a wraith; and the interpretation of its appearance was anxiously looked forward too. This was afforded in a few weeks afterwards, when news arrived that one of Mrs. Brook's nephews, a very handsome young man, had died out in India on the very day the apparition had appeared.

A short time afterwards, in the spring of the same year, a brother of Mrs. Brook, who also had a son in India, was at work upon the "night shift" of the colliery to which he was engineer, when he suddenly beheld the figure of his son standing quietly at his side. He would have addressed it, but his voice stuck to his jaws; and he could not speak for horror. And it slowly disappeared, partly vanishing, and partly sinking into the floor. He afterwards heard that his son, too, was dead.

A strange thing happened during the last illness of another brother of Mrs. Brook, to whom it was related by his wife, a good earnest woman whose story could be relied upon. It had been his custom to sit and smoke his pipe at the boiler side of the kitchen fire. A door opened opposite to this boiler from the kitchen into a passage leading to the pantry. One day when he was

quite bedfast, upstairs, his wife, on coming along the passage from the pantry, saw, on reaching this door, that her husband was sitting in his accustomed place smoking his pipe. She uttered an exclamation and appears to have looked round in her astonishment or indignation at his imprudence, a gesture natural enough to a woman under such a feeling; and, on turning her eyes again to the fireplace, she saw that there was no one in the room. On coming back to the kitchen door again shortly afterwards, the same thing occurred afresh in precisely the same way. The ghost explanation of such phenomena current among the people occurred to her, and she rushed upstairs with a feeling that he must be dying; but she found him as well, at least, as he had usually been just then. A few minutes afterwards, on her again coming to the kitchen door, she saw her husband a third time sitting as before. He died two days afterwards.

Mrs. Brook herself appears to have been introduced to the spirit world at an early age. Her father lived on Cockfield Fell, near Shotton and Cockfield, the one a hamlet and the other a village situate a few miles from Staindrop. He was a man of very social habits, and when he had stayed too long with his cronies at the village, he liked, for sufficient reasons, to have his children come and bring him safely home across the fell, which was a bit of moorland rendered dangerous by uncovered peat holes and quarries. One night, when Mrs. Brook

was accompanying him home at a very late hour, a large bird, "like a goose," ran along the moor lane before them for a little while, and then flew away, uttering loud screams. Her father, no doubt by that time of the night a very competent authority on such matters, said this was the "Shotton Dobby."

This was a local ghost which always appeared in the form of some animal, running up and down a sort of known gamut of metempsychosis of which the chief notes were the figures of a bird, a cow, an ass, or a large dog.

The circumstances under which this Protean dobby formed a predilection for Cockfield are said to have been the following. There had formerly lived a married couple on the Cockfield Fell, near a froggy marsh which the neighbours called in our north country tongue, the "Paddick Mire." The woman being on the point of giving birth to a child, sent the husband along to Cockfield for the customary assistance; but, loitering at the village inn, he put off the execution of his errand and soon got obliviously drunk; and, in the meantime, his travailing wife, for want of aid, died. Since that time, and on account, it is considered, of that sad occurrence, this place has been constantly haunted by the "Shotton Dobby," or, as the immediate neighbours also call it, from the vicinity of the "Paddick Mire," the "Paddick Ghaist." Appropriately enough, it is most often seen when there is a death or a birth in the village; and when a midwife of that place goes to a lying-in at mid-

night, a "something" invariably accompanies her. A Mrs. Gough, a midwife who long lived at Cockfield, told Mrs. Brook that she had many and many a time walked to and from the scene of her labours accompanied by this obstetric apparition, and that she "thowt nowt o 't," and that he was good company.

When quite a young woman, Mrs. Brook had on one occasion to go and work at a public-house at Staindrop, and, whilst sitting sewing in the parlour, the landlady asked her to go up to the long room and bring down some onions she would find there. As Mrs. Brook descended the stairs on her return with the onions, she was first astonished and then horrified to hear an invisible foot follow her from the room, step for step, as she hurried before it, with the noise of a person wearing clogs treading heavily on each stair. On reaching the room below she nearly swooned; but the landlady only replied to her story of what had alarmed her with a contemptuous and incredulous "howts!" But, on entering another house in the place that morning, some time afterwards, she was asked what made her look so white and ill, and she gave in explanation an account of her morning's fright. The person she was speaking to instantly explained that she had heard "Old Cloggy."

The correspondent adds, as also interesting to psychologists, that Mrs Brook, who told her stories with such circumstantiality, and as he believes, in perfect good faith, was a woman of tallish figure, of a sallow com-

plexion, and had large dark eyes, long straight hair, and an aquiline nose.

It appeared that some one formerly living in the house had had a son of unsound mind who had hanged himself in the long room, and the unhappy man's ghost had ever since haunted the place, being very frequently heard, and, after dusk, very often seen. When Mrs Brook, on returning to the inn, recounted to the landlady what had been told her concerning the noise on the stairs that habitual dealer in spirits laughingly admitted it was true, but declared she had not wished to alarm Mrs. Brook by telling her of it; while, for her own part, she had heard "Old Cloggy" so often that she cared nothing about it.

THE PICKTREE BRAG.

The Picktree Brag was a mischievous goblin, the existence of which was once firmly believed in by many of the inhabitants of the parish of Chester-le-Street. Sir Cuthbert Sharp, in his "Bishopric Garland," gives a long account of this singular being, verbatim from the deposition of an old woman (M.A.) of respectable appearance, of about ninety years of age, living near the spot, and who, he says, was universally referred to as knowing most about it. The worthy old dame said:—I never saw the "brag" very distinctly, but I frequently heard it. It sometimes appeared like a calf with a white handkerchief about its neck, and a bushy tail. It came also like a galloway, but more often like a coach horse,

and went trotting along the "lonin, afore folks, settin up a great nicker and a whinney every now and then;" and it came frequently like a "dickass," and it always stopped at the pond at the four "lonin ends and nickered and whinnied." My brother once saw it like four men holding up a white sheet. I was then sure that some near relation was going to die; which was true. My husband once saw it in the image of a naked man without a head. I knew a man of the name of Bewick, that was so frightened, that he hanged himself "for fear on't." Whenever the midwife was sent for, it always came up with her, in the shape of a "galloway."

It is now many years since the brag was last seen.

THE HUMBLEKNOWE BRAG.

Old Mrs. Ann Avery, who died about forty-five years since, at the age of 75, used to tell Mr. William Hurrell, my informant, that when she lived at "Hummelknowe," near Sedgefield,—a young married woman,—she frequently, when sitting up waiting for her husband coming home, heard strange noises outside the house at midnight, as if all the horses and cattle about the place had broken loose, and were running a-muck at each other. The first time she heard this noise, she called up the servant man and made him go out to see what all the stir was about. But the lad soon came in to say there was nothing either to hear or see. After a while Mrs. A got quite accustomed to it, and expected to hear it every night when she had to sit up; but she never altogether

got over her fears. Indeed, she said she was frightened "most awful." It was sometimes as if the very doors and windows of the house were being driven in. Mrs. A. believed in this strange story as firmly as she did in any incident of her life. No explanation of it, I need scarcely say, could she give. The Brag, it may be worth while to add, is the Pan, Silenus, or Satyr of our aboriginal British ancestors, in whose Celtic speech "brag" signifies "a lie, a falsehood, an untruth," and "breugach" "a deceitful female," the appropriateness of the name in the case of the goblin being its ability to assume all sorts of shapes and disguises, so as terrify and mock those who encountered it.

THE HYLTON LANE BRAG.

In the palmy days of keeldom, when the road leading from Sunderland to Hylton was commonly called the Keelmen's Lonnin, the men used, on their customary walks at night up or down, to be encountered by a supernatual being which sometimes took the form of a dog, at other times that of a calf, at other times, again, that of a galloway and occasionally that of a woman; and was wont to accompany them all the way from Lawson's farm, or High Ford, to a place called Glower-owre'im, where they first came in sight of Sunderland. It there disappeared. Many of the old stagers, whose memory went back as far as sixty or seventy years ago, would affirm this to be a positive undeniable truth. When a galloway, the Brag "nickered." Mr. Hurrell

tells me he knew an old man, named Tommy Rowntree, who said he had heard it "mony a time."

THE NICKY-NACK BRIDGE GOBLIN.

Many years ago, when there was no public-house either in the village of Tudhoe or nearer that place than at Sunderland bridge, a company of reapers had assembled at a farmer's house to enjoy a "Mell supper." A good supply of spirits and ale had been laid in, but either the party was larger than had been expected, or they drank more freely, for the supply was exhausted before the reapers were satisfied; so they agreed to contribute each a small sum, and send one of the company for more. The mission was entrusted to a poor fellow who was defective in intellect, and when he had been absent nearly three hours, the distance being only about a mile and a half, several began to be impatient for his return. At length one of them swore, with a deep oath, he would wrap a sheet round him and would meet him in "Nicky-nack field," and frighten him. Accordingly he procured a white sheet, drew it round him, and stalked out to meet the poor man. His companions waited long —hour followed hour, and yet neither the reaper nor the messenger appeared; at last when their patience was exhausted, and morning began slowly to break, the latter rushed in among them, pale and trembling. When they asked him if he had seen anything, he said "yes, I saw a white ghost which came and frightened me much, but I saw a black one behind it, so I cried, 'black ghost

catch white ghost,' and the white one looked about, and perceiving the black one, screamed out amain, and attempted to run away; but blackey was too swift for him, and after much struggling, he flew away with whitey altogether!" When day dawned and the peasants ventured forth to seek their companion, they discovered in the "field of Nicky-nack," a few fragments of the sheet in which he had been wrapped, but he himself was neither then nor ever afterwards found.

THE CAU'D LAD O' HYLTON.

Every ancient castle, tower, or manor-house has its visionary inhabitants. "The cau'd lad of Hylton" seems to belong to the class of "Brownie" or domestic spirit; and does not appear to have possessed any very distinctive attributes. He was seldom seen, but was heard nightly by the servants who slept in the great hall. If the kitchen had been left in perfect order, they heard him amusing himself by hurling the pewter in all directions, and throwing everything into confusion. If, on the contrary, the apartment had been left in disarray (a practice which the servants found it both prudent and convenient to adopt) the indefatigable goblin arranged everything with the nicest precision—and what was "confusion worse confounded" the night before, was "order" on the following morning. This poor *esprit follet*, whose pranks appear to have been at all times perfectly harmless, became wearisome to the servants, and they determined to banish him from the castle. The

"cau'd lad" had an "inkling" of their intentions, and was frequently heard to exclaim in the dead of the night, in a melancholy strain, the following consolatory stanzas :—

Wae's me, Wae's me,
The Acorn is not yet
Fallen from the Tree
That's to grow the wood
That's to make the cradle
That's to rock the bairn
That's to grow a man
That's to *lay* me !

However, the goblin reckoned without his host—for the servants provided the usual means of banishment, viz., a green cloak and a hood, which were laid before the kitchen fire, and the domestics sat up watching wistfully the event, at a prudent distance. At the dead hour of midnight the sprite glided gently in, stood by the smouldering embers and surveyed the garments provided for him very attentively—then tried them on, and appeared delighted with his appearance, frisking about the room, and cutting sundry sumersets and gambadoes, until at length, on hearing the first crow of the cock, twitching his green mantle tightly around him, he disappeared with the appropriate valediction of

Here's a cloak, and here's a hood,
The cau'd lad o'Hilton will do no more good.

But long after this—although he never returned to disarrange the pewter and set the house in order, yet his voice was heard at the dead hour of midnight singing in melancholy melody

Here's a cloak, and here's a hood,
The cau'd lad o' Hilton will do no more good.

The genuine brownie is supposed to be an unembodied spirit, but the "cau'd lad" has, with an admixture of English superstition, been identified with the apparition of an unfortunate domestic who was slain by one of the barons of Hilton in a moment of passion or intemperance.

Certain it is that there was a room in the castle long distinguished by the name of the "cau'd lad's room," which was never occupied except the castle was overflowing with company, and within the last century, many persons worthy of credence had heard at midnight the unearthly wailings of the "cau'd lad of Hilton."

The ballad of "The Cau'd Lad of Hilton"—a quite modern production—tells how the murdered lad, Roger Skelton, used to pace o' nights round the castle hall, with his head literally in his hand, singing "soft and low," the following prophetic words of dread:

Hilton's line dishonoured fall;
Lay with the dust proud Hilton's walls.
Murder blots the household sword;
Strip the lands from Hilton's lord, &c., &c.

THRUMMY CAP.

There is a sort of North-country Silenus called Thrummy-Cap, from the bonnet which he is said to wear, knitted with thrums or weaver's ends, of different colours. He is described as "a queer-looking, little awd

man," and the scene of his exploits is commonly in the vaults and cellars of old castles. Often when the butler or other domestic has gone down in the dead hour of night, to fetch another bottle of wine, he or she has seen Thrummy-Cap sitting astride of a cask, with a face as radiant and as red as the north-west moon. At a place called Redcleuch, on the south skirt of the Lammermuirs, this bibulous old gentleman used to be known by the name of Ruindie, owing to his being clad from top to toe in patchwork garments, made up of the ruinds, runds, lists, or selvages, of the woollen cloth used by tailors. He got the blame, whether deservedly or not, of emptying the hospitable farmer's ale or whiskey casks much sooner than they ought to have been emptied.

OLD HARROW-TOOTH.

This is a mysterious being, witch or hag, which carries off naughty children. She has long sharp iron teeth, whence her name. When a child is very cross and peevish, and nothing the mother or nurse can do, say or sing, will prevent it from squalling, Old Harrow-Tooth will be heard saying from behind the door, or out of a dark corner, "Oh, bring 'em to me, and I'll feed 'em with sour milk and cinders!"

THE BARGUEST OR BOGUEST.

The barguest is represented as a local spirit or demon, haunting populous places, and wont to howl dreadfully at midnight before any dire calamity. It has perhaps got its name from the Danish *baare*, a bier, the carriage or

frame of wood used for carrying corpses to the grave, and if so, it is the spirit of the bier. Glassensikes, near Darlington, is haunted by a barguest, which assumes at will the form of a headless man (who disappears in flame), a headless lady, a white cat, rabbit, or dog, or a black dog. There is a barguest too, it is said, in a most uncanny-looking glen between Darlington and Houghton, near Throstlenest.

HOB HEADLESS.

A sprite of a very malevolent disposition, named Hob Headless, used formerly to infest the roads between Hurworth and Neasham; but had it not in his power to cross the Kent, a little stream flowing into the Tees at the latter place, being subject, we may suppose, to the same law which once prevailed in the supernatural world in Scotland, whereby, under some mysterious penalty, even the witches durst not, in their nocturnal raids, cross a running stream. Hob used to go as far as the Millstone Bridge, on the Darlington road, but never was seen past that place. A man named Robert Bone, usually called Bobby Byens, was the last person who saw Hob Headless, who was exorcised many years ago, and laid under a large stone, formerly on the road side. There he was to remain for ninety-nine years and a day; and should any luckless person happen to sit down on that stone, it was verily believed that he would be unable to quit it for ever. But when Mr. Anthony Moss, of West Middleton, built his garden house near that

place, the stone was smashed up by the mason's labourer, and part of it was used as a foundation stone. There is, or was, another Hob at Coniscliffe, on the other side of Darlington ; but no particulars regarding him have been learned.

HOBHOLE HOB.

A sprite of a rather benign character, who likewise bears the homely name of Hob, resides in Hobhole, a natural cavern in Runswick Bay, on the coast of Cleveland. His dwelling-place is not within our district, but his reputation has reached South Durham. He is supposed to cure the whooping-cough, so parents have long been in the habit of taking their children, when suffering from that complaint, into the goblin's cave, even from great distances. When there they invoke him in a low voice :—

Hobhole Hob !
Ma bairn's gettin' kink-cough,
Tyek't off ! tyek't off !

PEG POWLER.

The river Tees has its sprite, called Peg Powler, whose delight it is to lure too venturesome bathers into her subaqueous haunts, and then drag them to the bottom and drown them. Children are still warned from playing on the banks of the river, especially on Sundays, by threats that Peg Powler will catch hold of them and carry them off. Peg has long green tresses, hanging down over her shoulders, but what her costume is we

are not told. The foam or froth, which is often seen floating in large masses, on the surface of deep eddying pools in the higher portion of the river, is called "Peg Powler's suds"; the finer less sponge-like froth is called "Peg Powler's cream." A goblin or sprite of the same evil character is said to haunt the river Skerne.

GOBLIN COACHES.

Mr. George Gamsby, a native of Sunderland, and a most intelligent old man, tells me that in his grandmother's time a tremendous fearful noise was one night heard in Silver-street, then a more fashionable place than it now is. Some described it as made by a horse with a lame foot and a chain attached to it, but exaggerated twenty times, for the whole street was shaken, as it might have been by an earthquake. Others, who got up and looked out, thought it was like a stage-coach, drawn by six horses. There was "a lot of men" on the top. The coach, the horses, and the men were all black. Strange to say, however, it could not be settled whether they were going up or down the street. The old lady who told the tale to her young grandson said there was a great deal of wickedness in the place at that time—a vast of smuggling from foreign. Besides most of the wives were always quarrelling with their goodmen, and one of them went so far that she had a knife laid under her pillow at night to cut her husband's throat. "But now," the good honest woman went on to say, "ye dinnet see or hear these things se offen now, because the scriptures is mair lyeukit into."

It is recorded in Rees's Diary, quoted by Mr. Henderson, that the death of one John Borrow, of Durham, was presaged by a vision of a coach drawn by six black swine, and driven by a black driver. "Night after night, too," says Mr. H., "when it is sufficiently dark, the headless coach whirls along the rough approach to Langley Hall, near Durham, drawn by black and fiery steeds." The vehicle has its name from both driver and team being without their heads. Its pace is rapid but noiseless. I have often heard old crones speak of hearses and mourning coaches having been seen, drawn by headless horses, and driven by headless drivers, towards some country churchyard, rapidly, but without noise. After every such fearful vision, the death of some distinguished person is sure to happen. I knew one young gentleman farmer, by no means poor in intellect or low in intelligence, who maintained to me that he once met a procession of this kind at a lonely part of a little frequented road, and had great difficulty in getting past it, as his horse was fully more frightened than himself, and required a deal of whipping and spurring to make it go forward. He almost grazed his right leg on the wheel of the hearse (for such it seemed to be) the road being very narrow, and he saw to his amazement that the horses and drivers were without heads, and that moreover the horses were yoked to the wrong end of the vehicle.

CHAPTER III.

GHOSTS.

ANNE WALKER'S GHOST.

In the Rev. John Webster's "Display of Witchcraft," which Dr. Henry More calls "a weak and impertinent piece," displaying only "the marvellous weakness and gullibilitie" of its author, who would not believe either the inspired word of God nor the testimony of innumerable life witnesses, as to the existence and power of witches and wizards, but denied that there were any such, a story is told of a strange occurrence at Chester-le-Street, in the County Palatine, about the year of our Lord 1632. It relates to a young woman named Anne Walker, who was seduced by her master, and afterwards on his instigation murdered by a pitman, named Mark Sharp. Shortly afterwards her ghost appeared to a miller named James Graham, when he was one night alone in the mill, and told him he must be the man to reveal the secret, which if he refused to do, she would continually pursue and haunt him. In the morning he went to a magistrate and made the matter known; and diligent search being made, the body was found in a coal pit, with five wounds in the head, and the pick, and shoes and stockings yet bloody, in every circum-

stance as the apparition had related to the miller; whereupon Walker and Mark Sharp were both apprehended, but would confess nothing. At the Assizes following, they were arraigned, found guilty, condemned and executed, but I could never learn they confessed the fact.

SOUTH SHIELDS GHOSTS.

All the old houses in South Shields used to be haunted—at least many of its denizens firmly believed that they were. Thus, the Old Hall, in West Holborn, formerly the residence of a wealthy shipowner, but now let out in tenements, and partly occupied as a public-house, used to be a noted rendezvous of evil spirits. A lady, whom I knew intimately, lived in it for some time, and she and all her family used to see and hear strange things in it. Dreadful deeds must have been perpetrated, some time or other, in its spacious and once splendid but now ghostly rooms. On one of the grand mantelpieces, she used to tell me, were the marks of two bloody fingers and a thumb, which no chemical art known to her mother, who was a notable housewife, and up to all points of domestic economy, could efface. Scrubbing and scouring had no effect, and even through successive coats of paint the marks reappeared. The finger marks were doubtless those of some female victim of lawless depravity, for the shade of her who impressed them was sometimes seen. One night, Mrs. Cassills

could not sleep, so she sat up in bed reading. About midnight, she saw, to her astonishment, a tall handsome lady, dressed in white, with a scarlet waistband, glide across the room, from the door of an apartment which was always shut up, towards one of the windows on the opposite side, whereat she disappeared. She made no sign whatever, nor intimated any wish to disclose her secret. Moreover, my informant once saw what she fancied to be the apparition of a soldier, standing on the landing-place at the head of the stairs, and others of the family at different times saw him likewise. There was one apartment in the house, which no soul ever entered, barring, of course, disembodied souls, for of such it was deemed the favourite haunt. No earthly tenant would have it for nothing, let alone pay rent for it; so it remained shut up from year's end to year's end. What was in it beside the ghosts nobody knew or dared to investigate, for even to peep into it through the key-hole would have needed more courage than most people possess, even if the spiders had not stretched their webs across it. Strange noises were heard in the room occasionally, as if the ghosts were kicking up a racket amongst themselves. This usually happened when the wind was in a certain point. The elements had free entrance, for not a pane of glass was left in the window: but the door was nailed up fast and the window so situated that it would have been difficult to get a glimpse through into the interior—indeed impossible without a ladder. Perhaps a hidden

treasure lay under the floor, with the mouldering bones of murdered men. Another house, in Thrift Street, South Shields, also occupied as an Inn, had a reputation no whit better. A servant girl, going one evening down to the cellar in the dark, was surprised to see an "ancient ladye" there, who spoke to her, contrary to the established etiquette in such cases (but there are differences, doubtless among ghosts, as among spirits incarnate, as regards stiffness), and made her promise, to come back without a candle at the same hour next night, when she would "hear of something to her advantage," as Joseph Ady used to write. She went accordingly, but took a candle with her, although the courtesy she had met with from the ghost might have taught her better. The old lady again appeared, and informed her that if she had not brought a light she would have told her "such a tale." As it was, she would give her something for keeping her appointment. So she bade her put her hand into a certain crevice, which she did, and there she found the title-deeds of the house and a purse of money. What became of the title-deeds my informant did not know, but the girl wisely kept the purse to herself, and immediately leaving off service was "a grand lady" ever afterwards.

THE CRADLE WELL GHOST.

On St. Thomas's Eve (20th December), the ghost of a murdered woman long used to alarm the carriers and wagoners, and their fare of country folks, leaving the

City of Durham, in the lane between the Cradle Welf and Neville's Cross, on the road to Brancepeth. With her child dangling at her side, she used to join particular parties, enter the vehicles, and there seat herself. The other passengers never had the courage to address her, which, if they had done, the spell would have been broken. She always disappeared at a certain part of the road, which must have been the limit of her hapless pilgrimage.

THE FLASS WELL GHOST.

In the same neighbourhood there was another goblin, if, indeed, it was not the same. It was the ghost of Jane Ramshaw, an unfortunate woman of the City of Durham, who was decoyed from her house at night and murdered, about the year 1789. This horrid deed caused a great sensation, and several persons were examined before the magistrates, but the perpetrator of it was never brought to justice. There was a rumour, Sykes says, that a soldier, on his death-bed on the Continent, confessed that he was the murderer; but if he really was so, his confession did not cause the poor unavenged ghost to cease to walk, for it continued to do so down to a comparatively recent period. The place where "Jeannie" used to make her appearance was at the Flass Well, on the North Road, not far from where Durham Infirmary now stands; and she would frequently flit about the neighbouring fields, or along the road leading to Brancepeth, called the Peth, at the foot of the Red Hills,

not far from where the Brawn appeared. In her time, that is to say, before railways became rife, this road was very much frequented, particularly on market nights, and there were few of the pitmen indeed who had not seen "Jeannie." The Flass Well, it may be incidentally stated, furnished very fine water. The old women preferred going to it long after the Durham Water Works had been constructed; for they could not bear the idea of using the water of the river Wear for cooking purposes, far less for drinking, though it was professed to be purified. The well is now, I believe, enclosed in the grounds attached to one of the villas on the North Road. There are a good many "Flasses" in South and North Britain, the word "flass" signifying a shallow marshy pond, as "flat" or "flatt" does in some districts. At the Flass, in Berwickshire, the ghost of a poor seduced and forsaken girl, whose "death was doubtful," like that of Hamlet's Ophelia, was said in our younger days to be in the habit of walking o'nights, but "never did any harm to anyone." She was commonly known as Fanny o' the Flass, and somebody made a ballad about her, commencing thus:—

In a' the skirts o' the Lammermuirs,
  There wasna a bonnier lass,
A brawer, a brisker, or a blyther,
  Than Fanny o' the Flass.

THE CROOK HALL GHOST.

Crook Hall, near the north end of Framwellgate-street, Durham, has its ghost, called the White Lady,

possibly one of the Billingham family, who once lived in the place, afterwards the domicile of two famous local antiquaries, Christopher Mickleton and James Raine, and now, I believe, of Mr. John S. Fowler, ale, porter and spirit merchant, and seedsman.

MADAME LAMBTON'S GHOST.

South Biddick Hall, on the north bank of the Wear, not far from Lambton Castle, has also had its ideal tenant, one Madame Lambton, believed to have been of the Delaval family, and tinctured with the clever eccentricity of that race.

THE LAVERICK HALL GHOST.

There is a tradition that an old farmer was murdered, many years ago, at Laverick Hall, near Scots House, on the road from Sunderland to Newcastle, and that he "came back," that is to say, used to haunt the place, apparently in the costume he wore when in this world. An old woman, who was long a servant in the place, told my informant that she has often seen him, and so, indeed, had everybody who lived there. She once saw him most distinctly pass in at one door and out at another, in the apartment where she happened to be all alone. "Was it not Mr. S—— ?" (her master) was the natural question put to her. "No, no," replied she, "it was the apparition."

THE MILK WHITE DOVE OF CORNFORTH.

A few fields to the south of Stob-cross farm, near Cornforth, stands a ruined dovecot, shaded by a few

straggling trees, and haunted by a brood of wood pigeons. Among these flies a milk-white dove, with three spots of crimson on its breast, being the spirit of a poor girl who here "put herself down for love"—here, the very spot of her appointment with her traitor lover, —and who still hovers round the devoted spot, the scene of her earthly joys and sorrows. The cruel deceiver drowned himself some years afterwards in the Floatbeck, the small stream on which stands the bishop's manor mill, converted into a paper mill; and being buried where four roads meet, with a stake or stob driven through his body, he left the memory of the transaction in the name of Stob Cross. The old custom of burying the bodies of suicides in such places originated in the idea that they were next in point of sanctity to consecrated ground, and that of driving a stake through the corpse was to prevent the foul fiends from running away with it and turning it into a vampyre. An old farmer assured Mr. Surtees that he had seen the ghost of the injured fair one in the shape of a dove twenty times; and he added that her appearance was considered as a harbinger of serene weather and a fruitful harvest.

LADY BARNARD'S GHOST.

In a letter to Sir Cuthbert Sharpe, Mr. Surtees tells the following story:—"Christopher, first Lord Barnard (son of Sir Henry Vane), was persuaded by his wife into a most unreasonable jealousy and dislike of his eldest son, and intending to pull down Raby, actually proceeded

to take the lead off, when his son stopped him by an injunction in Chancery. (The case is in Vernon's Reports). This old jade after her death used to drive about in the air, in a black coach and six; sometimes she takes ground and drives slowly up the lawn to Alice's well, and still more frequently walks the battlements of Raby, with a pair of brass knitting needles, and is called Old Hell Cat." Lady Barnard, whose Christian name was Elizabeth, was the eldest daughter of Gilbert Hollis, Earl of Clare, and sister and co-heir of John, Duke of Newcastle. She died on the 27th of March, 1742.

A SUNDERLAND BUTCHER'S GHOST.

Between thirty and forty years ago, a drunken butcher named B——, whose shop was in Sunderland High Street, in a house since rebuilt, died and was buried. It was soon rumoured all over the town that his ghost had been several times seen, in the upper part of his domicile, making strange manœuvres, and flinging its arms about wildly, as had been the deceased's custom when alive and fighting with some imaginary enemy in his cups or labouring under *delirium tremens*. Thousands of people gathered nightly in the streets, in front of the house, to see the marvellous sight; and there, of a truth, what seemed to be B—— was plainly visible, figuring away like a Peter Waggy inside the bedroom window, as shown by a dim gas light from behind. Whether it was a veritable apparition or only some wicked wag

personating the poor man's sore troubled and restless spirit, local wiseacres seem never to have fully determined, but many believed to the day of their death that it was B——'s ghost.

A LAMBTON STREET LADY'S GHOST.

The wife of a solicitor residing in Lambton-street, Bishopwearmouth, many years ago, suddenly disappeared, and it was whispered all over the town that she had been murdered. She is said to have been a woman of rather intemperate habits, and her murderer is thought to have been her own husband. With a view to discover what had become of her, bloodhounds were sent for from some gentleman's place in the neighbourhood: but it was found that the scent had been lost, owing to a cask of wine having been spilt on the floor, it was supposed on purpose. Some one was said to have been seen on the night Mrs. ——— disappeared, carrying a sack on his back, and going in the direction of Fenwick's limekilns. Shortly afterwards, a sudden blaze of light was observed rising from the kiln, into which something had been pitched. Of course, it was understood to be the poor woman's body. Many years afterwards, a skeleton was found near the place, but it turned out to be that of a male. Mrs. ———, as in duty bound, "came back," and was often seen by the servants. She made the house so hot for its inmates that they could not live in it. No servant, at least, would stay with them. And so they were forced to shift to another house.

THE ELVET BRIDGE PIPER.

On the north side of Elvet Bridge, in the city of Durham, is a building, erected in 1632, and formerly used as a house of correction, but which, after the erection of the new jail, was sold to Stephen Kemble, the famous comedian, and was subsequently the printing and publishing office of the *Durham Chronicle*. This building is said to have been haunted by the restless spirit of an old piper, who, as the story goes, was brought down by the river during a flood, and, on being recovered from the water alive, became an inmate of the house of correction, where he died a few years after. The bagpipes long continued to be heard at midnight, by persons crossing the bridge to or from Sadler-street. Mr. Henderson tells us that the season for the appearance of ghosts is from St. Thomas' eve and day till Christmas eve, when the approaching festival, of course, puts them to flight. On one of these unlucky days, which happened to be also a Friday, one of the waits disappeared at the foot of Elvet Bridge, not to be seen again, since which event the waits have never again played in that city on Friday nights.

THE GLOWROWRAM GHOST.

In a green lane, called Petty Lane, at Glowrowram near Chester-le-Street, there used to be seen the ghost of a woman. When approached the figure would fall down and spread out like a sheet, or rather like a great pack of white wool. And when they went forward to

pick it up it would suddenly disappear. Both men and horses used to be startled by it. The farmer at Glowr-owram's horse once took fright when he was coming home late, and when he got to the stable door, it was all in a tremble, yet the farmer himself had seen nothing. She often used to appear to the girls who went out at night to milk the cows, when they would get terribly frightened and spill the milk. But there was never a drop to be seen on the ground the next morning. When the carters drove up the lane with coals, the carts would be upset. At last while digging up the ground to improve the road they came upon the skeleton of a woman. The ghost never walked after that.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEYLDON HILL GHOST.

The Rev. John Wesley, in his journal, gives a very curious account of a series of apparitions, alleged to have been seen by a young woman in Sunderland, named Elizabeth Hobson, from whom he got the whole particulars. It would be doing injustice to the story were I to give it in any other than the venerable man's own words, and as the narrative is a very long one and has been so often reprinted, and that in a cheap form, so as to have been read, I daresay, by the bulk of my readers, I shall here pretermit it, only observing that Miss Hobson had been a sight-seer from her youth up, and that the particular visitation which she had from the other world, and which took place at Beyldon or Building Hill, near Sunderland, now included in the People's Park, had for its object to put the lady in possession of a certain piece of property, which had been wrongfully withheld from her.

Although the ghost was supposed to have been effectually laid, by means of fervent united prayer, after the young woman had got her rights, many of the inhabitants of Sunderland and Bishopwearmouth continued to believe that it still walked; and so an

intelligent middle-aged lady tells me that she remembers quite well how, when she was a young girl, the people used to go out to the hill at midnight to see the ghost. A gentleman named Haswell, the grandfather of Mr. J. H. Brown, Borough Accountant, was one of the twelve who volunteered to accompany Elizabeth Hobson to the solitary spot where her deceased relation was wont to meet her, a curious hollow near the North-west foot of the hill, called the Punch Bowl, where the children used, within living memory, to go on an Easter Monday with their pasch eggs and oranges and bottles with strings tied round their necks, and amuse themselves by rolling them down the slope and getting them back again. Mr. Haswell, however, did not go the whole length, but stopped at Mr. Davison's to pray, along with five others. Some of the Hobson family still reside in Sunderland. Vulgar tradition has it that Mr. Wesley went out himself to Beyldon Hill, and laid the Ghost; but this, it is clear, was not the case. The venerable man was, however, a firm believer in the reality of supernatural apparitions. These are his own words:—

"Let us consider what may be the employment of unholy spirits from death to the resurrection. We cannot doubt but the moment they leave the body, they find themselves surrounded by spirits of their own kind, probably human as well as diabolical. What power God may permit these to exercise over them we do not distinctly know. But it is not improbable he may

suffer Satan to employ them as he does his own angels in inflicting death or evils of various kinds on the men that know not God. For this end they may raise storms by sea or by land, they may shoot meteors through the air, they may occasion earthquakes, and in numberless ways afflict those whom they are suffered to destroy. Where they are not permitted to take away life, they may inflict various diseases, and many of which we may judge to be natural, are undoubtedly diabolical. I believe this is frequently the case with lunatics."

CHAPTER V.

FAIRIES.

A good sized library would be required to contain all the rich fairy literature that the fertile human imagination has given birth to, since the day when a certain Pharaonic scribe wrote on papyrus the first fairy tale, for the edification of the young Egyptian crown prince, Seti Mamephta, the son of Pharaoh Rameses Mi-Amun, who ruled in Thebes fourteen hundred years before Christ, and at whose court Moses was educated. This curious papyrus was unfolden by a learned German in 1863, and a literal translation of its contents was read by him to a Berlin Audience, in the winter of that year—thirty two centuries after it had been written. Fickle fancy has no more pleasant region than Fairyland to revel in, but I must not allow her to roam to a distance in this volume. We must stay at home, and speak only of our own County Palatine fairies.

FAIRY HILLS AND COVES.

There are several round green hills in this country, which were formerly supposed to be inhabited underground by the fairies. I have met with people who knew this to be a fact, because sometimes on a fine still summer

night, they have themselves lain down on these green hills with their ears close to the ground, and have heard piping, fiddling, singing, and dancing going on, far down in the interior. When questioned as to whether the sounds might not rather come from some neighbouring village or gipsy encampment, they would reply that that was quite impossible. "No, it was the fairies; everybody knew it was; hundreds had heard them; there could be no doubt it was the fairies." Indeed, almost every circular mound must once have been thus inhabited, if all tales be true. One such place is a remarkable tumulus between Eppleton and Hetton, consisting entirely of field stones gathered together. At the top of this mound is a little hollow, called the fairies' cradle; and there the fairies formerly used to dance, to the music made on a peculiarly sweet-toned pipe by a supernatural minstrel. Ritson speaks of some fairy hills at Billingham, and Mr. W. H. D. Longstaffe tells us of a very famous one at Middleton-in-Teesdale, called the Tower Hill, close to Pountey's Lane (vulgo County Lane, originally Pont Tees Lane.) A person informed Mr. Longstaffe that his grandmother frequently asserted that she had seen the fairies go from that hill to the Tees to wash themselves and to wash their clothes also. Moreover she once found a fairy, like unto a miniature girl, dressed in green, and with brilliant red eyes, composedly sitting on a cheese-like stone near her house. She took this strange creature into her kitchen, and set it by the fire, and gave it some

bread and butter, with sugar on it, which it ate, but it cried so bitterly that she was obliged to carry it back to where she found it. She however kept the elfish stone, and it may be in existence unto this day. The old woman preserved it most religiously, not suffering it to be touched, and always had it under the table in the pantry, for what purpose is not stated. Ritson deduces "Ferry Hill" from "Fairy Hill." At Hartlepool, there are fairy coves. Near Marsden, in one of the limestone caves with which that neighbourhood abounds, is "the Fairies' Kettle," a circular hole in the rock about four feet deep, filled with pellucid salt water, the sea covering the place at spring tides, and occasionally having a few little fishes in it, to swim about in a fairy-like fashion, as in a large aquarium of Nature's own forming. One of the prettiest sights I ever saw was a lithe young mackerel, most elegantly mottled with green, blue, and other colours, disporting itself in this secluded basin, the bottom of which consists of clean white sand, and near it, at a few feet higher level, is a smaller basin shaped like a baptismal font, and filled with delicious fresh water from a spring that gushes from the rock, so that it might very aptly be christened the Fairies' Font.

FAIRY BUTTER.

The fairies used to be heard patting their butter on the slope of Pensher Hill, when people were passing in the dark. A man once heard one of them say, "Mend that peel!" Next day, going past again, he found a broken

peel lying on the ground. So he took it up and mended it. The day after that, when going along the road with a cart, he saw a piece of bread lying on a stone at the root of the hedge, at the identical place, with nice-looking fresh butter spread upon it; but he durst neither eat it himself, nor give it to his horses. The consequence was that before he got to the top of the "lonnin," both his horses fell down dead. I may observe that what is commonly known as fairy butter is a certain fungous excrescence, sometimes found about the roots of old trees. After great rains, and in a certain degree of putrefaction, it is reduced to a consistency which, together with its colour, makes it not unlike butter, and hence its name. When met with in houses it is reckoned lucky. I should consider it very much the opposite.

CHANGELINGS.

The fairies were formerly much addicted to stealing the most beautiful and witty children they came across, and leaving in their places such brats of their own as were either prodigiously ugly and stupid, mischievously inclined, or of a peevish and fretful temper. These elfish imps were termed changelings. Some will have it that "the good people" could only exchange their weakly, starveling, ill-conditioned elves for the more robust offspring of Christian parents before baptism, and that they could not do so even then, if a candle was always kept burning at night in the room where the infant lay.

BISHOPTON FAIRY HILL.

Bishopton is a pleasant village situated on an eminence a few miles West North West of Stockton. A little to the east of it are the foundations of a circular fortification which was raised by Roger Conyers, who made a powerful resistance there against the troops of William Cumin, the Chancellor of the King of the Scots, when, supported by that monarch and the empress Matilda, he usurped the See of Durham, in the middle of the twelfth century. A conical mound, sixty feet high, stands in the centre of the fort and is surrounded by deep trenches. It is known in the locality as the Fairy Hill. The story goes, that the people were once carting away this hill, and had got it partly removed, when a mysterious voice was heard which said "Is all well?" "Yes" was the reply, "then keep well when you are well," rejoined the voice, "and leave the Fairy Hill alone." The admonition was not attended to, however, and the work went on again. In a short time the workmen came upon a large black oak chest; it was so heavy that it took several men to carry it to the nearest blacksmith's shop. Hoping to find it full of gold and silver, they immediately got it broken open, when, alas, it turned out to be full of nails. The chest long remained, perhaps still remains, in the blacksmith's shop, where the aunt of my informant, a trustworthy woman, has often seen it.

FAIRY RINGS.

We are most of us familiar with those beautiful green circles called fairy rings, frequently visible in meadows and pastures. Some attribute them to the growth and decay of a species of fungus, agaric, or mushroom, spreading from a common centre, others think they are caused by lightning; but the vulgar opinion is, that they are spots where the fairies have been dancing in a ring by moonlight, and have trodden down the grass with their tiny feet, for they are diminutive creatures, about the size of human children three or four years old, or not much larger than Lilliputians. Shakespeare calls them "green sour ringlets," and intimates that the fairies have formed them by making "midnight mushrooms" probably to form seats for the dancers after they have had their turn, and sit down to rest. There must be something inscrutable about these rings, if it be true, as I have heard affirmed, that a certain gentleman somewhere in West Durham, or Hexhamshire, one year dug a trench six inches deep round a conspicuous ring in one of his old grass fields, to prevent the spread of the fungus, nevertheless it re-appeared next year, outside the trench, as if no such severance had been made.

FAIRIES IN THE KITCHEN.

In the olden time it was not uncommon for the kitchen wench in a farm house to discover, when she rose with the sun or before it, that the floor had been clean

swept, and every article of furniture put into its proper place, by some kind sleight-of-hand fairy, during the night. These were the days when a great part of this country-side was still in a state of nature—bogs undrained, fields unfenced, leys untilled—and the inhabitants were almost as rude and untutored, in the schoolmaster's sense, as Zulus or Maoris, while the servants as a rule were shamefully hard worked. But now the girls get no such supernatural nocturnal help, but must do the needful work themselves, for—

> Where the scythe cuts and the sock rives,
> There are no more fairies or bum-bee likes.

FAIRY MONEY.

Found treasure is supposed to have been laid up by the fairies, and he who is so lucky as to light upon it, will, if he is a wise man, say nothing about it; because the good people do not like their gifts to be made known, any more than truly benevolent mortals do.

FAIRY PIPES.

Small tobacco pipes of an ancient and clumsy form, frequently found in ploughed fields, are supposed to have been manufactured and used by the fairies.

ELF SHOTS.

This is the name vulgarly given to the flint arrow-heads, made use of in war by the ancient Britons. The common people imagine them to have been maliciously

shot at cattle by the fairies or elves. The approved cure of the cramp or other disorder, thereby caused, used to be to chafe the parts affected with a piece of thick woollen cloth, or with an old stocking.

FAIRY CONCERTS.

The fairies usually took up their abode during the day underground in the bosom of isolated round green hills, I have met with people who knew this to be a fact, because sometimes on a fine still summer evening, when they had lain down on these hills with their ear close to the ground, they were astonished to hear piping, fiddling, singing, and dancing going on far down in the interior. When questioned as to whether the sounds might not rather come from some neighbouring village or gipsy encampment, they would reply that that was quite impossible. "No" they replied, "it certainly was the fairies; everybody knew it was; hundreds had heard them; there could be no doubt it was the fairies." Indeed almost every circular mound in the North must once have been thus used, if all tales be true.

A LEGEND OF CLINT'S CRAG.

The royal residence of the Queen of the Fairies in Weardale was a wild, romantic, little frequented place called Clint's Crags, on the south bank of Ireshope Burn, about two miles south west of the village of Ireshope. The burn washes the foot of these rugged and picturesque rocks which are crested on the highest battlements

with tufts of purple heath and bilberry shrubs, contrasting with the grey-faced cliffs over which falls a mossy rill; and a few solitary and shapeless bushes dangle from the crevices which are adorned by the common, the green and the wall rue spleenworts and various species of fern. At the foot of the limestone rocks there is a gloomy cavern, in which the fairy queen and her elfin courtiers resided; and according to Mr. W. M. Egglestone, whose description we take the liberty to borrow, "the royal palace was decorated with stalactitical ornaments of indescribable grandeur; marble chandeliers of intricate forms were pendent from the roof; the furniture and crockery ware were of stalagmitical formation; and on every side of the fairies' abode were myriads of sparkling gems of every hue." The Weardale fairies, we may feel assured, were as capricious and tricksy as their green-coated brethren and sisters everywhere else. Their habit it was to borrow the goodwife's domestic utensils, sometimes when she could very ill spare them; and if refused the loan of anything, they never failed to take their revenge. Unless it was their pleasure to make themselves visible, to serve their own private ends, they were never seen, though often heard. There was a singular virtue, however, in a four-leaved clover, to give the possessor of it the power of seeing the fairies at all times.

FOLK LORE.

CHAPTER VI.

HOLIDAYS AND HOLIDAY CUSTOMS.

HALLOWEEN.

On All Hallow Even, the vigil of All Saints' Day, it is customary with young people to dip for apples floating in water, or to catch at them when stuck on one end of a hanging beam, at the other extremity of which is fixed a lighted candle, and that with their mouths only, their hands tied behind their backs. I have often seen this ludicrous sport indulged in, and moreover the burning of nuts, which is an almost equally exciting game, though not so trying to the jaws. The nuts are placed, two and two, upon the topmost bar of the grate,—formerly on the hearth,—and named respectively after a lad and a lass. If they lie still and burn together, it prognosticates a hopeful love and a happy marriage; but if, on the

contrary, one or other, or both, bounce and fly asunder, the sign is unpropitious. If both start off, it is a case of mutual aversion; if one lies still, it is a case of love forsaken. When nuts are not come-at-able peas will do.

ST. AGNES' FAST.

St. Agnes's Fast is thus observed throughout the County of Durham. Two young girls, each desirous to dream about their future husbands, must abstain through the whole of St. Agnes's Eve (20th January) from eating, drinking, or speaking, and must even avoid touching their lips with their fingers. At night they are to make together their "dumb cake," the ingredients of which (flour, salt, water, &c.) must be supplied in equal proportions by their friends. They must also take equal shares in the baking and turning of the cake, and in drawing it out of the oven; and after it has been divided into two equal portions, each girl, taking her share, carries it up stairs, walking backwards all the time, and finally eats it and jumps into bed. A damsel who duly fulfils all these conditions, and has also kept her thoughts all the day fixed on her ideal of a husband, may confidently expect to see her future partner in her dreams. There is one way besides speaking in which the charm may be broken, and that is by a kiss. And therefore when it is known that a brace of girls are keeping St. Agnes's Fast, it is not uncommon for a couple of young sparks to come upon them unawares, and break their fast by a salute.

ST. SWITHIN'S DAY.

This day, the 15th of July, is almost universally believed by country people to give a certain indication of the state of the weather for the next forty days. For thus runs the old rhyme—

> "St. Swithin's day. if thou does rain,
> For forty days it will remain ;
> St. Swithin's Day, if thou be fair,
> For forty days 'twill rain ne mair."

A NEW DRESS ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Every body should wear a new dress on New Year's Day, and he should take care to have some "brass," including copper, silver, and gold money, in his pockets, in order to be certain that they will never be quite empty of cash throughout the year.

GOOD FRIDAY.

No Blacksmith with the least pretence to decency will drive a nail on Good Friday ; a remembrance of the awful purpose for which hammer and nails were used on the first Good Friday naturally holds them back.

CHILDERMASS DAY.

On this day, the feast of the Holy Innocents, which keeps up the memory of the wicked Herod's murder of the children at Bethlehem, it is very unlucky to begin any work, whatsoever day of the week it falls on.

OXEN ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

On Christmas Eve the oxen kneel in their stalls, and utter low sounds resembling moans. In boyhood many a one has been induced, as Brockett tells us he himself more than once was, to attend on the occasion and witness this curious and most suggestive phenomenon. But I have never yet met with any one who could sincerely say he had seen and heard it. The oxen, of course, do kneel when they lie down; but they do not moan at the same time.

FRIDAY.

A Sunderland lady was lately heard to say: "I am not superstitious; but I would not for the world begin any business on that day; it is unlucky." This is a very wide spread notion—Friday, the day on which Christ was crucified, being regarded all over Christendom as a day of ill omen. No unsophisticated people would choose to be married on Friday, for, if they were, they could not hope to enjoy much domestic peace.

FRUMETY ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

The orthodox old fashioned supper on Christmas Eve consists of frumenty, frumety, or furmety, a preparation of wheat well soaked and boiled in milk, with currants, cinnamon, and other spices, and sugar. It is the Latin *frumentum*, corn.

THE SUN DANCING.

At its rising on Easter morning, the sun dances for joy, in honour of the resurrection of Christ. Those who wish to see him do so, rise early that day, and go into the open fields, or on to a height overlooking the sea, where they can witness the phenomenon best.

EASTER MONDAY AND TUESDAY FROLICS.

On Easter Monday the boys have a right to lay hold of the girls, and pull off their shoes; and on Easter Tuesday, the girls may take their revenge, by pulling off the boy's caps. In the City of Durham, says Brand, "on the one day the men take off the women's shoes, or rather buckles, which are only to be redeemed by a present: on another day the women make reprisals, taking off the men's in like manner." A young lady tells me she has seen men taken to the police station in Sunderland on Easter Sunday, for using their presumed privilege on that sacred day, and pulling off the women's boots. Fishwomen and others have been known to go about the street the whole day, waylaying well-known characters, and levying contributions upon them. One gentleman in Sunderland has been forced to pay as much as nine shillings in one day. The late Peggy Potts used to be famous at this game.

SANTA CRUZ.

On Christmas Eve, each child hangs up one of its stockings in a place where it can be easily reached, in

order that Santa Cruz, the Holy Cross, may come into the bedroom during the night, and deposit some little present in it. And when the child wakens in the morning, sure as fate, in the stocking is a Christmas pie,—a yule dough, which is a bit of rich paste rolled out, cut, and baked in the shape of a nice little baby, with currants for eyes,—a packet of figs, raisins, bullets,—an orange, a ball, a top, or some other article, brought by the mysterious nocturnal visitor, who has come with light and gentle step, when the children were fast asleep.

PALMS.

It was quite customary, fifty or sixty years ago, for children to make palm crosses for Palm Sunday. The substitute for palm was *saugh*, sallow, or great round-leaved or goat willow, with its soft downy saffron coloured catkins in flower. The branches were tied together so as to form a St. Andrew's cross, with a tuft of catkins at each point, and bound with knots and bows of ribbon, generally blue or pink. In the old Catholic times, the branches were carried in procession, and strown on the road the Sunday next before Easter, in imitation of the palm leaves that were strown before Jesus on his entry into Jerusalem. The palm crosses made by the children are sometimes still seen stuck up or suspended in old fashioned people's houses.

EASTER EGGS.

Easter eggs, Pash or Passover eggs, or Paste Eggs, as they are vulgarly called, form a staple article of manu-

facture every year among the children in town and country. They are boiled as hard as possible, and stained various colours, with whin blossoms, lichen off stone walls, the juice of herbs, arnatto, logwood chips, and old rags dyed with a pattern which will cast. They can be bought in the shops by such as do not care to take the trouble to boil and dye them for themselves, and the dealers in them often have them covered with goldleaf. The egg, in heathendom, was an emblem of the life lying hid, dormant, and seemingly extinct in Nature during the reign of winter, and rising again in due time with the advent of spring. To Christians it prefigures the resurrection of the body from the regions of death and the grave. Easter Sunday is commonly known as Paste-egg day.

THE VIRGIN AND CHILD ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

On Christmas Eve, in this county as well as elsewhere, it is customary for old women to go about with penny waxen dolls, dressed up to represent the Virgin and Child, carried under their cloak, from house to house, and as a matter of course, expecting alms. They sing a carol, the purport of which is to wish master and mistress,

> "And all their little children, that round the table go,
> And all their kith and kindred that travel far and near,
> A merry Christmas and a happy New Year."

BALL PLAYING.

This game commences on Pancake Tuesday and continues without interruption till Easter.

SHROVE TUESDAY.

Shrive or Shrove Tuesday is still upheld, so far as being a half-holiday, which the apprentices of Durham claim as a privilege and an indisputable right. The custom of ringing the great bell of the Cathedral at eleven o'clock, after morning service, is still observed, receiving the usual designation of the "Pancake Bell;" but in pre-Reformation times it conveyed a more significant intimation—that the inhabitants must repair to their parish priests and get "shriven." The ancient glories of Shrove Tuesday have disappeared, and there are now few persons either

> "man or maid who take their turn
> And toss their pancakes lest they burn."

At Sedgefield and other places, the old fashioned people still dine on pancakes; and the afternoon is devoted to playing at football.

COLLOP MONDAY.

It is usual to have eggs and collops, or pieces of bacon, for dinner, on the day before Shrove Tuesday. The origin of this custom was that, it being the last day of flesh-eating before Lent, our ancestors cut what fresh meat they had left in their houses on that day, into collops or steaks, for salting or hanging up to dry till

Lent was over. In many of the older villages the inhabitants were once in the habit, on the morning of Collop Monday, of visiting the farm houses, and demanding a collop or steak, as well as a quantum of flour for use the next day.

CLEANING UP ON NEW YEAR'S EVE.

Before the New Year comes in, it is proper that the house should be thoroughly cleansed and purified. All the ashes should be carried out, all the slops emptied, every drop of dirty water removed. Misunderstandings, animosities and quarrels of every kind should likewise be made up before the advent of the New Year, and he or she who makes the first advance towards reconciliation has the greatest honour.

FIRST-FOOT.

It is considered very important that the first person who crosses the threshold and enters the house after midnight on New Year's morning should be a true friend, and therefore many make arrangements beforehand with some one in whom they have perfect confidence, to get him to be their "first foot." It would be counted very unlucky indeed if the first entrant were a female, or if the person who first came in did not bring bread or spirits with him. In order to prevent the possibility of mischief being done, through the influence of the evil eye, some people prefer being their own first-foot, going themselves to the door the moment it strikes twelve,

and immediately coming in again. Sailors' wives, when their husbands are away at sea, usually get some canny little lad whom they know to be their first-foot. Among old friends and neighbours, when our town society was less mixed than it is now, the first-foot used to come in bearing a tray, with a bottle and glass, and recite the following rhyme :—

"Happy New Year t' ye ! God send ye plenty !
Where ye have one pound note I wish ye may have twenty !"

THE YULE CANDLE AND THE YULE CLOG.

A large mould-candle is lighted and set on the supper table in many old-fashioned houses on Christmas Eve; and it is considered unlucky to snuff it until the conclusion of the repast. Another "betterly" candle is got to serve the same purpose on New Year's Eve. And both ought to be left to burn till daybreak next morning. A common candle will not do. The grocers formerly used to give a proper one away every year to their customers. The Yule Clog is a large block or log of wood, sometimes the root of a tree, laid on the fire on Christmas Eve, and kept burning all the following day, or longer, if possible. A portion of it is very often kept to light up the new block at the next Christmas, and to preserve the family from harm in the meantime. The Yule-Dough is a Christmas Cake, or rather a little image of paste studded with currants, and baked for children at that season of the year.

THE WICKED SUNDAY.

In many places, in pre-Reformation times, the village wake was held on a Sunday afternoon, after canonical hours. That day used to be called the Wicked Sunday, since the Sabbath was at no other time so generally profaned. All the good wives and their servants stayed at home in the morning to dress dinner; and in the afternoon all the men who were not playing at football or quarter-staff, sat drinking beer, either in their own houses or in the village alehouse, till "all was blue."

THE YEULWAITING.

According to the Boldon Buke, there were two cottagers in Heighington, each holding fifteen acres of land of the lord bishop, for which they wrought two days in every week throughout the year, and joined with the sixteen "villains" in the place in several other services, and in *yeulwaiting*. This latter was the easy and agreeable service of serenading the good prelate, of whom they held their lands, on Christmas Eve. Each of the twelve "villains" in the township of Killerby was bound to pay four shillings a year to the bishop, in lieu of yeulwaiting. We have here, not the origin, it is true, but an old established form, of the Christmas Waits, who still go their rounds in many parts of the country.

GOOD FRIDAY BREAD.

Bread baked on Good Friday, and laid by in a drawer, will keep fresh till the same festival comes round next

year. A little bit of it grated, and taken in a wine glass of water, is useful in cases of diarrhœa.

CERTAIN DISHES FOR CERTAIN TIMES.

A turkey and mince pie at Christmas; a gammon of bacon on Easter Day; a goose on Michaelmas Day; oysters on St. James's Day; a roast pig on St. Bartholomew's Day; a fat hen at Shrovetide; pancakes on Shrove Tuesday; a male pullet and bacon on Fastin's Day; hot cross buns on Good Friday; lamb at Whitsuntide; bull beef at Candlemas; eggs on the Saturday before Shrove Sunday; a sweet cake on All-Soul's Day; salmon and all other kinds of fish in Lent. We subscribe to all these, but the oysters on the 25th July, holding, as we do, to what we consider the more orthodox doctrine which associates oysters in season with months in the names of which R. occurs. Pullets are in season during the whole of January; hence the proverb :—

> If you but knew how good it were,
> To eat a pullet in Januar',
> If you had twenty in your flock,
> You'd leave but one to go with the cock.

YULE CAKES.

The Yule Cake, otherwise known as the Yule Dough, was formerly baked at Christmas, and presented by bakers to their customers. It was a little image of paste, in the form of a baby, and represented the infant Jesus.

Sometimes His Mother, the Virgin Mary, was added, holding the babe in her arms.

DURHAM CATHEDRAL ON CANDLEMAS DAY.

Brand cites a curious anecdote concerning John Cosin, bishop of Durham, on Candlemas Day, from a rare tract, intituled "The Vanity and Downfall of superstitious Popish ceremonies, preached in the Cathedral Church of Durham, by one Peter Smart, a prebend there, July 27th, 1626." Edinburgh, 4to, 1628. The story is that "on Candlemas Day last past, Mr. Cozens, in renewing that Popish Ceremony of burning candles to the honour of Our Lady, busied himself from two of the clock in the afternoon till four, in climbing long ladders to stick up wax candles in the said Cathedral Church. The number of all the candles burnt that evening was two hundred and twenty, besides sixteen torches,—sixty of those burning tapers and torches standing upon, and near, the high altar (as he called it), where no man came nigh."

TANSY PUDDING.

Eating tansy pudding at Easter is a custom derived from the Romish Church. Tansy (Athanasia) is one of the emblems of immortality, and consequently of the resurrection. The pudding is made of flour and eggs, seasoned with the expressed juice of the herb.

MAUNDY THURSDAY AT DURHAM.

At the South-West Entrance of the Cloisters at Durham, on Maundy Thursday yearly, were placed, in the Roman

Catholic times, as many poor children as there were monks in the convent; and each of the good fathers washed, dried, and kissed the feet of one of the children, and then gave him twenty silver pennies, seven dried herrings, three loaves of bread, and a wafer cake.

TID, MID, MISERAY.

The first Sunday in Lent has no name; but the other six are designated by the following couplet:—

"Tid, Mid, Miseray,
Carling, Palm, and Paste Egg Day."

The three latter have been already spoken of; the three former have been named from the beginning of Psalms and Hymns, viz, *Te Deum*, *Mi Deus*, and *Miserere mei*.

CRYING ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

If a child cries on New Year's Day, it will cry every day that year.

THE STOT PLOUGH.

In Sir Cuthbert Sharp's "History of Hartlepool," we are informed that "the first Monday after Twelfth Day, the Stot Plough, a small anchor drawn by young men and boys, is paraded through the town. They stop at every door and beg a small donation; if successful, they salute the donor with three cheers; but if the request is refused, they plough up the front of the house, to the great annoyance of the inhabitants." This was seventy years ago.

CANDLEMAS.

It is a common notion that the crows lay the first stick of their nests on Old Candlemas Day. The ravens, like the Russians, do not recognise the New Style.

PERAMBULATING THE BOUNDS.

It was a general custom formerly, says Bourne, and is still observed in some country parishes, to go round the bounds and limits of the parish on one of the three days before Holy Thursday, or the Feast of Our Lord's Ascension, when the minister, accompanied by his churchwardens and parishioners, were wont to deprecate the vengeance of God, beg a blessing on the fruits of the earth, and preserve the rights and properties of the parish. This custom is still kept up in Sunderland, and as the boundary line between it and Bishopwearmouth parish passes in one place at least through the middle of a house, some amusement is naturally caused by the perambulators making their way from the street in at a certain upstairs window and out again by the back.

VALENTINE DAY.

Brand says: "It is a ceremony, never omitted among the vulgar, to draw lots, which they term valentines, on the eve before Valentine Day. The names of a select number of one sex are by an equal number of the other put into some vessel; and, after that, every one draws a name, which for the present is called their valentine,

and is also looked upon as a good omen of their being man and wife afterwards. There is a rural tradition, that on this day every bird chooses his mate. From this perhaps the youthful part of the world hath first practised this custom, so common at this season." The sending of valentines in envelopes through the post is a practice which Sir Rowland Hill's reform has given an immense impetus to. It would be interesting to get the statistics, if they could be had, of the number of hundred weights of additional letters posted at this season in the United Kingdom, each year since the penny post came in.

ROYAL OAK DAY.

It was once customary on Royal Oak Day (the 29th of May), for people to wear in their hats the leaves of the oak; and those who neglected to do so, were liable to be hooted at by the boys in the streets. Carters still ornament their horse's heads with a sprig of oak on this great Caroline anniversary.

DRESSING STOOLS ON MIDSUMMER DAY,

A once prevalent custom in the city of Durham, as well as throughout the county, in towns and villages, was to dress out stools on Midsummer Day with a cushion of flowers. A layer of clay was placed on the stool, and therein was stuck, with great regularity, a great number of all kinds of flowers, so closely arranged as to

form a beautiful cushion. These were exhibited at the doors of houses in the villages, and at the ends of streets and cross-lanes in the larger towns: and the attendants levied donations from the passers-by, to enable them to have an evening feast and dancing.

GROCERS' GIFTS.

On Christmas Eve, grocers who understand how to push their business send each of their customers a pound or half a pound of currants or raisins to make a Christmas pudding. Sometimes the present is only a good sized twopenny candle; at other times, a nutmeg, when the purchase is perhaps only "a penn'orth of tea."

THE PANCAKE BELL.

The Pancake Bell used to ring in Sunderland at eleven o'clock every Shrove Tuesday, until within the last nine or ten years. Originally it was rung to call the people together for the purpose of confessing their sins, but latterly it was only meant as a signal for them to begin frying their pancakes. All apprentices used to consider themselves free for the afternoon from the moment this bell began to ring.

MOTHERING SUNDAY.

On Mid-Lent Sunday, young people out at service used to make it a practice to go home and see their parents, carrying little presents to them, and getting in return a hearty meal, formerly of furmety, latterly of

tea and cake, called Simnel Cake or Mothering Cake. On their way back at night, a good deal of courting went on.

HOT CROSS BUNS.

On Good Friday Morning, hot cross buns are in universal request, among those who like to keep up harmless old customs. People send to the confectioner's about half-past seven, and get seven for sixpence. If one of these cakes is preserved, it may be used, sage old women say, in cases of diarrhœa or other bowel complaints with great advantage.

CHRISTMAS BOXES.

Christmas boxes, as they are called, are now generally given only to postmen, newsboys, milk-lads, and others who are in the habit of calling regularly at the house or shop, on errands or such like.

GOWK DAY.

A Gowk is literally a cuckoo, but metaphorically a fool, and the first of April, All-Fool's Day, is in this part of the country termed Gowk Day. The observances on it are the same here as elsewhere, and therefore do not need to be related at length.

BLOODY THURSDAY.

Besides Collop Monday, Pancake Tuesday and Ash Wednesday, we have Bloody Thursday, so called because it was on that day that Jesus Christ was betrayed,

apprehended, and brought before the high priest of the Jews, to be delivered up next day to the Romans for crucifixion.

MIDSUMMER EVE.

There are still old women in Sunderland who were, in their girlhood, in the habit of dancing with their companions through fires made in the street on Midsummer Eve, the vigil of St. John the Baptist's Day, It was reckoned good fun to push or pull each other into the fire, which was commonly made with dry straw. The more nimble and adroit leaped over.

FEASTS AND HOPPINGS.

In many villages in the county annual wakes or fairs are still kept up, under the name of Hoppings, devoted entirely to pleasure. There the young men and women consort in great numbers—

> To happe and sing and maken miche disport.

They were usually observed in Catholic times on the Sunday next after the saint's day to whom the parish church was dedicated. The parishioners "made themselves bowers about their churches, and refreshed themselves and feasted together after a good religious sort, killing their oxen to the praise of God and increase of charity." These festivals were called Wakes, because on the vigils or eves of them "the people were wont to awake from sleep and go to prayers."

Subsequently a fair was held in the churchyard on such occasions, accompanied by feasting and all sorts of rural sports and exercises, which sometimes continued two or three days, or the entire week. In this county, the most famous of these hoppings is Houghton Feast, said to have been instituted by the celebrated Bernard Gilpin. Swalwell Hopping is also famed in song. Stockton Cherry Fair is another great gathering of the kind.

SUGAR AND WATER SUNDAY.

In many villages in the North it was once the custom for the lads and lasses to collect together at springs or river sides, on the third Sunday in May, to drink sugar and water, or Spanish juice (sugar-aloe) and water, the lasses giving the treat. They afterwards adjourned to the nearest public-house, where the lads returned the compliment in cakes and ale, punch, &c. This custom gave rise to many scandals, and is now, we believe, quite obsolete.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON HOLIDAY.

The following curious extract is from a manuscript volume of sermons for all the Saints' Days and remarkable Sundays in the year, in the Episcopal Library at Durham, communicated to Mr Brand by Mr Robert Harrison :—"It is writen in ye liffe of Seynt xxxxx that he was bisi on Ester Eve before None that he

made One to abase him or ye sunne wente doune. And the fiend aspied that, and gadirid up his heris; and when this holi man sawe it, he conjured him and badde him tell him whi he did so. Thane said he, bycause yu didist no riverence to the Sundaie, and therefore thise heris wolle I kepe unto ye day of dome in reproffe of ye. Thane he left of all his sharying and toke the heris of the fiend and made to bren hem in his oune haund for pennance, which him thought he was worthe to suffre; and bode unshaven unto Monday. This is saide in reproffe of hem that worcken at afternone on Saturdayes."

ASH-RIDDLING.

On the eve of St. Mark (April 24th), it used to be customary to riddle or sift the ashes on the hearth-stone, in the belief that, if any of the family were destined to die within the year, the mark of the individual's shoe would be impressed on the ashes.

CARLING, CARR, OR SATISFACTION SUNDAY.

Brand, in his "Popular Antiquities," says:—"At Newcastle, Sunderland, Shields, and many other places in the North of England, grey peas, after being steeped a night in water, are fried with butter, given away, and eaten on the Sunday preceding Palm Sunday." These peas are called Carlings. In Roxburghshire, a particular kind of cake is used, called *carr cake*. It is made of

fine or "bootit" flour, with sweet milk, eggs, and a teaspoonful or two of whiskey, made into a thin paste and put with a spoon into a frying pan, which has been previously lubricated with a *pat* of fresh butter, newly churned. Occasionally some hog's blood is added during the mixing. The German word *Karr* signifies the satisfaction of a penalty imposed, and hence it may be taken to refer either to the redemption of man by the Passion of Christ or to the fasts and penances endured by Christians at this solemn season of Lent to obtain thereby remission of their sins.

THE BORROWED DAYS.

The Borrowed Days, or Borrowing Days, are the last three days of March, which, according to old almanac-makers, are generally stormy. They have got their name from the idea that March borrowed them from April, in order that he might extend his power so much longer. And so the popular rhyme runs—

March said to Aperil
There lie three hoggs upon yon hill,
If ye will lend me days three,
I'll find a way to gar them dee.
The first day shall be wind and weet,
The second day shall be snaw and sleet,
The third day shall be sic a freeze
As to freeze the birds' nests to the trees;
And ere that day be past and gane,
The three silly hoggs will gan hirplan hame.

Superstitious people will neither borrow or lend anything on any of these days, lest the article should be used for evil purposes. In some parts, they call them the Barren Days.

CHILDERMASS DAY.

On this day, the feast of the Holy Innocents, which keeps up the memory of wicked Herod's murder of the children at Bethlehem, it is very unlucky to begin any work, whatsoever day of the week it falls on.

DOING BUSINESS ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Buy nothing, borrow nothing, on New Year's Day; and do not mend a single rag upon it; else you will be in rags all the year after.

UNLUCKY.

It is unlucky to lend anything whatever on New Year's Day, and, as it is kept a close holiday in Shields, prudent housewives take care to have everything laid in for it beforehand. It is unlucky to meet a female first on New Year's Day, or indeed on any day in the year. Specially unlucky is it when a woman is your "first foot," that is, when she is the first to enter your house after the New Year has come in.

THE SCHOOLMASTER'S COCK-PENNY.

In the good or bad old times, when Shrovetide was the season for throwing at cocks, a yearly cock-fight was a part of the annual routine of several of our northern free schools. The playground of the scholars was the place of diversion, and the master was umpire by virtue of his office. He was moreover entitled to a perquisite or fee of a penny for each cock set down to the main;

and every fugie or craven that showed himself chicken-hearted, or either declined to fight or fled before his adversary, was confiscated for his benefit.

THE MELL-DOLL OR KERN-DOLL.

The last cut of corn of the season, gathered by a maid, is plaited into the form of a child's doll, ornamented with ribbons, and hung up in a conspicuous place till next harvest. There is a contest among the maidens in the *boon* or gang of reapers to decide who is to have it, as she who gets it is supposed to have the best chance of being married during the year. As soon as the last cut has been made, the shearers gather into a ring, and throwing their hooks up into the air, make the welkin ring with their shouts. The master, steward, or grieve, if not young and frolicsome, takes care to be out of the way when the *Kern* is won, or otherwise the women give him "up in the air," much in the fashion in which Sancho Panza was treated at the inn, only barring the blanket, and he must afterwards kiss them all round, old and young. Sometimes when their employer or overseer is not a favourite with them, they have been known to let him fall to the ground instead of "kepping" him in their arms, and cases have been known of persons getting severely hurt in this way. It is not usual to "cry the kern" after sunset, nor after Old Michaelmas Day (October 9th), it being considered that to constitute a "maiden kern," the harvest must be concluded previously to that day, and in broad daylight.

CHAPTER VII.

LADY JARRATT.

The old manor-house at Darlington was long haunted by the ghost of the lady of Charles Gerrard, Esq., who is said to have been a daughter of Dr. John Cosin, Bishop of Durham. This lady, according to the popular tradition, was murdered by some of the Parliamentary soldiers during the great civil war, when she left on the wall of the room where the murder took place a ghastly impression of the thumb and fingers of her left hand in blood that no scouring could ever eradicate. Down to a comparatively late time the poor lady continued to walk, and was frequently seen sitting on the boundary wall of the churchyard, although why she chose that place it would be difficult to explain. It was observed that she had but one arm, for the other was cut and carried off by the ruthless ravagers, in order that they might secure the valuable ring which she wore on her finger. She was believed to traverse nightly a supposed subterranean passage leading from the Manor-house to the church, which nobody, however, dared to explore, and the existence of which many denied. There was one house near the factory which she liked to frequent, making it in fact perfectly untenantable. She used to jingle the pans of the establishment, and keep rattling

the old pump handle when she found it locked. She would likewise pull the bedclothes off the servants' beds, and sometimes pull them out on to the floor. When the Manor-house was converted into the parish Workhouse she did not cease her nocturnal visits, but occasionally, instead of doing the inmates any mischief, she would even make coffee for the sick, a proof that her ideas were not altogether of a malevolent nature, but that benevolence entered into them by fits. In all her various appearances and offices within doors, she invariably made a rustle-me-tustle with her stiff silk dress, like the Silky that long used to haunt a lane near North Shields. But, strange to say, she sometimes took the form of a white rabbit, scampering about the Market place. Her ladyship, moreover, is not the only Darlington sprite associated with coffee. Many years ago a house in Tubwell Row was said to be sorely infested by the ghost of a grocer's apprentice, who kept grinding away continually at a coffee mill. But in this case the supernatural coffee grinder was resolved at length, like Mrs Radcliffe's romantic goblins in the Mysteries of Udolpho, into a simple natural cause, having been nothing more or less than the noise made by an ill-fitted door, the slightest opening of which hushed the noise.

CHAPTER VIII.

BELIEF REGARDING TREES AND PLANTS.

THE BUR TREE.

A branch of the common elder, bur tree, or bore tree, is supposed to possess great virtue in guarding the wearer against the malevolence of witches, fairies, and other "uncanny" people. Brockett says he remembers, when a boy, during a school vacation in the country, at the suggestion of his young companions, carrying it in his button-hole, with doubled thumb, when under the necessity of passing the residence of a poor decrepit old woman, who, though the most harmless creature alive, was strongly suspected of holding occasional converse with an evil spirit. Under this impression, the country people were always very reluctant to meet her. Some say the cross was made from the wood of the bore tree; others, equally worthy to be believed, that Judas hanged himself on it; but all "knowledgable persons" are agreed that the tree is obnoxious to witches, because their enemies use the green juice of its inner bark for anointing their eyes; and any baptised person whose eyes are touched with it can see what the witches are about, in any part of the world. Furthermore, if a man take an elder stick, and

cut it on both sides so as to preserve the joint, and put it in his pocket when he rides a journey, it will prevent his fretting or galling, let his horse go never so hard. Moreover, if you gently strike a horse that cannot stale, with a stick of this elder, and bind some of the leaves to his belly, it will make him stale presently. Sheep which have the rot will soon cure themselves if they can get at the bark and young shoots of the elder: and any tree or plant which is whipped with green elder branches will not be attacked by insects. In some districts the tree is known as the Bown-tree, which means the Sacred Tree.

BUMBLE-KITES.

The fruit of the blackberry bramble (*Rubus umbrosus* or *fruticosus*) is vulgarly known in this district by the name of bumble-kyte, from its being supposed to cause flatulency when eaten in too great a quantity. No knowledgeable boy will eat these berries after Michaelmas Day, because the arch-fiend is believed to ride along the hedges on the eve of that great festival and pollute everything that grows in them, except the sloes, by touching them with his club foot. The same notion prevails further north, where the bramble-berries are called lady's garter berries.

FERN SEED.

It was formerly supposed that "fern seed" was obtainable only at the exact hour of midnight, on the

eve of the day on which Saint John the Baptist was born; and people believed that if they gathered it at that particular time, it would endow them with the power of walking invisible. The right way to obtain it was to hold a plate under the plant, and let the seed fall into it of its own accord, for if was shaken off by the hand it lost its virtue. This belief was founded on the doctrine of signatures, according to which certain herbs were held to be specific remedies for particular diseases, because they bore upon them some impress of the morbose symptoms accompanying them. Thus the liver wort was supposed to be a sovereign remedy against the heat and inflammation of the liver, because it was shaped like that organ; the lungwort, from its spotted leaves, was a popular remedy for diseased lungs; the pilewort, on account of the small knobs on the roots, was administered in cases of hemorrhoids; the figwort, for a similar reason, in the disease called *ficus*. The seed of the fern, being on the back of the plant, and so small as to escape the sight of ordinary observers, was assumed to have the property of rendering those who tasted it, or carried it about their persons, invisible for the time.

THE DOCKEN.

There is a charm connected with the medicinal application of this plant, the common blunt-leaved dock. If a person be severely stung with a nettle, it is customary to collect a few dock leaves, to spit on them,

and then to rub the part affected, repeating the incantation, "In docken, out nettle," till the violent smarting and inflammation subside. This saying is at least as old as Chaucer's time, as he uses it proverbially —"nettle in, dock out," in his "Troilus and Cresseide."

HOUSE-LEEK OR SEN-GREEN.

Country people plant the house-leek or sen-green, locally termed "full" or "fullen," on the thatched roofs of their cottages, in order to preserve them from thunder and lightning, which, it is said, will never strike this evergreen herb.

COW GRASS.

The common purple clover (*Trifolium pratense*) is very good for cattle, but very noisome to witches. In the days when there was at least one noted witch in every hamlet, the leaf was commonly worn as a potent charm, being regarded as an obvious emblem of the Blessed Trinity. The belief in its magic virtue is not quite extinct even yet.

THE ROWAN TREE.

One saying is—

> If your whipstick's made of rowan
> You may ride your nag through any town.

Another—

> Woe to the lad
> Without a rowan tree gad.

The latter has fallen into disuse since the old fashioned twelve-oxen plough was laid aside. When

that cumbersome affair was at work, making those enormous S-shaped ridges of which are still seen the traces left in some outlying old grass fields, a gadman to take charge of the team was as necessary as a ploughman to take hold of the stilts, and his iron pointed instrument was made of a young mountain ash or rowan tree, which kept the witches away from making the cattle "camsteery." The following anti-witch rhyme was used in Teesdale some seventy or eighty years ago :—

> Black luggie, lammer bead,
> Rowan tree, and reid threed,
> Put the witches to their speed.

The black luggie was a small wooden dish, with only one handle, out of which children used to sup their porridge. It was made of bog oak—that is, oak dug out of a peat moss—and dyed through and through as black as ebony. Lammer beads were properly amber beads, the initial '*l* being merely the French article *l'*—the. They were worn as a preservative against a variety of diseases, particularly asthma, dropsy, and toothache. The rowan tree, so called from its berries closely resembling the "rowan" or roe of a fish, was also called witch-wood, witch-bane, quick-bane, quicken, wicken, wiggan, witchen, wiggy, &c. The right day to gather it on was the second of May, the day sacred to St. Athanasius, whose creed, still read in the Church, shows him to have been one of the boldest and most expert exorcists that ever drove a demon out of a place

where he had no right to be. If the twig was wanted to keep witches and boggleboes away from a house, it was customary to wind some dozens of yards of red thread round it, and place it visibly in the window. Sometimes householders preferred to stick it into the thatch, right above the door, so that it might disenchant everybody and everything that crossed the threshold. In Lancashire, wick means quick, alive, clearly pointing to the old superstition that the mountain ash was the tree with which our ancestors "quickened" their cattle to ensure them against the powers of witchcraft, the evil eye, and other occult influences. In other parts of England, the mountain ash is called the care tree, possibly on account of its supposed redemptional virtues; and it is said to be, or more probably once was, a favourite with rustics for cutting walking sticks from, through its reputed anti-witch properties. Turner, the father of English botany, derives the word Rowan from *rund*, incantation, because of the use made of the word in magical arts. Rudbeck mentions its sacred character among the northern Gothic tribes. They inscribed their laws upon its wood, an honour which it shared with the beech. In the olden time, in this part of the country, almost every mansion and outhouse was guarded with it in some shape. Usually, the dwelling house was secured with a rowan tree pin, that the evil thing might not cross the threshold. In addition to a piece in his pocket, the ploughman yoked

his oxen to a rowan tree bow, and with a whip attached to a rowan tree shaft, drove the incorrigible steer along the ridge. Moreover, the ox not unlikely had his horns decorated with red thread, amidst which pieces of rowan tree were inserted, or a portion of the wood hieroglyphed with quaint devices, and similarly garnished with threads, might peradventure be dangled at the tail. Thus fenced in person, home, and stall, with "rowan tree and red thread," the agricultural labourer bade defiance to sorcery and fiendish malice. But it was equally requisite to a prosperous voyage on the deep, and sailors to ensure no other hazards than those incidental to their profession, had over and above their cargo a store of this harm-expelling preservative on board their vessel. It is by no means a remote period since a withered successor of "Norna, the Reimkennar," tenanting a hut overlooking the steeps "where Orcas howls his wolfish mountains rounding," in plain prose, in the Orkneys, obtained a miserable livelihood, by vending winds and consecrated mountain-ash to credulous mariners!

CROPPING TREES.

If a fruit tree is cropped with a saw, it will die, and not spring afresh, as intended.

CHAPTER IX.

CONCERNING BEASTS.

PIGS AND PRIESTS.

When the men of Holy Island are going out to fish, they do not suffer any one to mention a pig or a priest. Our informant saith, he was threatened to be thrown overboard, as Jonah was of old, if he dared to go on with a story he had begun about a pig being able to see the wind. The men believed they would catch no fish if he did not hold his tongue, or that the boat would be swamped.

CATS.

It is a very unlucky thing to let a cat die in the house. Many a poor pet pussy has been carried out into the back yard, by a kind housewife in canny Sunderland, and deposited tenderly on a mat, or a piece of old blanket, to die.

MAY KITTENS.

It is unlucky to keep May kittens; they ought to be drowned.

TO MAKE A CAT STAY IN A HOUSE.

Grease its feet, or dip them in cream.

THE BRAWN OF BRANCEPATH.

"The Brawn of Brancepath," says Surtees, "was a formidable animal, which made its lair on Brandon

Hill, and walked the forest in ancient undisputed sovereignty from the Wear to the Gaunless. The marshy, and then woody vale, extending from Croxdale to Ferry-wood, was one of the brawn's favourite haunts, affording roots and mast, and the luxurious pleasure of volutation. Near Cleves-cross, Hodge of Ferry, after carefully marking the boar's track, dug a pit-fall, slightly covered with boughs and turf, and then tolling on his victim by some bait to the treacherous spot, stood armed with his good sword across the pit-fall.

"At once with hope and fear his heart rebounds!"

"At length the gallant brute came trotting on his onward path, and, seeing the passage barred, rushed headlong on the pit-fall. The story has nothing very improbable, and something like real evidence still exists. According to all tradition, the rustic champion of Cleves sleeps beneath a coffin-shaped stone in Merrington church-yard, rudely sculptured with the instruments of his victory, a sword and spade on each side of the cross."

RATS FORSEEING SHIPWRECK.

When the rats take it into their heads to leave an old ship, the likelihood is that she will founder next voyage, and drown all hands.

THE DUN COW.

The precise spot designed for the permanent residence of the mortal remains of the blessed St. Cuthbert was indicated to the monks of Lindisfarne on their return

from their flight to Ripon, in the manner following :— "Four months after their arrival at Ripon," says Patrick Sanderson, in his History of the Abbey and Cathedral Church of Durham, "the Danish War ceased, and they intended to bring him (St. Cuthbert) again to Chester-le-Street; and coming with him on the east side of Durham, to a place called Warden-law, they could not with all their force remove his body further, for it seemed fastened to the ground; which strange and unforseen accident produced great astonishment in the hearts of the bishops, the monks, and their associates; whereupon they fasted and prayed three days with great devotion, to know, by invitation from God, what to do with the said body; which was soon granted to them, it being revealed to Eadmer, a virtuous man, that he should be carried to Dunholme, where he was to be received to a place of rest. They were again in great distress, in not knowing where Dunholme lay; but as they proceeded, a woman wanting her cow, called aloud to her companion, to know if she had seen her Who? answered, she was in Dunholme. This was an happy and heavenly sound to the distressed monks, who thereby had intelligence that their journey's end was at hand, and the saint's body near its resting-place; therefore with great joy they arrived with his body at Dunholme, in the year 997." Hence the effigies of the dun cow in the west corner tower of the east transept of the cathedral. This legend, how-

ever, is not mentioned by Simeon of Durham or any other old historian, and rests wholly on the sculpture. Of the other innumerable legends relating to St. Cuthbert we need take no notice here. We do not remember that any of them now circulate generally among the people, all being confined to books and bookmen. In the same category we may place the legends about St. Godric, the Anchorite, who made Finchale famous.

WHY ASSES HAVE LONG EARS.

Considering how intimately the County Palatine has been connected with the Church, for upwards of a thousand years, it is remarkable that so few of our local superstitions have a direct and immediate Scriptural origin. Here is one instance, however. On the evening of the day on which Noah had got all the other animals safe into the ark, the ass, even then the most stupid beast in creation, still remained outside, and by no coaxing or beating, threat or blandishment, could the patriarch get old Jack and his mate Jenny to walk the plank into his caravan. So he laid hold of them by the ears, and pulled them in by main force. Ever since then the ass has had long ears.

THE CROSS ON THE ASS'S BACK.

The ass has the mark of a cross made by a black list down its back, and another at right angles from its shoulders. Some say this was given to the poor

drudge to commemorate its having had the honour to bear the Saviour on its back, on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Others account for the transverse mark by saying it is that which Balaam made when he struck it in anger because it would not pass the angel, and jammed his foot against the wall.

CURE FOR THE MURRAIN.

During the last century, at a time when the murrain was prevalent amongst cattle, the people in several places assembled and worked for need-fire, wherewith to kindle bonfires, into the smoke of which the beasts were driven, as a certain preventative, if not cure. The mystic fire was produced by the violent and continuous friction of two pieces of wood, say a wooden axle in the nave of a waggon wheel; and when it was to be got, all the fires in the houses near had to be previously put out; otherwise it had no virtue. The swine were driven through first, and lastly the horses, or *vice versa*.

HOW TO GET CALVES REARED.

A few years ago, Mr G. W——, a gentleman of the city of Durham, during an excursion of a few miles into the country, observed a sort of rigging attached to the chimney of a farm house well known to him, and asked what it meant. The good wife told him that they had experienced great difficulty that year in rearing their calves, for the poor little creatures all died off; so they had taken the leg and thigh of one of the dead calves,

and hung it up in a chimney by a rope ; and since that day they had not lost another calf.

SALAMANDERS.

A wide-spread popular belief attributes to long-continued flame the power of generating a dragon-like monster, the Salamander. The name, which comes to us from the primeval seat of the Aryan race in Central Asia, and which is found in Sanskrit in the form of Salamandala, has been adopted by all the European nations of Greek, Latin, and Teutonic origin, but not by the Celts. It was long a habit with glass-workers to extinguish their furnaces once in seven years, to avoid, as they believed, the generation of a salamander. We used to be told terrible stories, in our childhood, as to what calamities would be sure to happen if such a pestiferous creature was allowed to be bred anywhere.

THE POLLARD BRAWN.

Pollard's Lands is a small township on the east side of the Gaunless, the greater portion of which now forms a part of the town of Bishop Auckland. According to the most trustworthy tradition, Pollard, of Pollard Hall, a champion knight, for slaying a wild boar there, had as much land granted to him by one of the bishops, as he could ride round while the grantor dined, and he made such good use of whip and spur as to encompass a considerable tract of fertile ground. The wild boar or brawn has been transmogrified in the course of time

into a venomous serpent, like that of Sockburn; and the estate is held by a tenure similar to that of the latter estate.

HOWLING DOGS.

When any person is lying ill in a house, and a dog sits down on its haunches before the window, in the dead of night, and lifts up its head and howls, it is a sure presage of that person's speedy death.

COWS MILKED BY HEDGEHOGS.

Brockett says, "ignorant persons who attend to the keeping of cattle still believe in that very ancient prejudice of the hedgehog's drawing milk from the udders of resting cows during the night, thus disappointing the milkmaid of the expected repletion of her morning pail." "The smallness of its mouth," he adds, "renders such an accusation thoroughly absurd; but to reason with such people is like talking of the blessing of light to those who have the misfortune to be born blind."

THE SHREW MOUSE.

It is supposed that the shrew mouse, which in reality is perfectly harmless, is of so baneful and deleterious a nature, that wherever it creeps over a beast, be it cow, horse, or sheep, the suffering animal is afflicted with cruel anguish, and threatened with the loss of the use of the limb. Against this accident, to which they were continually liable, our provident ancestors always kept

a shrew-ash at hand, which, when once medicated, would maintain its virtue for ever. Into the body of the tree a deep hole was bored with an auger, and one of the pestilent little vermin was thrust into it alive, and plugged in securely, there to die of hunger. A twig or branch of the tree was then drawn several times across the afflicted beast's back, in order to expel the venom; and as soon as the poor devoted mouse had yielded its life up to famine, the beast would most certainly recover. If an ash tree was not ready at hand, a witch-elm, or witch-hazel, would do.

CHAPTER X.

CONCERNING BIRDS.

THE YELLOW HAMMER.

The yellow hammer, yellow teedring, or yellow bunting (Northumbrian, yellow yowley; Scotch, yellow yorling; *Emberiza citrinella*) is looked upon by the juvenile population of North Durham, as well as on the further side of the Tweed, as a confederate with old Nick. It is commonly called by them "the devil's bird," and a superstitious dislike of it extends as far south as the Tyne, and perhaps the Tees. Every time the boys see the poor bird they shout :—

Half a paddock, half a toad,
Horrid yellow yorling!
Drinks a drop of the de'il's blood
Every Monday morning!

This legend of its taste for blood, drawn from the veins of the Evil One, has most likely risen from the fact of the bird's breast being mottled with red, as if blood-sprinkled.

MAGPIES.

The magpie is deemed to be a very unlucky bird.

One's joy, twee's grief;
Three's a marriage, fower's deeth.

Or, as others recite the rhyme :—

One is sorrow, two mirth,
Three a wedding, four a birth,
Five heaven, six hell,
Seven, the de'il's ain sell.

To make a cross in the air, or take off the hat, is said to be not an uncommon practice on seeing a magpie ; this is done to avert ill luck. A north-country servant thus accounted for the unluckiness of the "pyet" to her master, the Rev. H. Humble. "It was," the girl said, "the only bird which did not go into the ark with Noah ; it liked better to sit outside, jabbering over the drowned world."

WHEN A SNOW STORM COMES ON.

The folk i' the east are plottin' their geese,
An' sendin' all their feathers tiv us !

At Shields, before the days of the police, the boys used to make a procession through the streets, on the occasion of the first fall of snow in the season, shouting :—

Jenny Cut-throater, plot yer geese !
Caud days an' winter neets !

THE SNIPE'S SONG.

Bideake Bleary, bideake bleary !
Gie the lads what ye like, I sit easy.

PIGEONS' FEATHERS.

It is a common superstition in the North of England that pigeons' feathers, put in a bed, bolster or pillow, prevent a dying person from giving up the ghost.

Cooks, therefore, always burn them, and never mix them with other feathers. It has frequently been known, when a poor dying creature continued a long time in mortal agony, that the attendants adopted the expedient of emptying the bed of its feathers, so as to get rid of any pigeon ones, and substitute others.

ROOKS.

When rooks desert a rookery it portends the downfall of the family on whose property it is. On the other hand, when rooks haunt a town or village, it indicates that the death-rate either is or shortly will be inordinately high; and if they feed in the streets, it shews that a storm is near at hand. Both the latter auguries, at least, seem to be founded on a real basis. In the one case, the birds come to act as scavengers; in the other, premonition of hard weather drives them so near human dwellings, where there is generally some off-fall to pick up.

SWALLOWS.

It is a very good omen for swallows to take possession of a place, and build their nests around it, while it is unpropitious for them to forsake a place which they have once tenanted. To pull down a swallow's nest is almost as sacrilegious an act as to break into a church or chapel. We have known farmers who would as soon have set fire to their steadings as do or sanction such an act. We knew one case where there were half-a-dozen

nests built outside each window, in the upper story of a large farm house, besides a great number stuck under the eaves of the roof; and there they remained year after year, during a lease of twenty-one years, to be occupied each summer by their old tenants, on their return from Africa, not one of them being allowed to be pulled down by the maids, though they protested that the swallows were "dirty beasts," who even had bugs among their feathers, and that they could not get the windows cleaned for them. The only exception was when a pair of impudent sparrows thought fit to take possession of a nest—a fact which was soon made known by the long straws sticking untidily out of it. In case of such usurpation, the prong of a hay fork, the handle of a rake, or a besom shank, was unscrupulously used to effect a clearance. But the nests were never touched otherwise, and they were built in tiers of five or six, attached to each other, like the "lands" in old houses in Edinburgh.

ROBIN REDBREAST AND KITTY WREN.

The robin and the wren
Are God Almighty's cock and hen;
Him that harries their nest,
Never shall his soul have rest.

This rhyme is current among our honest kindly country people, who regard both these birds with particular favour. Sympathy with the redbreast is expressed in the following stanza:—

The north wind will blow,
And we shall have snow,
And what will the robin do then, poor thing?
He'll fly to the barn
And keep himself warm,
And hide his head under his wing, poor thing.

COCK FIGHTING.

Cock fighting was once a favourite amusement all over the country, and particularly in the pit districts. In some places, the cockpit was the village school room, and the master was the comptroller and director of the sport. The "fugies," that is to say, such cowardly cocks as tried to run and avoid fighting, were deemed his perquisite. In Bishopwearmouth, there was a cockpit in Low-row, behind some old cottages next the burn. What is done in this way now is only in out-of-the-way places, in public-house yards, and such like clandestine haunts, as much as possible impervious to the police. The barbarous custom of throwing at a cock, fully described by Brand and Hone, as practised all over Britain, has long since fallen out of use.

RIDING AT THE GOOSE.

It was once no unusual diversion in country towns, to suspend a live goose, whose neck had been well greased, by the legs, to the middle of a cord fastened to two trees or high posts, so as to let the poor bird swing at the distance of between three and four yards from the ground; and then for a number of men on horse-back riding full speed to attempt to pull off the head,

which if one of them managed to do, he won the goose for his dexterity. Thanks to the march of intellect, this custom has fallen into disuetude. It was kept up, however, by the Honourable Society of Whipmen, in Kelso, in Roxburghshire, till about half a century since.

CROWING HENS.

Whistling women and crowing hens are proverbially "not canny." An acquaintance of ours tells us he once knew a woman who would instantly draw the neck of one of her hens, if she heard poor Partlet crow.

ROBIN'S NESTS.

A correspondent, when walking out to Silksworth, the other day, fell in with a little boy, with whom he entered into conversation. "Have you seen any bird's nests yet this year?" he asked, "No," was the reply, "I haven't." And then, after a pause, "But I don't like to rob a bird's nest, I like better to hear them sing." "I am glad to hear you say that," answered the gentleman. "It's cruel thing to deprive the poor birds of their young." "Aye," returned the boy, "and it's dangerous, particularly if it's a robin. If one robs one of their nests, one's sure to get either killed or lamed. There is a lad I know that works down the pit; he robbed a robin's nest on the Sunday, and the very first thing on the Tuesday morning a sad accident happened him. He had not been long at work before he got his thigh broken. Now, I had worked in the same place for six months, and never happened a thing."

A PULLET'S FIRST EGG.

Take a pullet's first egg, break it up into a tumbler glass, and examine it carefully. The young woman who does so will see in it her future husband, working at his trade; for instance, if a mason, she will see him using the ladder, trowel, hammer, &c.; if a sailor, climbing up the masts of a ship; and so on.

UNTIMELY COCK-CROWING.

If the cock crow in the afternoon, it is considered a very bad sign. "My stepmother's mother," says a correspondent, "was a canny old body. One Saturday afternoon, when I was a lad, and alone with her in the house, we heard the cock crow about four o'clock. 'I don't like that,' she said. 'Don't you, granny? Why so?' said I. 'It's a hundred to one,' was the answer, 'but some of us will be gone before next week.' On the Monday following, while she was binding a shoe, her daughter's husband being a shoemaker, she suddenly became as it were blind and stupid, and began groping about for something she thought she had lost. 'What are you seeking?' she was asked, 'The shoe,' said she. 'Why, dear me, granny, you have it in your hands.' She had been struck with her mortal illness, went off to bed, and before the end of the week she was dead."

THE PROUD PEACOCK.

The peacock has a very clumsy foot for such a grand bird. Everybody knows he is as proud as his tail is

gorgeous. The old women say he looks at his feet only once a year, and having done so, and seeing they are so ugly, he never struts so proudly again that season. So they call out to him—"Look at your feet and your feathers will fall."

RAIN BIRDS.

The wood-pecker is commonly known as the rain-bird, because it prognosticates rain, by its loud and familiar cry, frequently repeated. The plover is another rain-bird, and derives its name from the Latin *pluvia*, rain. The peacock gives the same indications of an approaching change of weather. Several species of small birds are confounded under the not over-complimentary title of "dirt birds," because they sing on the approach of rain.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCERNING FISHES, INSECTS, &c.

THE SPANKER EEL.

The spanker-eel, called in parts further to the North the lamper-eel, and sometimes the ramper-eel, is the common lamprey, so much esteemed in the South. It is held in great abhorrence in this part of the country, by boys at least. The seven roundish gill-orifices on each side are mistaken for eyes, as is also the case in other countries. Thus the German, Swedish, Danish, and Dutch names of the creature all imply that it has nine eyes (Neunauge, Nejenoegon, Negenoegen, Negenoogen.) If it is supposed that there is a spanker or ramper-eel in any pool in a Border river, he would be a bold lad that would venture in to it to bathe. For the monster, as it is deemed, lays hold of bathers and sucks the blood out of them. It is true that it lives by sucking the blood of fishes, the skins of which the hard teeth, or tooth-like tubercles, readily pierce, and which are unable to shake it off.

THE HADDOCK.

The large black spot on each side of the haddock behind the gills, is the impression St. Peter left with his finger and thumb when he took, by Christ's orders,

the tribute money out of the mouth of a fish of this species. As there are now no haddocks in the Sea of Galilee, captious critics doubt this statement.

EATING A RED HERRING WHOLE.

When a young woman wishes to know what trade or occupation her future husband is to be of, she takes a red herring, and eats it whole, head, tail, fins, and all; and then she goes off to bed in the dark, without speaking a word. If she utter a single sound by the way, the spell is broken. So it is common to lay all sorts of impediments in her road, so as to provoke her to speak, or utter some sudden exclamation. If she passes the ordeal successfully, as soon as she falls asleep she dreams of the sweetheart whom she is to make a happy man of.

BURNING FISH BONES.

No knowledgeable person in Holy Island will burn a fish-bone, for they have a legend of a fish that jumped out of the water and said, "Boil my flesh! Roast my flesh! But do not burn my bones!" So they bury them, or otherwise get rid of them, but never burn them.

HORSE-HAIRS TURNING INTO EELS.

It is a common notion all over the North Country, from the Yorkshire Wolds to the Lammermoors at least, that a horse-hair kept in water will in time turn into an eel. Many a time have I tried the experiment, in a burn which ran past the home of my youth. It is

certain that the horse-hairs, after they had been a week or ten days in the water, seemed to possess a sort of sensient life, curling up at the ends when lifted out, very much after the manner of eels, and being besides visibly thickened throughout their whole length. There was never any further approach, however, to the anguilliform shape or nature. The fact is, the idea has arisen from the sudden appearance, after rain, of long hair-like worms in the deep holes left in clayey ground by horses-hoofs. There having been no trace of such creatures before they were filled with rain-water, observant youths have not unnaturally fancied them to be hairs, dropped from the horses' mane and tail, in course of transition into eels. Indeed, young eels, at a certain stage of their existence, so closely resemble these worms, that it is not astonishing that the two sorts of creatures, though generically different, have been confounded by the vulgar.

SPIDERS.

It is very unlucky to kill a spider. On the other hand, if a spider happens to get upon your clothes, it is lucky to let it crawl all over you and get away safe. Even to shake it off is a mistake.

THE FLYING ADDER.

There is no living creature which children in the country dread more than the large dragon fly, which is chiefly seen about ugly moss haggs, pools, and "stanks."

It is supposed to carry a sting, which, if not deadly, is exceedingly painful. It is accordingly called the flying adder, or "stangin ether," and I have known boys, not otherwise at all cowardly, take to their heels and run off as fast as they could, on seeing one of these gorgeously tinted insects.

HAIRY HUBERT.

If you throw a hairy worm, in the North called Hairy Hubert, over your head, and take care not to look to see where it alights, you are sure to get something new before long.

A MONSTROUS SERPENT.

In St. Nicholas' Register, Durham, is the following:— "1568, Mdm. that a certain Italian brought into the cittie of Durham, the 11th day of June, in the yeare above sayd, a very great strange and monstrous serpent, in length sixteen feet, in quantitie and dimensions greater than a great horse; which was taken and killed by speciall pollicie in Æthiopia, within the Turkes dominions. But before it was killed, it had devoured (as is credibly thought) more than 1000 persons, and destroyed a whole countrey."

A PERTINACIOUS SERPENT.

During the episcopate of Egelwin, which lasted from 1056 to 1071, there was a certain ill-conducted individual lived near Durham, whose name was Osulf. One day, on awaking from a sleep which he had been

enjoying in the fields, he discovered that a serpent had twisted itself round his neck. He seized it with his hand, and dashed it to the ground; but it leaped up and wound itself round his neck a second time. Once more did he throw it to the earth, but he was instantaneously attacked by it exactly in the same manner as before. It mattered not whether he threw the snake into the fire or on the ground, it always regained its hold round his neck; how he knew not. Sometimes he took a sword and cut it into pieces, but forthwith the self-same serpent was twisting round his neck once more. At first it had been a very little one, but it gradually grew larger and larger. He experienced no harm from its venom, however. And whenever he entered that church, which was rendered illustrious by the presence of St. Cuthbert's body, the serpent left him at the very moment when he crossed the threshold, nor did it presume to return so long as he remained within the sacred fabric. But whenever he went out it twisted itself once more closely round his neck. After he had endured this annoyance for some considerable period, he at last fell upon a plan for releasing himself. For three successive days and nights he remained within the church at prayer, and when he came out he was thenceforth unmolested.

TOAD-BIT.

When cattle exhibit certain symptoms of illness, they are vulgarly supposed to have been smitten by a toad—

that harmless and really useful creature, which suffers so dreadfully in common estimation, on account of its dirty-looking, rough, warty-skin, and slovenly crawling gait, and in spite of its bright and beautiful eyes. The idea may be said to be universal that the toad is very "smittle," in plain English, venomous. The beast that a toad is falsely accused of having bitten or smitten, must be passed in due form through the need-fire, in order to expel the poison.

SPANGHEWING THE TOAD.

The toad as well as the ask, eft, or newt, is an object of abhorrence to boys in general. Even to touch it with the naked hand is supposed to venom the part, if not to endanger life. The toad is, moreover, thought to be a witch, having the power of the evil eye. And so it is a common practice to *spanghew* it, which is done by lifting it with a pair of tongs, or between two sticks, and laying it on one end of a plank or bar, resting on a large stone, a cart tram, or any convenient fulcrum, and then, with a club, striking the unsupported end with the utmost force. This throws the poor creature high up into the air, and when it falls to the ground with a "soss," it is smashed to a jelly.

TELLING THE BEES.

If there is anything particular going on in the house, the bees ought to be told. They will be very much offended if they are not informed in time, particularly

when there is sickness, or a death. Bees never thrive in a family where there is quarrelling; and no bargain regarding bees will turn out lucky when there are any cross words about it.

TREATING THE BEES.

When the master or mistress of the house dies, the bees ought to get a bit of the best of everything that is at the funeral feast—cakes, sugar, spirits, wine, &c. The hives should likewise be shifted to a new place, or at least turned round, to prevent all the bees dying, as they otherwise would.

THE BEES HOLDING A COUNCIL.

The bees are said to take council together before they swarm. Country people will tell you they have often heard them talking to one another. One party will say, "Out! out!" while another says, "Wait! wait!" and the matter is supposed to be settled by a majority of votes. When the swarm is in the air, it is supposed they can be made to alight by making a tinkling noise with an iron spoon on the bottom of a kettle or frying-pan.

BEES THAT KNEW THIER RIGHT OWNER.

Some time back, we cannot tell how far, at Sherburn, "hard by Durham," a swarm of bees from a hive belonging to a poor man settled in the garden of a rich neighbour, who challenged it as his own. The poor man, appealing to the justice of Heaven, prayed that it

might immediately be made to appear to whom the swarm of right belonged. His prayer was answered. The swarm rose from the place where they had settled down, followed the poor man, hung upon his beard, and in this position suffered themselves to be carried back to the hive which he had prepared for them.

COCKROACHES.

Cockroaches are fancied to bring good luck to a house. Mrs Marshall, of Westoe, got a breed on purpose, and in a short time her house was over-run by them. Many houses in Shields are full of cockroaches, especially in cupboards near ovens. Some say they were originally brought to this part of the country amongst ballast.

CUCKOO SPIT.

A white frothy matter, very like spittle, seen on certain plants in the spring, about the time when the cuckoo makes its appearance, is supposed to be the spittle of that bird. Really, however, it is deposited by the female grasshopper as a place in which to lay her eggs.

THE DEATH WATCH.

The poor little worm, maggot, or beetle, called the death watch, on account of its ticking having been thought to forebode death in a family, is likely long to keep its evil reputation, in spite of the spread of knowledge. I confess to having been several times startled out of a pleasant reverie by its eerie tick.

LICE ON CLEANLY PEOPLE.

The late Barbara Neil, of Church Street, Sunderland, told me in March, 1865, that she knew her brother had been drowned, because she had found two lice on her baby linen. She had got them off nobody, she said, because she never washed her lodgers' clothes along with her own. She had always had lice on her before any of her relations died. Her mother swarmed with lice before her demise. Lice denote sickness or death, when they come upon cleanly people.

CHAPTER XII.

LOCAL TRAGEDIES.

THE STRICKEN TRAVELLER.

In the Legendary Division of Richardson's Table Book, Mr William Pattison tells the story of a traveller, who had been collecting accounts at Alston, Nenthead, and Allendale, and who, on his way over the moors into Teesdale, in charge of a large sum of money, disappeared at a lone place called Park-house pasture, and never was heard of more. Suspicion of having murdered him rested upon two or three parties, one of whom is stated to have been seen to force a horse down an old pit which had long lain unworked. These men, we are told, became suddenly rich, which was generally attributed to the plunder of the luckless stranger. Searching inquiries were made by the friends of the deceased without the slightest success. But not many years ago, when the roads were altered, in cutting through a certain field, the skeleton of a man was found buried in an upright position. Straightway the story of the Stricken Traveller was revived. "Such is the substance of a tale long a fireside talk of the peasantry of this secluded vale; and at the dead of night a phantom horse with a bleeding rider, careering over the

field and disappearing at the old quarry where the headless rider was found, is sufficient to deter the timid from using the road after nightfall, and enough to chill the blood of the listeners who encircle the blazing hearth."

THE DEAD MAN'S HAND.

The hand of a man who has been hanged on a gibbet, —prepared in a manner which need not be here particularised, but which those who would like to know it will find in Ellis's Notes to Brand's Antiquities, under the head of "Physical Charms,"—is said to possess the property of depriving those to whom it is presented of all power of motion. It has been used by midnight thieves and robbers on that account, in the idea that it would enable them to rifle a dwelling house with impunity. A story is told of its having been once thus employed at the Old Spital Inn, in High Spital, on Bowes Moor, the place where the mail coach used to change horses, in crossing Stainmore from Barnard Castle to Brough. Mr Henderson tells the story at some length. He says it was related to his informant, Mr Charles Wastell, in the spring of 1861, by an old woman named Bella Parkin.

THE STAINDROP, BARNARD CASTLE, AND BEDLINGTON TRAGEDIES.

Three melancholy tales have been enshrined in verse, by anonymous, and, it must be confessed, wretched

ballad-makers, connected with Staindrop, Barnard Castle, and Bedlington respectively. The first relates to a murder committed by a man named Vert, upon a young woman who was pregnant by him. The villain laid her dead body under some bushes, in a lonely place where there seemed little or no chance of its being discovered; but a dog scenting out the hideous mass of corruption, led the neighbours to the spot. The murderer, horror-struck, confessed his guilt, was tried, executed, and hung in chains. The "Barnard Castle Tragedy" relates to the miller's sister at Barnard Castle Bridge-end, a girl named Betty Howson, who was courted by one John Atkinson, of Morton, near Appleby, and was caught fast by him "in Cupid's snare," he having a most "deluding tongue." Atkinson was particularly fond of his glass, and, according to all accounts, "of everything nice," like that notorious Welshman, David Price, immortalised in the "Milk-maid's Story" in the "Ingoldsby Legends." And so, one night, while carousing with his boon companion, Tom Skelton, ostler at the King's Arms, to whom he was in the habit of telling all his secrets, he revealed to him that he had got a "new love," who had plenty of money, and would stand treat, or, as he expressed it, keep the pot full. Her name was Bett Hardy, and she verified Atkinson's words, by pawning her Sunday smock to defray their reckoning, when drinking about at different public-houses, where she went and joined

them. Skelton forthwith married the couple, that is, declared them man and wife, to save his friend the priest's fee, which, as he observed, was large. The false swain next day acquainted poor Betty with the fact that he was a married man ; but she, of course, did not believe him. Then the ballad goes on to tell how she pined away, and died through the cruelty of her false swain. In the Bedlington Tragedy, a fair young woman, "with ruby lips and auburn hair," and "heir to store of wealth," is said to have been courted by a "famous youth, for generous acts and constant truth," but, alas, penniless. The girl's parents, of course, objected to their being joined in wedlock, and sent their daughter off to an uncle's at Stokesley, in Cleveland. The young man thereupon sickened sore and died heart-broken, "which pleased her parents' greedy pride." The father resolved to go off to Stokesley the day after the funeral, to bring his daughter home, meaning now to marry her to a richer suitor. But the dead lover was beforehand with him. James (it appears that was his name) rose incontinently out of his grave, mounted the old gentleman's horse which stood ready saddled, galloped off to Staindrop, and brought home his beloved one behind him on a pillion, greatly to the astonishment, doubtless, of the old people. What the finale of the story is, nobody knows, for the ballad narrating it is a fragment.

THE HARTLEPOOL TRAGEDY.

The Maiden Bower at Hartlepool, a yawning space between a detached rock and the main land, is associated in popular tradition with the murder, in 1727, of Mary Fawding, who was thrown over the precipice by William Stephenson, a merchant of Northallerton (afterwards executed), by whom she was pregnant. Hence arose a ballad, "The Hartlepool Tragedy," reprinted by Mr. Ord, of Hartlepool, twenty or thirty years ago.

ANDREW MILLS' STOB.

In the month of January, 1782-3, John Brass, Jane Brass, and Elizabeth Brass, the son and daughters of John Brass, of Ferryhill, were all murdered in their father's house by his servant, a weak-minded young man of 18 or 19 years of age, named Andrew Mills. The wretched murderer was tried and found guilty, and his body, after the execution, was hung in chains on a common by the road-side, in full view of the scene of his horrid and seemingly unprovoked crime. The universal tradition is, that he was gibbeted alive, with a penny loaf suspended on a string, close to his face, so as cruelly to tantalise him in vainly trying to bite it, till he at length died of hunger and thirst. A portion of the gibbet, or, as it was called, Andrew Mills' Stob, remained till about fifty years ago, but the spot was then enclosed and ploughed, and the last vestige removed. Like other murderers' gibbets, the wood was supposed to possess peculiar properties, in removing ague, toothache, headache, &c.

SPIRITUALISM IN WILLIAM II.'S TIME.

Under the episcopate of William de Carelipho, the friend of Robert Earl of Normandy, there was one of the bishop's knights, named Boso, who, having been attacked with sickness, appeared to be at his last gasp. For there was only the slightest possible breathing from his mouth and nostrils during three days in which he lay senseless, and like a dead man removed from the world. But, to the surprise of all, he "returned to himself" upon the third day, when he confessed to Prior Turgot that he had been carried away in vision to various places, of which some were terrible and some were pleasant, and there he saw all the monks of Durham who had been unfaithful to their vows punished most severely, and also a number of women—the wives of priests—who were having smart chastisement administered to them by horrible fiends, and awaiting the eternal sentence of condemnation in hell.

THE GRAVE OF A SUICIDE.

In Mile End Road, South Shields, at the corner of a garden wall, on the left hand side going northward, just adjoining Fairless's old ballast way, lies the body of a suicide, with a stake driven through it. It is, I believe, that of a poor baker, who put an end to his existence seventy or eighty years ago, and who was buried in this frightful manner, at midnight, in unconsecrated ground. The top of the stake used to

rise a foot or two above the ground within the last thirty years, and boys used to amuse themselves by standing with one foot upon it. The practice of driving a stake through the body of a suicide originated in the days when a belief in vampires prevailed. It was done to prevent the fiend from entering into the dead carcase, and reanimating it.

THE NORTH SIDE OF THE CHURCH.

The north side of the church-garth is supposed to be not quite so holy as the more sunny sides; and, for that reason, is usually reserved for the place of interment of such as come to some untimely end, including persons excommunicated, executed, suicides, and still-born infants. On entering some country churchyard, you will see a number of little tiny, undistinguished wholly neglected mounds on the north side of the church, and on inquiring who they are whose dust reposes beneath, you will be told they are unbaptised children. The south and east sides of the sacred edifice are most preferred by the vulgar to bury their dead in. The west side is in less repute; and the north avoided. Old graveyards are consequently crowded on the right side, but very seldom on the wrong one.

THE SUNDERLAND USURER PUNISHED.

In the first volume of Richardson's excellent work is a reprint from a curious tract, without date, intituled

"The Wretched Miser, or God's revenge against the Oppressor; remarquable in a most miraculous punishment inflicted on the person of a notorious usurer, in Sunderland, near Newcastle, who, having unjustly taken away two kine from a poor widow, put them among twenty of his own, which were all struck by the hand of heaven, and found dead the next morning, the widow's kine only escaping; which sad judgment when the miser had seen, he fell a-cursing, blaspheming, and deriding God's justice in such words as are not fit to be named amongst Christians. Thereupon he immediately sunk into the ground above the waist, and there continually barketh and howleth like a dog day and night, still beckoning with his hand for assistance, to the great terrour and amazement of all that see or hear him."

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCERNING ST. CUTHBERT.

HOW ST. CUTHBERT GOT HIS PATRIMONY.

During the time that the uncorrupted body of the most blessed father Cuthbert lay at Chester-le-Street, then called Cuncaestre, the Saint appeared in a vision to Bishop Eardulf, and spoke to him thus: "Tell the king that he must give to me, and to those who minister in my church, the whole of the district lying between the Wear and the Tyne, to be held in perpetuity, that it may be the means of providing them with the necessaries of life, and secure them against want. Moreover, command the king to appoint that my church shall become a safe place of refuge for fugitives, so that any one who flees to my body, for what cause soever, shall have protection there for thirty-seven days; and that the asylum shall not be violated upon any pretence whatever." Not only did the king of Northumbria, whose name was Guthred, son of Hardacnut the Dane, who had been raised from the condition of a slave and invested with the ensign of royalty, in implicit obedience to another nocturnal vision, and who, grateful to his sainted patron, constantly and faithfully served him all

his days,—not only, we say, did he give heed to the special direction given him by "that trustworthy messenger the abbot," to make over all that land to the church, but moreover he contributed to it liberally in other ways, bestowing honour and giving presents. Besides this, Ælfred, king of the West Saxons, better known as Alfred the Great, having regained the possession of his kingdom "through the assistance of the merits of St. Cuthbert," solemnly sanctioned this transfer of land, publishing the fact to all the people, and decreeing that the settlement should be observed for ever. Still further, "The whole army, not only of the English but of the Danes also, agreed thereto, and approved of the same." "It was determined," says the Church historian, "that persons presuming in any manner to violate the protection which the Saint had thus established, should be fined by a payment of money. Moreover, as the land which he had demanded, situate between the two rivers, was immediately conveyed to him,—it was resolved by the assent of the whole people, that if any one gave land to St. Cuthbert, or if any land was purchased with his money, from that time no one should presume to exercise over it any right or custom; but that the church alone should possess in perpetuity unbroken quiet and liberty therein, together with all the customs; and (to use the common terms), with sac and socne, and infangentheof. The universal suffrage condemned by a sentence of anathema those persons,

whoever they might be, who presumed in any manner to attempt to set aside those laws and statutes, and consign them to the perpetual punishment of the flames of hell, unless they made satisfaction.

HOW A SACRILEGEOUS VARLET WAS PUNISHED.

During the episcopate of Egelwin, a man, who came with his master to the solemn feast of St. Cuthbert at Durham, noticed the mass of coin that had accumulated upon the holy confessor's sepulchre, by the offerings of his visitors, and determined to plunder it. So, says Simeon of Durham, he drew near, and for the purpose of deceiving the people who were standing round, he pretended to kiss the sacred marble; but in doing this he at the same time carried off four or five pennies in his mouth. Each penny being twenty-four grains troy of silver, would have bought perhaps fifty times as much market stuff as a penny does now. And so, if he could have carried his booty quietly off, he would have been a comparatively rich churl. But immediately the inside of his mouth began to feel as if on fire. He would gladly have spat out the pieces of money, but he could not do so much as even open his lips. Tortured with intolerable agonies, he ran through the church hither and thither like a dumb man; terrifying all the people; for they thought he had gone mad. At last he broke out of the church, rushing through the crowd, and dashed from one spot to another without stopping, giving all to

understand by painful signs and gestures the extremity of his sufferings. At length, however, he became more tranquil, and hastily returned to the sepulchre, and kneeling down, from the depth of his heart he asked for pardon from the saint, and offered all that he possessed. Having made this offering he placed it upon the altar, and kissed it; and as he kissed the altar, the pieces of money fell out of his mouth upon the sepulchre.

A MIRACULOUS EBB AND FLOW OF THE TIDE.

The miracle vouchsafed to Moses and the Israelites in their passage through the Serbonian Bog, mistranslated the Red Sea, was repeated, according to Simeon of Durham, in the year of our Lord 1068, when Agelwin, Bishop of Durham, and the chief of the people,—fearing lest, on account of the slaughter of Earl Robert Cumin and other Normans at York, the sword of William the Conqueror should include equally the innocent and the guilty in indiscriminate slaughter—with one consent betook themselves to flight, on Friday the third of the ides of December, carrying with them the uncorrupted body of the holy father Cuthbert. They made their first stay at Jarrow, their second at Bedlington, the third at Tugall, and the fourth at Holy Island. "But about evening," says Simeon, "when the full tide would prevent travellers from crossing over, behold by its sudden recess it left the approach clear for them; so that neither when they hurried did the waves of the sea linger behind them,

nor when they delayed did they press upon them. But when they reached the land, lo! the sea coming up covered the whole sands as before."

AN ENTIRE ARMY SWALLOWED UP.

Some time towards the close of the ninth century, while King Guthred, the Anglo-Dane, wielded the sceptre of Northumberland, the Scots collected a numerous army and invaded his dominions. Among their other deeds of cruelty, says Simeon, they plundered the monastery of Lindisfarne. Guthred marched against them, waving the banner of St. Cuthbert, and when he was just on the point of engaging in battle with them, "immediately the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up alive, herein repeating the ancient miracle in the matter of Dathan and Abiram."

AN INCOMBUSTIBLE HUMAN HAIR.

Ælfrid, the priest, who was honoured to be the man to whom Durham was indebted for the possession of the sacred relics of Balfer and Bilfrid, the anchorites—Acca and Alchmund, bishops of Hexham—Oswin, King of Northumberland—the venerable abbesses Ebba and Æthelgitha—St. Boisil, the master of St. Cuthbert—the doctor Bede (now known as "the Venerable"), and other illustrious North country saints, had in his repository one of St. Cuthbert's Hairs, which he frequently exhibited to those friends who visited him. When the holy father's sanctity was the subject of conversation,

as it very often was, Ælfred made his guests wonder still more at it than they would otherwise have done by means of this hair. For he used to fill a censer with glowing coals, and lay that hair upon them, and although it continued thereon for a long time, it could not be consumed thereby, but it grew white and glittered like gold in the fire; and after it had remained there for a considerable period, on its removal it recovered, little by little, its former appearance.

A MAN FIXED TO THE GROUND.

In the "History of the Translations and Miracles of St. Cuthbert," printed by Mabillon in his "Acts of the Holy Order of St. Benedict," there is an account of a certain Pagan named Onlafbald, who laid violent hands upon the farms which of right belonged to the bishop of Durham, being part of St. Cuthbert's patrimony, and inflicted many grievous injuries on the Christian people of the diocese, showing himself more savage and more cruel than the bulk of the heathen Danes his countrymen. "Puffed up with the spirit of the Evil One," he swore eternal enmity to St. Cuthbert and his successors, and proceeded to enter the sanctuary where his remains rested, meaning to pollute and scatter them, The bishop (Cutheard) and all the brethren thereupon fell upon the ground, and prayed that God and St. Cuthbert would render nugatory his proud threats. The Pagan had by this time reached the door; one foot was even within the threshold, and one had crossed over it; and there he

stood fixed as if a nail had been driven through each foot,—unable to move in any direction. After having undergone many tortures, he was compelled to make public confession of the sanctity of St. Cuthbert, and then, says the historian, "he gave up his wicked spirit in that same place." Terrified by this example, as well they might be, none of the other sacrilegeous wretches from the other side of the sea dared, from that time forward, to seize any of the lands or other property which belonged to the Church.

INCORRUPTIBILITY OF ST. CUTHBERT'S REMAINS.

The miraculous incorruptibility of the body of St. Cuthbert was one of the fundamental articles of faith in Catholic times. After he had been eleven years in his sepulchre, "Divine Providence," says Bede, "put it into the minds of the brethren to take up his dry bones, expecting, as is usual with dead bodies, to find all the rest of the body consumed and reduced to dust, and intending to put the same into a new coffin, and to lay them in the same place, but above the pavement, with the honour due to them. They acquainted Bishop Eadberct with their design, and he consented to it, and ordered that they should remember to do this on the anniversary of his deposition. They did so, and on opening the grave, found all the body whole, as if he had been alive, and the joints pliable, much more like one asleep than a dead person; besides, all his vestments

in which he was clothed were not only found incorrupted, but wonderful for their original freshness and beauty. The brethren, on seeing this, with much fear hastened to tell the bishop what they had found; he being then in solitude in a place remote from the church, and encompassed by the sea. They brought him also some part of the garments that had covered his (Cuthbert's) holy body; which presents he thankfully accepted. And when they had dressed the body in new garments, and laid it in a new coffin, they placed it on the pavement of the sanctuary."

MIRACULOUS CURES AT ST. CUTHBERT'S SHRINE.

Miraculous cures are said to have been performed at St. Cuthbert's Shrine, in the Feretory Chapel, in Durham Cathedral. In the latter end of the twelfth century, Thomas, the Norman Archbishop of York, came to Durham. For two years he had laboured under a grievous indisposition, and his case had been pronounced desperate by his physicians. In consequence of an admonition in a dream, he passed a night at the tomb of St. Cuthbert, and during the night saw the saint approach him, and felt him pass his hands over his limbs. He was immediately restored to health.

ST. CUTHBERT'S BEADS.

St, Cuthbert's Beads are found in great abundance on the rocks at Holy Island, now reckoned in Northumberland, but formerly a part of North Durham. They are

sold to strangers as the workmanship of the Saint, who, according to tradition, often visits the shore of Lindisfarne in the night, and, sitting upon one rock, uses another as his anvil, on which he forges and fashions these singular beads. Science has revealed the fact that these so-called beads, which were once commonly used in rosaries, are neither more nor less than the joints of the fossil encrinitis, or sea-lily, a radiate animal, somewhat resembling a star-fish inverted, and attached to the rock by a pedicel.

CHAPTER XIV.

ST. GODRIC AND OTHER SAINTS.

HOW THE DEVIL STOLE ST. GODRIC'S CLOTHES.

One cold winter night, when St. Godric of Old Finchale was standing praying in the river Wear up to his neck, the devil was so provoked to see him, that he stole away his clothes, which he had left lying on the bank side. Godric detected the petty larceny, and being well aware who the foul thief was, he set about saying Aves and Paternosters with might and main. This forced the devil to restore the clothes, much against his will; "for though," as Hegg says, "his apparel was so coarse, that the devil would scarce have worn them," it pained him exceedingly to have to be just, even for once. Godric's jerkin, it seems, was of iron, of which he had worn out three in the time of his hermitage,—"a strange coat," says the same quaint writer, "whose stuff had the ironmonger for the draper, and a smith for the tailor." His shirt was of coarse sackcloth, and was never changed till it wore out, and fell off piecemeal, half or wholly rotten.

HOW THE DEVIL GAVE ST. GODRIC A BOX ON THE EAR.

The devil, Proteus-like, used to transform himself into

sundry strange shapes before the saint. Godric saw through all his flimsy disguises, and merely laughed and made sport, instead of being afraid, when he saw Satan come in like a ravening wolf, or a fierce wild boar, or a hungry hound, or a sneaking fox. This so provoked the devil, that one night as the saint sat by the fire, he gave him such a box on the ear as would have felled him down, had he not promptly saved himself by making the sign of the cross, which deadened the blow, and at which the fiend fled.

ST. GODRIC AND THE GOBLIN.

St. Godric was one day informed by a friend where he might find a hoard of gold. The pious man knew full well that he was dealing with the Evil One, and for his own private use he had no need of either silver or gold, and therefore he felt it to be no temptation ; but he also knew that if he had the money he could utilise it by handing it over to the church. So he quite forgot that it was once said by his Divine Master that the devil is a liar and the father of lies, and he went to work with pickaxe and shovel, pleasing himself with the idea that he was about to get hold of a grand windfall for the use of Holy Mother Church. But when he had dug some depth, and was literally dropping with sweat, he was alarmed to find that he had broken into a dark hole, in which, instead of treasure, there were a number of small black imps, huddled together, like adders in a moss hag. They

issued from the hole in which they had been confined, and with screams of laughter pelted the saint, their unconscious deliverer, right lustily with fire-balls. The saint never again attempted to search for unconsecrated gold. His chief employment when not engaged in prayer, or standing stock-still in the river Wear up to the neck, to mortify the flesh, was digging in his garden. One day, weary with digging, he had stopped to rest himself, when a strange man suddenly appeared, and after staring for some time at the saint, spoke and accused the good man with idleness, telling him he did not work half so hard as the saints of former times used to work. Godric, who at first thought it had been a messenger of God sent to instruct him in his duty, answered, "do you then first set me an example." And he gave him the spade and left him; but he promised soon to return and see how much work the man had done. The stranger took the spade and worked most vigorously; and when the saint came back he was astonished to find that in the space of an hour his new labourer had dug as much ground as he himself could dig in eight days. "There" said the fellow, "that is the way to work!" Godric was now seized with ghastly fear, for he was sure it could not be a real man he was speaking to. Indeed, appearances were much against the stranger, for he was very dark and hairy, and somewhat too tall, and what seemed exceedingly odd, though he worked so hard, yet he showed no signs of weariness, and did not even

sweat. Then Godric went back to his cell, and concealed a little book in his bosom, after which he returned and said, "Now tell me who thou art, and why thou hast come here?" "Do you not see I am a man like yourself?" was the evasive answer. "Then," said Godric, "if you are a man, tell me if you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and join with me in adoring the Mother of our Lord." But the hairy gentleman only said, "Be not solicitous about what I believe, for it is no concern of yours." Godric of course became more suspicious than ever. He took the book out of his bosom, and laid it suddenly against the stranger's mouth, telling him, if he believed in God, to kiss it devoutly. It contained the pictures of our Lord, of the Virgin, and of St. John, and contact with it was too much for the graceless goblin, for such the stranger was. So with what the old story-books call an eldritch laugh, and a strong perfume anything but pleasant, he vanished. But, like a pious man as he was, Godric lost no time in watering with holy water the ground which had been thus fiendishly dug, and let it lie uncultured for seven years.

PRIOR MELSONBY.

Thomas Melsonby, who was appointed Prior of Durham in 1233 and Bishop of Durham four years afterwards, but had his election negatived by the king, resigned his office of Prior in 1244, and retired to the Farne Islands

to prepare for death. It had been asserted by his enemies, that he was an improper person to hold any ecclesiastical dignity, being the son of the rector of Melsonby by his maid-servant; and that he had been guilty of homicide, in having instigated a rope-dancer to exhibit his feats upon a cord suspended from two towers of the church, from which dizzy height the mountebank fell, and, as might have been expected, broke his neck. However this might have been, he did sore penance for his sins. He died, after all, in the odour of sanctity, and the lay brother who was deputed to minister to him during his illness, a man named Heming,saw a choir of angels, in white apparel, waiting upon the roof of the hermitage to receive his soul; while a brother hermit, whose name was Bartholomew, espied, in the corner of the cell, the archfiend himself, in the shape of a grizzly bear, bitterly lamenting that the dying man had escaped his snares, and was going to his eternal reward. Bartholomew more than once sprinkled a few drops of holy water on the ugly beast, to make him withdraw; but against these, strange to say, he was proof; till at last the patience of the hermit was exhausted, and he boldly dashed the sacred vessel, with the whole of its contents, in the face of the fiend, and thus, to his great delight, effected his purpose.

SACRED RELICS AT DURHAM.

In a list compiled in 1383, and first printed by

Dr. Smith in his edition of Bede, there are mentioned, as contained within the shrine of St. Cuthbert, a pyx of crystal containing the milk of St. Mary the Virgin; manna, from the grave of St. Mary; a portion of the very identical bread blessed by Our Lord; a piece of the tree (the oak of Mamre) under which the three angels sate with Abraham; some bones of the Innocents slain by Herod; a piece of the Desert (the dust of it, I presume) in which Our Lord fasted forty days; one of stones aimed at St. Stephen the proto-martyr; a piece of the throne on which Christ is to sit with his twelve disciples judging the tribes of Israel in the New Jerusalem, together with portions of the apostles' thrones; three griffins' eggs, &c. "In an old manuscript of a monk of Durham," says Hegg, "I find in a catalogue of the reliques of this abbey, which were so many that it seemed a charnel-house of saint's bones—For from hence, at the resurrection, St. Stephen will fetch his tooth, Zachary a leg, Simon an arm, St. Christopher an elbow, St. Lawrence a finger, St. Ambrose some of his hair, and St. Ebbe her foot."

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAMBTON WORM.

The wicked heir of Lambton was fishing one Sunday in the Wear, and, after toiling in vain for some time, vented his dissatisfaction in curses loud and deep. At length he felt an extraordinary tugging at his line, and, in the hope of catching a large fish, he drew it up with the utmost care. It took all his strength to bring the expected salmon to land, but it proved to be only a worm, of most unseemly appearance, so that he hastily tore it from the hook, and threw it in a passion into a well hard by. When he had again thrown in his line, a venerable-looking stranger came past, and asked him what sport he had had. He replied testily—"Why, in truth, I think I have caught the devil," and bade the man look into the well, which he did. The stranger remarked that he had never seen the like of it before; it resembled an eft, indeed, but then it had nine holes on each side of its mouth, and he felt certain that it boded no good. Whatever it might be, it was left to live or die in the well, for the heir of Lambton did not believe in omens. But, strange to say, it grew, and grew, and better grew, till it had become so large that it had to seek for itself some new abode. So it crept out of the

well and returned to the river, in the middle of which it usually lay during the day time, coiled round a rock; and at night it betook itself to a neighbouring hill, now called the Worm Hill, near Fatfield, around the base of which it twined itself, increasing in size till it could compass the hill nine times (Sir Cuthbert Sharpe says three, but he was probably mistaken). As this hill is between three and four hundred yards in circumference, lessening gradually towards the apex, it may be taken for granted that the worm, when it had reached its full growth, was about two miles long. No wonder it was now the terror of the neighbourhood; for it had an appetite proportioned to its size. It soon wasted everything on the north side of the river, and then crossed the stream towards Lambton Hall, where the old lord was living in grief and sorrow. The young sinner who had done the mischief, and whose name was John Lambton, had long ere this repented of his horrid profanity, duly confessed his manifold sins to a priest, bathed in a bath of holy water, assumed the badge of a crusader, been dubbed a knight of Rhodes, and set out for the Holy Land to win it back from the infidels. The terrified household assembled, when the worm appeared, and it was proposed by the steward, a man far advanced in years and of great experience, that the large trough which stood in the court yard should be filled with milk for the creature to drink, as otherwise it might drown them all. The monster approached, eagerly drank the milk, and returned, with-

out further ravage, to repose round its favourite hill. But it came again the next morning at the same hour, and the same quantity of milk had to be provided for it. It was soon found that it could not be satisfied with less than the milk of nine cows. If the quantity was diminished ever so little, it would lash its tail round the trees in the park, and tear them up by the roots in its rage. "The worm was a terrible hugeous cretur," said an old woman at Lambton to William Howitt; "it drank every day nine cows' milk; and even if the family took a little sup out for their tea (?) it wor fain to rive a' doon." Many a gallant Knight essayed in vain to slay this terror of the country side, but they always suffered loss of life or limb, and never did the creature any real hurt, for though it had been frequently cut asunder, yet the severed parts had immediately re-united, and so it reigned triumphantly on its hill. At length, after seven long years, the Knight of Rhodes returned, and found the broad lands of his ancestors desolate. He heard the wailing of the people, and hastened to his father's hall, to receive the embrace of the old man, who was worn out with sorrow for the Knight's supposed death, and the dreadful waste caused by the Worm. We are beholden to Surtees for the briefest account of what follows:—"John Lambton was extremely shocked at witnessing the effects of his youthful imprudences, and immediately undertook the adventure in which so many knights had failed. After several fierce combats, in which the crusader was

foiled by his enemy's power of self-union, he found it expedient to add policy to courage, and, perhaps not possessing much of the former quality, he went to consult a witch or wise woman. By her advice he covered himself in a coat of mail studded with razor blades, and placed himself on a crag in the river and awaited the monster's arrival. At the usual time the Worm came to the rock, and wound himself with great fury round the armed knight, who had the satisfaction to see his enemy cut to pieces by his own efforts, whilst the stream, washing away the several parts, prevented the possibility of re-union. The witch had promised Lambton success only on one condition, that he should slay the first living thing which met his sight after his victory. To avoid the possibility of human slaughter, Lambton directed his father that as soon as he heard him sound three blasts of his bugle horn, in token of the achievement being performed, he should release his favourite greyhound, which would immediately fly to the sound of his horn, and thus become the sacrifice. On hearing his son's bugle, however, the old chief was so overjoyed that he forgot the injunction, and ran himself with open arms to meet his son. Instead of committing a parricide, the conqueror again repaired to his adviser, who pronounced, as the alternative of disobeying the original instructions, that no chief of the Lambtons should die in bed for seven (or, as some accounts say, for nine) generations," a prophecy believed to have been literally fulfilled.

CHAPTER XVI.

DIABOLIC.

THE DEVIL IN SOUTH DURHAM.

About ninety years ago, an old farmer at or near Bishopton— a Roman Catholic, but married to a Protestant,—died after making his will, by which he left a considerable sum to the church he belonged to. The pair had agreed that if they had any children the boys should be brought up Catholics and the girls Protestants. They had two boys. After the priest had performed his preliminary duties, the corpse was placed in an upper room, and the lads, with a few of their friends, proceeded to hold the wake in another apartment. The widow, who did not believe in the efficacy of crucifixes, holy water, and moulded candles, refused to give the priest any money to pray the deceased out of purgatory, saying he had given the church a great deal too much already. The holy father warmly expostulated with her, and as she still declined, told her he should not be surprised if the devil were to come at midnight and carry off the corpse, but even this did not frighten the good woman into drawing her purse strings, and the priest went away very ill-satisfied. Just as the clock struck twelve, the lads, who were whiling away the dull hours with playing

at cards, heard a terrible noise upon the stairs as if some monstrous thing were coming up, loaded with clanking chains. Looking out, they say a huge black man, with horns, and a cloven foot, who was about to enter the room in which the corpse lay. "Go back, or I'll shoot you!" cried the eldest lad, laying hold of a horse pistol. The apparition, however, took no notice of the threat, and was proceeding to lay hold of his prize, when the lad fired and the devil fell, severely wounded in his nether extremities. It was the grave-digger, whom the priest had bribed—So runs the tale.

THE DEVIL'S APRON.

A legend connected with a large stone in Castle Eden Dene, reveals the fact that the devil is not above wearing aprons. His Satanic Majesty was, it seems, on one occasion flying over the Dene with this immense stone in his apron, when, sad to relate, the apron string broke, and the weighty burden was precipitated to the place where it now lies.

In days now long past, when Newcastle-upon-Tyne was privileged with the presence of such bold, earnest, and powerful preachers of the gospel as John Knox, and there seemed a near prospect of the bulk of the inhabitants becoming truly religious, and, therefore, honest and fair in all their dealings, the Devil, we are told, determined that he would ruin the place, and, therefore, set about blocking up the entrance into the Tyne by flinging great

apronfuls of stones, brought from Whitley quary, into the channel. One morning, however, when he was coming along the bank top, as usual, heavily laden, he met a woman, whereupon, poltroon as he is, he dropped his burden in a great fright, fled, and never returned. The stones he had managed before that to throw in are now known as the Black Middens.

PER CONTRA: MICHAEL SCOTT AT CAMBOIS.

The Wansbeck runs into the sea at Cambois, in North Durham, and the tide flows about four miles up the river, towards Morpeth. Tradition reports that Michael Scott, whose fame as a wizard is not confined to Scotland, would have brought the tide up to the respectable old market town, as a particular favour for some kindness shown to him, and that he gave instructions to one of the town's people to run up all the way from Sheepwash to Morpeth, as fast as he could, without looking behind, when the tide would follow him. After running some distance the man became afraid by the roar of waters behind him, and forgetfully gave a glance over his shoulder to see if the danger was imminent. Immediately the advancing tide was still. Michael also intended to confer a similar favour on Durham's reverend city, but his good intentions were defeated in like manner by the cowardice of the person who had to "guide the tide."

RAISING THE WIND.

It was quite common, forty or fifty years ago, to hear

a South Durham man or woman observe, during a hurricane of wind, "There's somebody been at t' wise man this mornin', and he's raised t' wind." A storm of wind and rain, thunder and lightning, when extremely violent, and especially during the night, was once generally regarded as indicating that the foul friend was very busy, carrying away a witch to the realms below. "There hasn't been sic a neet as last neet sin' Kate Steele, the witch o' Katiefield, deed," is an expression we have often heard. "As busy as the devil in a gale of wind" is still a common saying.

BATTLE ECHOES AT NEVILLE'S CROSS.

A lady was once teaching in a Sunday School in the City of Durham, when the chapter read in class happened to be one in the First Book of Samuel. After it had been duly gone through, one of the pupils observed that he did not like that chapter so well as last Sunday's, because there were no battles in it. On this the teacher thought fit to dilate on the horrors of war and the blessings of peace, to all which, like a truculent young Northern as he was, the boy turned a deaf ear, only observing that there had been a great battle at Durham once. "And where was it fought?" asked she. "At Neville's Cross," answered the lad, promptly. "I go there very often of an evening to see the place; and if you walk nine times round the Cross, and then lay your head to the turf, you'll hear the noise of the battle and

the clash of the armour." These were the young fellow's exact words to his Sunday School teacher.

KING DAVID BRUCE UNDER ALDIN GRANGE BRIDGE.

There is a tradition in the neighbourhood of Broom, a couple of miles or so West of Durham, that David Bruce, King of Scots, concealed himself under the old narrow stone bridge over the Browney at Aldin Grange, after the battle of Neville's Cross, and that he was discovered by his pursuers by his shadow in the water. This is perhaps as true as many other traditions.

PHANTOM ARMIES.

A folio of "Apparitions and Wonders," preserved in the British Museum, records that at Durham, on the 27th of September, 1705, when the evening sky was serene and full of stars, a strange and prodigious light spread over its North-Western quarter, as if the sun itself was shining; then came streamers, which turned to armed men, ranked on horseback. This may be accounted for on the supposition that it was an extraordinary display of the Aurora Borealis, or "merry dancers." That beautiful phenomenon is still known in the "North Country" as "the Derwentwater lights," in consequence of their having been particularly red and vivid at the time of the unfortunate last Earl's execution. Myriads of fighting men were seen in the sky, night after night throughout the county of Durham, before the French Revolution.

THE DRAGON, WORM, OR FLYING SERPENT, OF SOCKBURN.

The legendary tale concerning this monster is simply this, as set down in the Bowes Manuscripts:—"In an ould manuscript which I have sene of the descent of Connyers, there is writ as followth: Sir John Connyers, knight, slew that monstrous and poysonous vermine or wyverne, and aske or werme, which overthrew and devoured many people in fight, for that the sent of that poison was so strong that no person might abyde it, and by the providence of Almighty God this John Connyers, knight, overthrew the saide monster and slew it. But, before he made this enterprise, having but one sonne, he went to the church of Sockbourne in complete armour, and offered that his only sonne to the Holy Ghost. That place where this great serpent laye was called Graystane. And as it is written in the same manuscript, this John lieth buried in Sockburne Church, in complete armour, before the Conquest." The grey stone is duly pointed out in a field near the church, as well as a trough, where the worm was in the habit of drinking so much milk daily, and basking itself before returning to the river Tees. Mrs. Anne Wilson, in her very wretched poem Teisa, published in quarto, in 1778, says the Sockburn worm was supposed to have fallen from the lunar circle, and states that the knight slew it by stabbing it in its only vulnerable part, under the wing. Its body was then drawn into a pit and a heap of massive stones raised over it. The manors of Sockburn and Dinsdale were given to Conyers as a reward for his bravery, and when he died a monument was raised over his remains.

THE GABRIEL HOUNDS.

The strange unearthly cries, so like the yelping of dogs, uttered by wild fowl on their passage southwards on the approach of winter, from Scotland and countries further north, have engendered a wide-spread belief in the existence of a pack of spectral hounds. In Durham and the neighbouring counties they are called the Gabriel Hounds, and under that name they are mentioned by Wordsworth in one of his sonnets. They are monstrous human-headed dogs, who traverse the air, generally during dark nights, or high up out of sight. Sometimes they appear to hover over a house, and then death or calamity is sure to visit it. Some call them the Sky Yelpers.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCERNING CHILDREN AND CHILDREN'S GAMES.

ROCKING AN EMPTY CRADLE.

It is very unlucky to rock an empty cradle, and any inadvertent person, who happens to do so, for want of better employment, when sitting waiting for somebody or something in the room where a cradle stands, will be sharply rebuked for his imprudence. The reason assigned is that it gives the child a headache or other ailment, and, if persisted in, may even cause its death. Rocking the empty cradle is often deprecated, likewise, on the ground that it is ominous of another claimant for that place of rest coming before it is wanted.

BAPTISM AND CHRISTENING.

There is a clear distinction in the minds of good old Tees, Wear, and Tyneside people, between baptism and christening. Baptism, a venerable gossip tells us, is simply sprinkling with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This may be done by a layman, or, in case of necessity, even by the midwife, when the life of the infant seems in danger. "Drop it! drop it!" was the exclamation of an old woman at the Felling, meaning, sprinkle its face with water—when an infant, that moment born into the world, seemed ready

to give up the ghost, and might be dead before a priest could be got at. Christening is a more solemn ordinance, in which the priest dips his finger into the font, and with it makes the sign of the cross on the baby's face, and godfathers and godmothers take obligations on them. One intelligent lady of my acquaintance, resident in Shields, was baptised Mary and christened Elizabeth. At the request of her mother, she received, on being sprinkled in the name of the Blessed Trinity by the parish priest, the name of Mary. And when her father came home from sea she was carried to church and christened Elizabeth.

GROANING CHEESE.

A large cheese, procured in expectation of the birth of a child, is called the Groaning Cheese, or the Sick Wife's Cheese. A slice of the first cut, laid under the pillow, is said to enable young damsels to dream of their lovers. But in order to be of any use, it must be pierced with three pins, taken from the infant's pincushion. In Sunderland, it was once common for cheese-mongers to lend a cheese on such occasions, to poor but honest customers, who could not afford to buy one, but who had it to cut and come again, that is, to be used *ad libitum* and the remainder returned. By this plan, the child has the honour of a whole cheese at its birth, and the parents pay for no more than they need. The cake provided to be eaten with the cheese is called the Groaning Cake, and persons have been known to preserve bits of it for years, as a sort

of amulet, "unmouldy and unmouse-eaten," to promote fruitfulness. In the days when all people of moderate means brewed their own ale, it was the universal custom to provide a boll, a bushel, or a peck of "groaning malt," according to the prospective demand and supply. Brockett says there was once a time, his old nurse informed him, when children were drawn through a hole cut in the groaning cheese, on the day they were christened.

CARRYING A BABE UPWARDS FIRST.

It is very important for an infant to go up in the world before it goes down. Accordingly, if a child happens to be born in the top storey of a house, one of the gossips will take it up in her arms, and, for want of a flight of stairs leading to the roof, mount with it upon a table, chair, or chest of drawers; after which it may safely be taken down stairs.

SUNDAY AND WEEK-DAY CHILDREN.

The following verses are still current in North and South Durham, as well as in many other parts of the kingdom:—

Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace,
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
And Thursday's child has far to go.
Friday's child is loving and giving,
And Saturday's child works hard for its living,
But the child that is born on the Sabbath day
Is blythe and bonny, good and gay.

ALMS TO A NEW BORN BABE.

The first time that you call at a house where there is a new born babe, and the first time an infant is brought to your own house (at least after it has been christened) you must present it with what is called alms. In the former case, it should be in the shape of a piece of silver, and in the latter of "the three blessings," viz. :—salt or sugar, an egg, and bread. The following form of words is used by old-fashioned kindly people :—"Weel mayest thou thrive and grow till thou bringest me this back again." The egg is emblematical of new life, the salt of incorruption, and the bread of bodily sustenance. These votive offerings must be pinned in the baby's lap, and so brought home.

CHILDREN'S HANDS AND NAILS.

In order that a child may gather riches it is said to be proper to leave its right hand unwashed, for "muck," as an old crone once told me, "bodes luck." A baby's nails must not be cut till it is a year old, for fear it should grow up "light-fingered," that is, in plain terms, a thief. The mother must bite them off, if needs be; and in some parts it is believed that if the first parings are buried under an ash tree, the child will turn out a first-rate singer or famous musician. Care must be taken not to cut the child's nails on a Sunday or a Friday, at any rate for the first time. For—

> Cut them on Friday, cut them for sorrow. ;

And—

> Better a child had ne'er been born
> Than cut his nails on a Sunday morn.

GIFTS.

Many a child has been buoyed up with the hope of getting some valuable present soon, through seeing a white speck on his finger nail. As it grows up to the end of the nail the prospect grows near; but he must not let it be pared off, for fear of losing the gift. Its particular nature depends on the finger the mark is on. Beginning with the thumb, young people say:—"A gift, a friend, a foe, a lover, and a journey to go." Children less precocious, too bashful to say a "lover," substitute "a letter" instead.

TIG-GEE.

When children are leaving school, to go home for the night, and come to the place where their roads separate, each tries to get the last touch. Giving a sudden sharp tug at the boy's jacket, the girl's frock, or the satchel or bag, if any, the challenger runs off as fast as he or she can, exclaiming—

Tig tag!
Leather bag!
Last bat's poison.

The challenged one, if possessed of any spirit, follows, and tries, and often manages, to get the last bat. Tiggy-touch-wood is a similar play.

OTHER CHILDREN'S GAMES.

The old game of Hunt the Slipper is still occasionally played by girls. The players, all but one, sit down in a circle on their "hunkers," and pass a slipper round from one to another under their skirts. The odd player tries

to catch hold of it, and when she succeeds in doing so, another takes her place. Certain forfeits are demanded for any breach of rules, and reclaimed on sundry hard conditions. The game of "Honey Pots," played indiscriminately by both boys and girls, is too well known to require description; so is the familiar girls' game of Hitch i' Bed, sometimes simply called "The Beds."

THE GOSSIP STONES.

On the side of the road, between Pensher and Offerton, there once stood two tall stones, of which one only is now left. A woman who had seen eighty-eight winters, told my informant in 1876 that she had heard her mother tell the story of their erection, as even then an old story. Two gossips, that is to say, persons who had together stood godfather to a child, were coming from a christening at Pensher, when they fell out and fought. The one was killed and the other died on the spot. Their bodies were buried where they were found lying, and the stones placed above them.

SPITTING ONE'S FAITH.

When required to make an asservation on any matter deemed important, schoolboys "spit their faith," or, in the Durham vernacular, "pin their sawl," that is, their souls. They also add "Christ's Cross, cut my throat if I tell a lie!" at the same time making the sign of the cross In bygone days, when peculiar fashions were more rife than they are now, the pitmen used to spit upon a

stone together, by way of cementing their confederacy, when about to make a "stick" for higher wages. When one lad challenges another to fight, he dares him to spit over his little finger, or scratch his buttons; if he will not, he is a coward; if he does, it is a fair battle.

BARLEY.

When a lad wishes to bespeak something for his own exclusive use, he says "Barley me that!" an expression that Brockett thinks is only a corrupt contraction for "By your leave me that." When he calls for a truce during a school-green fight, he cries "Barley!" which is just the French "Parlez," from which comes our English "Parley."

BOGLE ABOUT THE STACKS.

This has, from time immemorial, been a favourite pastime, during the clear moonshiny autumn nights, about farm places and in country villages. One of the young players personates a bogle, and hides himself among the stacks in the farm yard. The rest hunt him until they catch him, when he has to pay a forfeit, kissing his captor if it be a young woman, or giving up his cap, pocket-knife, or some other article, if it be a young man.

COBBING.

To cob is, according to Brockett, to pull the hair or ear, to strike, to thump; and cobbing he defines as "striking, thumping, a punishment among children and workmen." In some schools cobbing means taking a lad firmly by the collar with both hands, and bumping him behind with

the knee. In others it is seizing the unfortunate object of the cobbing-match by the hair, and tugging at it on both sides alternately, dragging out in some cases the ear-locks, and in all cases inflicting great pain.

Those who will bear no part in cobbing the delinquent are liable to be cobbed themselves, and so is any boy who is mercifully disposed, and does not give a sufficient tug to hurt the victim. The prescribed rites for this administration of justice, or as it more usually is, this gratification of capricious mischief, are standing on one leg, closing the eyes, elevating the left thumb, compressing the lips, and repeating some such verses as the following—

All manner of men, under threescore and ten,
Who don't come to this cobbing match,
Shall be cobbed over and over again !
By the high, by the low, by the wings of a crow,
Salt-fish, regnum, a buck or a doe ?

A doe is a violent tug at the hair ; a buck, a rap on the skull with the closed hand ; what salt-fish and regnum are I do not know.

CHILDREN'S RHYMES.

To make a butterfly alight, repeat the following lines—

Le, la, let,
Ma bonny pet.

and if this is only said often enough, the charm never fails.

Does rain spoil a holiday, let the boys and girls shout out :—

Rain, rain, gan away !
And come some other summer's day !

or more imperatively and decidedly—

Rain, rain, go to Spain !
Fair weather come again !

sooner or later, the rain will depart, If there be a rainbow in the sky, the children must keep looking at it all the time.

In order to charm away a flight of crows, when they settle upon a new-sown field of corn, or corn nearly ripe, or standing in the stook, the crow herds ought to say :—

Crow, Crow, get out of my sight,
Or else I'll eat your liver and light.

When you happen to touch a snail, it draws in its horns. To make it put them out again, you should say :—

Snail, snail, put out your horn,
Or I'll kill your father and mother the morn.

The ladybird *(Coccinella Septempunctatus)* is raised to activity by the cry of :—

Lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home,
Your house is on fire, your children all gone.

In the South Shields vernacular this runs—

Cushie cow lady, flee away hyem,
Yer house is on fire, yer bairns are all gyen.

The Dock being an approved antidote to the sting of a nettle, the following lines should be repeated when it is being applied :—

Nettle out, dock in ;
Dock remove the nettle sting.

To the lapwing, peewit, or peeze-weep, when it is pretending to be lame, and hirpling along the ground to draw you away from its young, you may call out—

Peeze-weep, wallop away,
Cau'd feet and a frosty day.

The cry of the plover is interpreted into the following in some districts :—

Bidcake bleary, bidcake bleary,
G'ie the lads what you like, I sit easy.

There is a ridiculous mock numeration rhyme :—

Onery, tworey, tickery seven,
Allum-a-crack, tennum, eleven,
Pin, pan, musky dan,
Tiddleum, Toddleum, twenty-one.

When the clock strikes, after the usual warning, the nurse should say to the child—

Zickery, zickery, zock, zock !
The mouse ran up the clock, clock !
The clock struck one, down the mouse ran !
Zickery, zickery, zan, zan !

JAWPING EGGS.

Jawping eggs at Easter is a favourite youthful amusement. One boy or girl holding a boiled egg in his or her hand, challenges another to give blow for blow, taking

care to hit the end only. One of the eggs is sure to be fractured in the conflict, and its shattered remains become the spoil of the conqueror. To "jaup" is the local vernacular for "Chip."

STEALY-CLOTHES.—SCOTCH AND ENGLISH.

A party of boys divide themselves into two bands, the captain of each alternately choosing his man till the number be complete, so as to secure, as far as possible, equality of strength and skill. Then a line is drawn as a boundary of their respective territories, and at equal distances from this line, the hats, coats or handkerchiefs of each band are laid in a heap. The game commences with a defiance, couched in no measured terms of abuse, and ending with "Set your foot on English ground, Scots, if ye dare!" or the converse. After this they make mutual incursions, each trying to seize and carry away some articles from the other's store. But if they are unfortunately caught in the attempt, they must not only restore the plunder, but remain prisoners until one of their own party can make his way to them, and touch them. When all the things belonging to one of the bands are transferred to the other's head-quarters the game is won.

THE STIRRUP GLASS.

It used to be a common thing for the host or landlord to present a parting drink to his guests, at the door of the private mansion, tavern, or inn, as the case might be, after they had mounted their beasts to go away.

This was called the stirrup cup or stirrup glass. I knew an old butcher who had a favourite brown pony he rode, and who used to require a stirrup glass for his beast, in addition to one for himself, the real fact being that Mr Toot-up drank off both to fortify the inner man, though his galloway got the credit of the second.

THE SWORD-DANCERS.

It is still the practice, though less in repute than formerly, for companies of pitmen and other workmen from the neighbouring collieries to visit Sunderland, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Seaham, and other towns, during the Christmas holidays, to perform or play a dance, accompanied by song and music. The dancers carry swords in their hands, very often made of lath, and they wield these in various ways during the performance; hence they are called sword dancers. They are clad in white shirts or tunics, decorated with a profusion of ribbands, of various colours, gathered from the wardrobes of their sweethearts, sisters, and other well-wishers. The captain generally wears a kind of faded uniform, with a large cocked-hat and feather, for pre-eminent distinction; and the buffoon, or "Bessy," who acts as treasurer,and collects the cash bestowed on the party in a tobacco box, sometimes wears a woman's gown and petticoat, and a hairy cap, with a fox's brush pinned on to it behind. One of the actors is dubbed "Galatian," and is the braggadocio of the lot. Another personates a doctor, direct from High Germany. "Bessy" first enters, brandishing a

besom, and clears the floor for the players. Then Galatian and the Captain, after reciting their various past achievements in high-sounding rhyme, engage in mortal combat. A dreadful clashing of steel it sometimes is. At last Galatian falls, and the Captain soliloquises over his body. He repents, however, that he has killed him, and offers a great reward to any one who will restore him to life. Then the doctor chimes in with a long list of his infallible nostrums and miraculous cures, and after being somewhat severely cross-questioned by the Captain, he is ordered to try his skill. This he does in a very ludicrous fashion, administering a strong dose of some horrid compound which he calls "hoaxy croaxy" to the fallen champion, and giving him a sly kick behind, ordering him to rise up and fight again. Galatian rises as if out of a swoon, and sings out—

Once I was dead,
But now I am alive,
And blessed be the hands of him
Who made me to revive.

The final is that all differences are patched up, and a general dance takes place, with which the play concludes, and the party take their leave, with set metrical expressions of thanks, proportioned to the largess they have won.

HINTS TO LIARS.

Mr Punshon informed Mr Brand that among the colliers of his time there was a custom of giving a pin to a person in company, by way of hinting to him that he was fibbing. If another man outlied him, he in turn delivered the

pin to him. "No duels," adds Brand, "ensue on the occasion." "Take my cap," was another common hint, to people who were transgressing the bounds of credulity. On one occasion a North Country wench was indicted at the Old Bailey for feloniously stealing from her mistress a dozen round-eared lace caps, of a very considerable value. The girl pleaded not guilty, insisting very strenuously that she had her mistress's express orders for what she had done. The prosecutrix being called upon by the court to answer this allegation, said, "Mary, thou wast always a most abominable liar." "Very true, Madam," replies the hussy, "for whenever I told a round lie, you was so good as to bid me take your cap." The court burst into a violent fit of laughter, and the jury acquitted the prisoner.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CUSTOMS REGARDING COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE.

MARRIAGE.

Each day of the week has some peculiar virtue as a day for getting married on. Thus it is—

Monday for wealth,
Tuesday for health,
Wednesday the best day of all,
Thursday for losses,
Friday for crosses,
And Saturday no luck at all.

The unsuitableness of Lent for marrying and giving in marriage is expressed in the verse—

If you marry in Lent
You are sure to repent.

It is very unlucky for swine to cross the path in front of a wedding party. The bridegroom, as well as the bride, has been known to turn back, instead of proceeding to church, when such an occurrence happened. This was, of course, before the days when actions for breach of promise became fashionable. Hence the old adage—"The Swine's run through it." The presence of the bride's mother is inauspicious at a wedding. A wedding after sunset entails to the bride a joyless life, the loss of children, or an early grave. A wet day is deemed unlucky, too, while a fine one is auspicious, for—

"Happy is the bride that the sun shines on."

To rub shoulders with the bride or bridegroom is deemed an augury of speedy marriage; and, again, she who receives from the bride a piece of cheese, cut by her before leaving the table, will be the next bride among the company. Dinner over, the bride sticks her knife into the cheese, and all the men at table endeavour to seize it. He who succeeds, without cutting his fingers in the struggle, thereby insures happiness in his married life. The knife is called "the best man's prize," since commonly, by some means or other, the "best man" secures it. Should he fail to do so, woe to his matrimonial prospects. The maidens, for their prize, try to possess mementoes of a piece of the wedding dress, called a "shaping," for use in certain divinations regarding their future husbands. When she proceeds to the altar, the bride should wear something borrowed. On the bride's arrival at her new home, one of the oldest women in the neighbourhood, who has been stationed on the threshold, throws a plateful of cake over her head, so that it falls outside. A scramble ensues, for it is deemed very fortunate to get a piece of the cake, which ought to be put next night under the pillow to dream upon. Throwing a shoe after the bride and bridegroom, on their leaving the bride's parents' house, is also very common. It is a symbol of renunciation of all right in the happy woman by the old people, and the transference of it to her husband. In the pit districts the bridal party used, at one time, to be escorted to church by men armed with guns, which they fired again and again close to the ears of the

bride and bridegroom, terrifying them sometimes not a little. In some places he who gives the bride away claims the first kiss, in right of his temporary paternity; in other places it is the privilege of the parson who ties the knot.

It is unlucky for a woman to marry a man whose surname begins with the same letter as her own, for—

> If you change the name and not the letter,
> You change for the worse and not for the better.

A country wedding is, by rights, wound up by a race for a ribbon, given by the bridegroom. All the racers, winners and losers alike, are entitled to a glass of spirit each; and, accordingly, as soon as the race is run, they present themselves at the house, and ask for their allowance, without any particular hesitation. It is unlucky for a young woman to attend church on the day when her banns are being published; if she do, her child will run the risk of being deaf and dumb. The wife who loses her wedding ring incurs the loss of her husband's affection, while the breaking of the ring forebodes death.

THE BRIDEWAIN.

West Sheel, or West Broomshields, in the chapelry of Satley, near Lanchester, was long the inheritance of the Darnells. One of the family, named William, by his last will and testament, in 1674, appointed for his daughter Elizabeth (besides her marriage portion), the ancient provision, on her marriage day, of a Bridewain: that is, a wain or waggon, with articles of use and luxury,

"inside and outside gear and plenishing" for the young couple. The bridewain was usually crowned with boughs and flowers, and the horses or oxen which drew it were decorated with ribbons and bride favours. It was brought around to the houses of relatives and friends, who contributed what they pleased as a marriage present.

STEALING THE BRIDE'S GARTERS.

In some of the villages in the county palatine, in the unsophisticated olden time, it was the custom after the connubial knot had been tied, for one of the wedding party, the bridegroom's man or some other, to take off the bride's garter while she knelt at the altar; and this rather delicate piece of work having been anticipated, the garter was generally found to do credit to her taste and skill in needle-work.

THROWING THE STOCKING.

On the wedding night, after the bride has retired, and while she is undressing, she delivers one of her stockings to a female attendant—"the best maid,"—who throws it at random (or perhaps not quite) among the assembled company. The person on whom it happens to light will, it is supposed, be the next to enter into the blessed state of matrimony. Another and more curious, though perhaps obsolete mode of divination, was for the invited guests to repair to the bridal chamber, where the happy pair received them sitting up in bed, in full dress, except only that they had taken off their shoes and stockings. One of the bridesmaids then took the bridegroom's

stocking, and standing at the foot of the bed with her back towards it, threw the stocking with the left hand over the right shoulder, aiming at the bridegroom's face. This was done by all the unmarried females in rotation. When any of them was so fortunate as to hit the object, it was a sign that she was soon to be married. The bride's stocking was thrown by the young men at the bride's face in like manner, a like prognostic being drawn from it. Brand says new marriages were often occasioned by such incidents. Throwing the stocking finds a place among the ceremonies gone through in that popular old local poem "The Collier's Wedding."

CHAPTER XIX.

DEATHS AND FUNERALS.

THE LYKE WAKE.

The watching of a corpse previous to interment is known by the old Saxon term Lyke wake, from *lic*, a body, and *waecce*, watch. It was formerly considered very wrong, indeed positively impious, to leave the defunct for a single moment alone. One set of watchers therefore took the place of another, from the moment of the breath leaving the body, till the lifting of the coffin previous to the interment. And as the grief, even of near relations, cannot long drown the natural appetites, refreshments had to be provided somewhat liberally for such good natured friends and neighbours as volunteered to sit up with the corpse. In the custom itself there was nothing wrong, it was rather a tribute of respect paid to the deceased and an exhibition of sympathy in affliction. But as the best things in this world are apt to be abused, even so was the lyke wake. In process of time it came to be nothing better than a scene of feasting and revelry, extremely indecent on such a melancholy occasion. Instances are related to have occurred where the festering corpse was kept unburied for more than a week, until the watchers had consumed, in their festivity, everything that was in the house.

This almost always happened when the deceased man or woman had lived alone, had some modicum of means, and had no relations near. It was common to say that people had met to drink such a one's dirgie; and after the funeral it was the usual practice to adjourn to the nearest public-house to finish off, if it was not convenient to return to the deceased's late residence and conclude the orgies there.

EARTH AND SALT ON A CORPSE.

It was once customary to set a plate full of earth and salt upon a corpse, as an emblem of mortality and eternal life. Some matter-of-fact people, who could not rise to the conception of the mystical meaning, said it was done to prevent the body from swelling, through the air getting into the bowels.

FLOWERS IN THE COFFIN.

Down till about fifteen or twenty years ago, it was an almost universal custom in Sunderland to decorate the dead in their coffins with wreaths of flowers. For this purpose rosemary, white roses, wall-flowers, southern wood, and other flowers, were used in their season, and those who had them in their gardens were always ready to give them to their poorer neighbours. This was a very ancient custom, going back to the earliest times.

THE TIDE.

Life goes out with the tide, and comes in with it. So births and deaths, in seaport towns at least, happen respectively at the flow and ebb. In some extracts of old date, from the parish register of Heslidon, near

Hartlepool, the state of the tide at the time of death is named. "The xith day of Maye, A.D. 1595, at vi of ye clocke in the morning, being full water. Mr. Henrye Mitford, of Hoolan, died at Newcastel, and was burried the xvi. daie of Maie, at vii of ye clocke at noon, being Sondaie, at evening prayer; the hired preacher made ye sermon."— "The xvii. daie of Maie, at xii of ye clocke at noon, being lowe water, Mrs. Barbara Mitford died, and was buried the xviii. day of Maie, at ix. of the clock. Mr. Holsworth maid ye sermon."

THE SOUL BELL.

Many people still believe that the tolling of the parish church bell at the time of a death or funeral, commonly called the passing bell, the dead bell, or the soul bell, is for the purpose of driving away the evil spirits, which dare not, it is imagined, come within hearing of the solemn sound. It used formerly to call all good Christians to pray for the soul of the deceased person. Hence the old couplet—

When the bell begins to toll,
Lord, have mercy on the soul.

Bede is the first who mentions the custom.

REALISING THE RESURRECTION.

The Rev. Arthur Shepherd, vicar of Pittington, who died in 1770, had a hatchet deposited with him in his coffin, and a plate of looking-glass inserted in the lid opposite his face, "both," says Surtees, "with a view to facilitate his resurrection." Mr. Shepherd is said to

have been a very worthy character. He held the living during forty years, and as he reprobated the practice of burial within the walls of churches, he and his wife Anne were interred in the church yard, in the open air, and, presumably, not very deep.

ANIMAL SACRIFICES AT CHRISTIAN BURIALS.

In the month of August, 1849, in excavating the earth within Staindrop Collegiate Church, in order to build flues for warming the sacred edifice, the skeleton of a human body was exhumed, which was generally supposed to be one of the "Noble Nevilles," of Raby Castle, in the Bishopric; and at his feet were found the bones of a dog of the greyhound breed, which must have been buried along with its master, and had probably been killed (in other words sacrificed) for the purpose.

BARNARD CASTLE FUNERALS.

At Barnard Castle, half a century since, funerals were attended by women chiefly, all those in the neighbourhood going as a matter of courtesy, if it took place in the afternoon. Forenoon Funerals were counted private, and none attended unless invited. The poorer class generally sent round the bellman to announce that such a person, naming him or her, was to be interred at such an hour, or that so and so was going to bury his father, wife, or child, as the case might be, and that all persons were invited to be present. Not to go was reckoned a slight.

THE DEAD KNOCK.

A mysterious rap heard at the door, or upon the foot of the bed, when there is nobody there to give it, is set down as being a warning of the approaching death of some friend or relative. In most cases it is neither more nor less than an indication that the wood of which the furniture has been made has not been thoroughly seasoned, and is now beginning to crack, because dried.

SHROUDING THE LOOKING-GLASS.

If you look into a mirror in the death-chamber, you will see the corpse looking over your shoulder. Therefore, the mirror ought to be removed or shrouded. We have seen this done by the attendants in a number of cases.

RECOVERING THE BODIES OF THE DROWNED.

It is said that the bodies of the drowned float on the ninth day, and, that if a gun be fired over a dead body lying at the bottom of a river, or of the sea, the concussion will break the gall bladder, and cause the body to float.

A DEAD MAN RESTORED TO LIFE.

In Simeon's History of the Church of Durham, that veracious chronicler tells us that shortly before Bishop Walcher's death, which took place during a popular tumult at Gateshead, in the year 1080, a man named Eadulf, who resided at no great distance from Durham,

in a ville called Ravenswurthe (Ravensworth), fell sick and died; but he returned to life before sunrise next morning. Suddenly sitting up, he so terrified the people who were watching by the supposed corpse, that they took to flight. But as they were running away, he called them back and said: "Do not be afraid. Of a truth I have arisen from death. Sign yourselves and this house with the sign of the cross." As soon as he had said this a number of little birds rushed through the door from the outside of the house, and filled the room in which they were sitting; and they flew backwards and forwards in such a troublesome manner as almost to dash themselves in the very faces of the beholders. So the deacon (whom the priest had dispatched thither when he himself had returned to the church) ran and sprinkled them and the house with holy water, and immediately all that ghastly company of birds vanished like smoke from before their eyes. The man who had risen from the dead then related several things regarding the joys of the dead and the punishment of the damned, which he had seen when absent from the body; he also stated that he had recognised several of his former acquaintances, who were rejoicing along with the blessed ones in flowery abodes, and he announced that for some others, who were still alive, the eternal torments of hell were in preparation. One of these was Waltheof, Earl of Northumberland, who afterwards was the instigator of the Bishop's murder.

BIDDERS TO A FUNERAL.

Brand, in his Antiquities, says :—"At South Shields, in the County of Durham, the bidders, *i.e.*, the inviters to a funeral, never use the rapper of the door when they go about, but always knock with a key, which they carry with them for that purpose."

VIRGINS' GARLANDS.

It used to be the custom in many country churches to hang a garland of artificial flowers over the seats of deceased virgins, in token, says Bourne, of esteem and love, and as an emblem of their reward in the heavenly church. They were made of variegated coloured paper, dyed horn or silk, representing forget-me-nots and other flowers, fastened to small sticks crossing each other at the top, and fixed at the bottom with a circular hoop. From the centre was suspended the form of a woman's glove cut in white paper, on which the name and age of the party commemorated by these frail memorials were sometimes written. The custom, once probably very general, of placing flowers, particularly roses, lilies, and violets, in the coffin with the deceased, is still preserved amongst our villagers. Brand says he saw in the churches of Wolsingham and Stanhope, in the county of Durham, specimens of the Virgins' Garlands, the form of a woman's glove, cut in white paper, hung in the centre of each of them.

CONFIRMATION.

A preference is universally felt among ignorant candidates for the touch of the Bishop's right hand over the left in the rite of confirmation. The reason assigned is, that the unfortunate recipients of the sinister palm are doomed on the spot to a life of single blessedness. On this account, some young women are known to have come forward twice or thrice to be confirmed, in order to improve their chance for marriage.

CHAPTER XX.

PORTENTS, AUGURIES, AND OMENS.

CUTTING ONE'S NAILS.

One must not cut one's finger or toe nails on a Friday. If anything happens to a nail on the sixth day of the week, the broken part must be bitten off. Neither knife nor scissors must be used by any means.

A SHOE OMEN.

A person who wears away his or her shoes in the middle and fore part of the sole will be fortunate in life. He or she who, on the contrary, either wears out the shoe at one or the other side, and so "cams" it, through walking in a shambling fashion, and setting the feet down carelessly, or else causes it to break out at the toes or go down at the heel, will be unfortunate.

LENDING SALT.

No knowledgeable person will lend salt. "No, indeed," an old crone will say, "I will not lend you any, but I'll give you some. Let's have nyen o' yer salt back here." If you borrow salt, it is very unlucky to return it.

TEA LEAVES.

It is unlucky to throw away tea leaves; they should always be laid on the back of the fire; this keeps away poverty.

FUNERAL OMENS.

He who meets a funeral is certain soon to die, unless he bares his head, turns, and accompanies the procession some distance. If the coffin is carried by bearers he must take a lift. This done, if he bows to the company, he may turn and go on his way without fear. If, at a funeral, the sun shines brightly on the face of one of the attendants, it marks him for the next to be laid in that churchyard; and persons aware of this take care to place themselves, during the interment, on the south or east side of the grave. If the sound of the earth falling on the coffin be heard by any person at a considerable distance from the spot, it presages a death in that person's family.

SAILORS' DREAMS.

If a Sailor dreams that the ship has signed articles to sail, it will be lost on the voyage; no consideration will tempt him to go to sea in her. He would ten times rather go to jail. In a case of this kind, not long ago, the man told the Magistrate that he was satisfied with the ship, officers, and food, but he had had a dream that the ship would be lost, and would not go to sea in her for any amount of money. Once before, he added, he had a dream that the vessel in which he was sailing would be lost, and it was lost.

SUPERNATURAL GIFTS.

The seventh successive son and the ninth successive daughter are supposed to be endowed with supernatural

powers. On the other hand, the illegitimate child of an illegitimate man or woman cannot enter, it is said, into the kingdom of heaven. We once knew a poor fellow who believed this to be true.

SUPERSTITIONS OF SAILORS.

A correspondent of the *Sunderland Times*, whose initials were A.J.G., writes on the subject as follows :— "It is not a little strange that the men who face terrible dangers oftener than any others, the men who are supposed to be the boldest and hardiest, should be the most superstitious. The most common omen current among sailors is that it is unlucky to put to sea on a Friday. It is accounted very unlucky to lose a water bucket or mop. To throw the cat overboard or drown one at sea is the same, and a storm is bound to be the consequence of such a rash deed. Children are deemed lucky to a ship. Whistling at sea is supposed to cause increase of wind. This belief is supposed to arise from an old dread of the potency of his Satanic Majesty in stirring up a storm, and to abstain from whistling is thought to conciliate his feelings—wherein generally is implied a most delicate compliment to his Highness's ear for music. The appearance of dolphins and of porpoises, disporting themselves in the water, is held to presage a gale."

TO TEST A LOVER'S TROTH.

The maidens in Durham are wont to test their lovers' fidelity by taking an apple pip, and, naming the lover, putting it in the fire. If it makes a noise as it bursts

with the heat, the experimenter is assured of her young man's affection; but if it burns away silently, she will be convinced that he has no true regard for her, and will forsake her whenever to do so serves his turn.

WISHING CHAIRS.

We have wishing chairs here and there throughout the North Country. There is one at Finchale Priory; and he who seats himself in it, breathes a wish, and tells no one what it is, will possibly receive it.

SPITTING ON A HORSE SHOE.

If you see a horse shoe, a piece of old iron, or even a nail, on your path, take it up, spit on it, and throw it over your left shoulder, wishing for something at the same time. Then keep the wish an inviolate secret, even from your wife or husband, if you have one, and you will be sure to have it gratified, if you wait long enough.

MINOR SUPERSTITIONS.

The following list of little superstitions, still extant in the County of Durham, was supplied to Mr. Henderson by a careful observer:—"It is counted lucky there to carry in the pocket a crooked sixpence, or a one with a hole in it, or to put a stocking on, through inadvertence, inside out. People with meeting eye-brows are thought fortunate fellows. It is lucky to set a hen on an odd number of eggs; set her on even ones, and you will have no chickens. Again, if two persons wash their hands

together in the same basin, they will be sure to fall out before bed time. If a person's hair burn brightly when thrown into the fire, it is a sign of longevity; the brighter the flame the longer the life. On the other hand, if it smoulder away, and refuse to burn, it is a sign of approaching death. If the nose itches, it is a sign that you will be crossed, or vexed, or kissed by a fool; if the foot, it foretells that you will soon tread on strange ground. Itching of the right hand portends receiving money; of the left hand, paying money; of the ear, hearing sudden news. If the right ear tingles, you are being spoken well of; if the left ear, some one is speaking ill of you. If you shiver, some one is walking over your future grave. If you stumble up stairs (by accident), you will be married the same year; if you snuff out the candle you certainly will. If you sing before breakfast you will cry before supper. If you put a button or hook into the wrong hole while dressing in the morning, some misfortune will occur during the day. A mole at the back of the neck marks out the bearer of it as in danger of hanging." Here follow some more omens of the same kind:—Spring has not arrived till you can set your foot upon twelve daisies. If you take violets or primroses to a house in less quantity than a handful, all the owner's young chickens or chicks will die. Before you kill anything that is to be eaten it is necessary to wash your face; otherwise the meat will not keep. Eat pancakes on Shrove-Tuesday, and grey peas on Ash-Wednesday, and you will have money in your pockets all the year

round. To sweep the dust out of your house by the front door is to sweep away the good fortune of your family; it ought to be swept inwards, and carried out in a basket or shovel, and then no harm will follow. It is unlucky, after one has started on a journey, to be recalled and told of something previously forgotten; but the spell may be broken by asking for meat and drink, and partaking of it. No one should, on any account, lend another a pin; say—"You may take one, but, mind, I do not give it." To make anyone a present of a knife or other sharp implement is sure to cut friendship or love. Mr. Henderson has heard in Durham of a schoolmaster who wished to reward one of his pupils with a knife, but dared not do so without first receiving from the boy a penny, in order that the knife might be purchased, not given. Every body knows it is unlucky to spill salt. Rooks and swallows are lucky birds; where they come to a place and take possession of it, the people are sure to thrive; whereas a place which they desert, or from which they are driven away, is always an unlucky place.

DISAGREEABLE DREAMS.

If you dream that a cat is lying on your bed, you are going to encounter an enemy who will give you trouble. If you dream about your teeth getting loose and falling out, you are going to lose a friend.

SIGNIFICANT DREAMS.

A reverend gentleman in Barnard Castle—a near relative of my own—used to pray every evening that the dreams of himself and household might be "spiritual

and significant." There is, indeed, a very general belief in the significance and fulfilment of dreams. A remarkable discovery of a dead body by means of a dream took place in South Durham in the year 1848, and was narrated in the papers of the day. Mr. Smith, gardener to Sir Clifford Constable, was supposed to have fallen into the Tees, his hat and stick having been found near the water side, and the river was dragged for some time, but without success. A man named Awde, from Little Newsham, a small village four miles from Wycliffe, then dreamt that poor Smith was lying under the ledge of a certain rock about 300 yards below Whorlton Bridge, and that his right arm was broken. The dream so affected this man, that he got up early and set out at once to search the river. He went to the boat-house, told his story to the person in charge there, and asked for the boat. He rowed to the spot he had seen in his dream, and on the first trial he made with the boat-hook, he drew up the body of the drowned man, and found his right arm actually broken. A few years ago a plate-layer, named William Potts, was killed on the North-Eastern Railway at Washington, by being knocked down and run over by a goods train. The night before the accident, a little girl, who lived next door to the engine driver of the goods train, dreamed that she saw the engine knock a plate-layer down, who was at the time driving in a "wooden key" with his hammer, and run over him, killing him on the spot. The thing was so strongly impressed on the mind of the girl, who was then an

invalid, that the first thing she did in the morning was to go and tell the engineman's wife; and when her husband came home she related to him the dream as it had been told to her, when he told her what had happened on his journey home from York. The wife was the more affected at the circumstance, from the fact that the deceased and herself had been acquainted with each other almost from childhood. It was concluded that he was really employed at "keys" or "chairs," according to the dream, from the fact that there were some out near the spot where he was killed.

UNLUCKY HOUSES.

"Aye, shour, we're removin', honne'," said a shipmaster's wife in Bishopwearmouth, as she stood at the door of her domicile one day, with her household goods around her: "folks say it's all them unlucky houses. My hoosband was three times shipwrecked in our first house. Then we removed; but we had ney sooner gettin' into the next house than he was browt on shore in the life-boat. Aw's shour I hope we'll hev better luck in the house we're gan tey."

LAYING A LOAF UPSIDE DOWN.

You must on no account lay a loaf on the table, or, [illegible], anywhere, upside down. To do so is, in the sight of all old housewives, a serious fault.

WINDING WORSTED.

In the County of Durham, in the old times of our grandmothers, it was reckoned unlucky to wind worsted by candlelight. No sailor's or shipowner's wife, at any rate, would do it, as it would have been sure to "wind away the ship's luck."

THE NEW MOON.

If a person happens to have money in his pocket when he first sees the new moon, he will certainly not want money that month. There is an equivoque in this. It is unlucky to see the new moon first through the window.

CANDLE OMENS.

Candles and other lights burn blue and dim when invisible beings are present, especially if they be evil spirits. "A letter at the candle," as it is called, caused by a hair or some other foreign substance, collecting some of the half melted tallow round it and preventing it from dissolving, is regarded as the fore-runner of some strange news. "A spail at the candle," which is a similar appearance, in the shape of a chip, or rather shaving of wood, prognosticates death in the house—generally that of the person who sits opposite to it, or some one very near and dear to him or her.

A CINDER FLYING OUT OF THE FIRE.

When household coal is full of gas, the bubbles produced in burning not unfrequently burst, and throw off hot sparks or flakes which are apt to burn holes in the

carpet (if there is any), or might even set the house on fire, if not promptly stamped out. If the explosion is a silent one, as sometimes happens, the spark or cinder signifies a coffin; if it rattles, it means a purse.

HANDSEL.

Fishwomen and huxters have from time to time immemorial been in the habit of handselling, that is, spitting upon the first bit of money they receive in a morning, so as to render it lucky. They say it makes it draw more money to it. The Danes and Swedes, as well as the Scots, use the same word—handsel, handsol, hansel,—to signify the same thing.

SIGNS OF BEING A WITCH.

"Hinny, if ye ivver gan intiv a house, an' ye see a person there who has eye-brows meetin' each other, that person's a witch. An' you must be sure to cross yourself, and close the fingers of your left hand over your thumb; and that takes away her power. I always de'd, an' they can do nothing to us." Such was the sage advice tendered to a young woman by an old crone, in the hearing of a friend of mine, a short time ago. To follow it, it is clear, could do no harm.

SNEEZING.

Many a Durham dame—mother, nurse, friend, or simple acquaintance,—never hears a person sneezing, and particularly a child, without ejaculating the brief prayer: "God bless thee!"

HARVEST BLESSING.

Seventy or eighty years ago, nobody ever passed a body of reapers in harvest time without shouting—"Forther ye!" to which the response was "thank ye!" A similar custom is alluded to in the book of Ruth (II. 4), wherein it is said that when Boaz came from Bethlehem he said unto the reapers "The Lord be with you!" and they answered him "The Lord be with thee!"

BREAKING THE RAINBOW.

The children hereabouts cut the rainbow in two, or at least fancy they do so, by laying two straws on the ground in the form of a cross. Shortly after they have done so, the rainbow always falls asunder. The weather-wise call it a "weather gall," Scotice weather ga', when only a small piece of the end of a rainbow, near the horizon, is visible. It has this name evidently from its colour.

GOING SUN-WAYS ROUND.

"The dead maun aye go wi' the sun." This custom originated in the notion that it is unlucky to walk in procession in a contrary way to that in which the sun goes. When the wind veers round northerly from east to west, old farmers observe that fine weather seldom follows; but that when it goes sun-ways round, or "south about," a favourable change may be expected. From this the general conclusion has been drawn, that to go against the sun's course (in German "widersonne," Scotch "withershins") is purposely to bring ill luck, not on the individual who does so, however, but on those against whom he harbours ill-will.

THE EAST WIND.

A wind from the East
Is good for neither man nor beast.

There is reckoned to be something very remarkably unwholesome in East winds, and particularly North-easters. They cause headaches, cramps, lumbagoes, rheumatisms, and a host of serious disorders. One old commandant at Tynemouth is said to have suffered so dreadfully from them, that when he looked out in the morning, and saw the weather-cock pointing in the dreaded direction, he never shewed face outside again that day. Some of the men, observing this, climbed up and nailed the weather-cock with its bill to the East, and so kept the old gentleman indoors for six or seven weeks. Every morning when he arose, his first exclamation was, "There it is still—always the same!" adding a round volley of oaths.

THE HURRICANE OF 1839.

Mr. Luke Mackey, of South Shields, communicates the following item :—"A farmer's wife at West Cowton, near Croft, was the cause of the hurricane of June, 1839. She was blamed by a butcher with stealing some meat from him, and in revenge read the 1—6 psalms backwards, and prayed that the winds might rise. My informant, Matthew Crawford, knife grinder, &c., was living there at the time, and says there are numbers of people who can attest it. The farmer's wife, he adds, left West Cowton shortly after, the place being too hot to hold her." The storm here referred to was one of the most violent that ever visited the North. There is a good account of it in "Fordyce's Local Records."

WHIN-BURNING.

It is a common notion in the North of England, and also in the South of Scotland, that Whin-burning breaks the weather; likewise moor-burning, and even "wrack-" burning—especially the former.

STARS NEAR THE MOON.

The appearance of a star near the moon is an omen of bad or stormy weather being not far distant.

SNAKE STONES.

In Scott's Marmion, the Nuns of Whitby are recorded to have told exultingly

> ——how, of thousand snakes, each one
> Have changed into a coil of stone,
> When Holy Hilda prayed;
> Themselves, within their holy bound,
> Their stony folds had often found.

Specimens of the seemingly petrified snakes, or snake-stones, as they are called, may still be seen in many a house in the County Palatine, carefully kept. The good Saint Hilda, it was said, knocked off their heads, and the fact is that all of them are headless, the reason being, however, that they never had any; for they are not snakes at all, but fossil shell fish or ammonites. One of the Flint Jack fraternity, some time ago, made a pretty good livelihood by attaching stone heads to these fossils, and selling them to ignorant tourists.

CHAPTER XXI.

OLD WOMEN'S CURES, CHARMS, &c.

CONCERNING THE TEETH.

It was by eating the forbidden fruit that toothache was first caused. So you will be gravely told by many sage matrons. Even after the tooth is drawn there is still some mysterious connection between it and the gums. For if it is thrown away and allowed to rot, you will have gumboil or some other plague of the kind until it has been fairly dissolved away. To prevent this, when a decayed tooth is extracted, salt should be put into the hollow part, and it should be thrown into the fire. In the case of a young person losing his or her first teeth, the old woman who pulls the loose grinder out with her fingers or by means of a pack thread, will say, as she devotes it to the devouring element :—

> "Fire, fire, burn the byen !
> God send thee thy tyeuth agyen."

SALT WORKERS ESCAPING THE PLAGUE.

A tradition prevails at Shields, that when the plague raged there, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the persons employed about the salt works entirely escaped the infection.

CURE FOR WHOOPING COUGH.

Take the child affected with whooping cough to a tan-yard, and hold it for some time over the pit while the hides are being turned over. Or put a live trout's head into the mouth of the sufferer, so as to let it breathe therein. Or make it sup porridge made over a stream running from north to south. Or tie a hairy caterpillar (locally Hairy 'Ubert) in a small bag round the child's neck, so that when it dies, the cough may vanish. Or carry the patient through the smoke of a lime-kiln. Or catch a shrew mouse, make a holocaust of it (that is, burn it to ashes) and administer the water in which the ashes are put to the child as a curative draught. Or, take the patient to the gas works to breathe the air engendered there. Another remedy current in Sunderland is to have the crown of the head shaved, and the hair hung upon a bush or tree, when the birds carrying it away to their nests will carry away the cough with it. Still further, the sufferer may be passed nine times over the back and nine times under the belly of a donkey, or of a piebald pony, with good hopes of a cure. Another infallible cure is said to be, to bake a cake on Good Friday, hang it up to dry thoroughly, so that it will not mould, and grate as much of it as you think will do, when a child happens to take the whooping cough, and give it the powder in a warm drink.

A REMEDY FOR GOITRE.

The Rev. J. W. Hicks, incumbent of Byers Green, near Bishop Auckland, informed Mr. Henderson, that

on asking a parishioner afflicted with Goitre, whether he had tried any measure for curing it, he answered :—"No, I have not, though I have been a sufferer for eleven years. But a very respectable man told me to-day that it would pass away if I rub a dead child's hand nine times across the lump (the hand of a suicide will do equally well). I've not much faith in it myself, but I've just tried it." Somewhat similar measures were resorted to, Mr. Henderson tells us, on the authority of the Rev. H. B. Tristram, of Greatham Hospital, by another sufferer, not many years ago. "The body of a suicide, who had hanged himself in Heselden-dene, not far from Hartlepool, was laid in an out-house, awaiting the coroner's inquest. The wife of a pitman at Castle Eden Colliery, suffering from a wen in the neck, according to advice given her by a 'wise woman,' went along and lay all night in the out-house, with the hand of the corpse on her wen. She had been assured that the hand of a suicide was an infallible cure. The shock to the nervous system from that terrible night was so great that she did not rally for some months, and eventually died from the wen. This happened about the year 1853."

CURE FOR THE STY.

A great relief, if not a perfect cure, for that troublesome and painful swelling on the eye-lid, commonly called a *sty*, by learned doctors *hordeolum*, is supposed to be effected by the application to the tumour of a wedding ring, nine times repeated.

CURE FOR EPILEPSY.

Let a half-crown piece that has been offered by some person on going to Holy Communion, and begged for from the priest, be made into a ring to be worn by an epileptic patient, and it will infallibly cure him.

TO CAUSE OR TO REMOVE WARTS.

Wash your hands with water in which eggs have been boiled, and it will cause warts; wash them nine times with the water in which potatoes have been boiled, and it will cure them. Or, for the latter purpose, take a large black snail, rub the wart well with it, and throw the poor creature against a thorn hedge, so as to impale it on one of the twigs; as the snail melts away, so will the warts. Another way:—Put into a small bag as many pebbles as there are warts on your hands, and drop it at a place where four roads meet. Whoever picks up the bag will get the warts. A fourth plan is to steal a piece of beef from a butcher's shop and rub the warts with it, after which the beef must be thrown into a place where it will lie and rot, and as it rots the warts will fade away. A fifth, sometimes adopted, is to make as many knots on a hair as there are warts on the hands, and throw it to the winds. The application of eel's blood is likewise supposed to cure warts. Boys take a new pin, cross the warts with it nine times, and fling it over the left shoulder; or they cut an apple in two, rub the warts with each half, tie the halves together again, and bury them in the ground. In the latter case, as the apple decays, the warts will disappear.

CHARMS AGAINST CRAMP.

Mr. Henderson says:—"School-boys have their superstitions and legendary rites. In my own day, and perhaps at the present time, no boy would commit himself to the Wear without the precaution of an eel-skin tied round his left leg to save him from cramp. Well do I remember thus fortifying myself against danger, before plunging into the stream." A charm often used by folks who are troubled with cramp in their limbs—a most excruciating malady—is to take a roll of sulphur or common brimstone in each hand when they go to bed, and keep it there all night. I have known this done in several cases, it was said with good effect. Another charm is to wear a cramp ring, made out of the handle of a decayed coffin. Such rings used formerly to be blessed by the priest on Good Friday. They were either worn on the finger or placed next the skin on the limb subject to the cramp.

CHAPTER XXII.

MORE GHOSTS.

A HYLTON CHAPEL GHOST.

Many years ago—our authority is George Gamsby's grandmother, who has been dead for half-a-century, and who was eighty years old when she died—a sailor named Wull, who lived at Hylton, was returning home one night along the north bank of the Wear, when a woman came out of the hedge, between High Southwick and Hylton Castle, laid her hand upon his shoulder and walked along with him. She said nothing, and he said nothing; but the sweat poured off him like water. When he came to the small chapel near the castle, she disappeared, gliding down the two or three steps and through the little gate leading to the cemetery attached, at the foot of the slope next the river. He got home, but he scarcely knew how, and as soon as he crossed the threshold he fainted away, and it was a good while before he came to.

APPARITION AT STOCKTON.

In Mr. W. D'Oyly Bailey's "History of the House of D'Oyly," the following passage occurs:—"Many cases are related by the superstitious of persons who, dying abroad, have in their last moments visited or appeared

to their friends at many thousand miles distance. That a most remarkable instance of this occurred in Mr. Bailey's house at Stockton, between the hours of twelve and one, midnight, close upon the time when it was afterwards ascertained Lieut. T. D'Oyly (the late Mr. Bailey's nephew), died in the East Indies, the author can vouch for, as it was communicated to him some weeks before news of Lieut. Thomas D'Oyly's decease reached England."

THE MISER'S GHOST AND THE BOX-MAKER.

Surtees, in his "History of Durham," quotes the following wonderful story said to have been told by Bishop Gunning, who had it from a doctor who came out of the Bishopric of Durham, in the year 1671 :—Lately there lived a usurer in Durham who spoke to a boxmaker of his acquaintance, to make him a box to hold about £208, which he did; after this the usurer died and left neither will nor money that anyone knew of, and so he was buried; after this his ghost appeared to the box-maker in the night, made him rise and carried him over hedge and ditch into a meadow; and there made him dance till he was quite tired, and so left him; and served him so a second time; and came the third time, and then the box-maker did speak to the ghost, asking him what he would have him to do for him; then the ghost bid him follow him into a barn, and there showed him where the box which he made was hid full of gold and silver; and then gave him his will in writing, making

the boxmaker swear to perform the same, which accordingly he did, and got well by it too; and after that the ghost came to give him his thanks, and told him, to gratify his care and due observance of his will, he would tell him a secret that should be for his good but he must swear to keep it; and then he told him and left him.

WAFTS.

The waft, waff, or fetch, is the apparition of a dying person, manifestfng itself at his or her departure from this world, to a friend at an indefinite distance. In Scotland it is known as the wraith. The belief in it is common all over the country, and we have heard many examples of it quoted. Sir Cuthbert Sharpe says that "at Hartlepool 'waffs' were still common in his time, and few persons died there before their neighbours had seen their 'waff.'" Indeed he tells us that "some persons have seen their own 'waffs,' and under the conviction that their death before long was thereby predicted, have seldom recovered from the impression." The 'waft' usually takes the form of the person about to die, but not always. For a strange cat or dog, a hare crossing the road, or some other startling appearance, is sometimes, from coincidence of time, supposed to be the waft of a friend in the article of death.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGES.

Near every ancient castle, cathedral, abbey or hall, the common people have traditionary tales of underground (vaulted) roads, sometimes to great distances, such as from Durham to Finchale Abbey, from Raby Castle to Staindrop Church, from the Bishop's Manor House to Darlington Church, from the Green Cove at Hartlepool to the Church there, from Wearmouth Monastery, or some say Hylton Castle, to the sea at Roker (Spottie's Hole). The latter, called also more euphoniously the Monk's Cavern, was partially explored some eighty years ago, by three of the inhabitants of Monkwearmouth, as related by Garbutt (History of Sunderland, p. 89). "After they had advanced a little way from the entrance, they found the passage perfectly good, in general allowing them to walk upright, and entirely hewn out of the limestone rock, with which this place is surrounded. Having proceeded a considerable distance in the direction of the site of the monastery, without meeting with any considerable impediment, they thought it prudent to return, on account of the danger of coming in contact with foul air, to which they might have been exposed by a further progress." The local song of "Spottie," written by Mr. Thomas Clarke, of Sunderland, father of

Mr. Thomas Clarke, of Silver Street, in that town, who died in 1816, and preserved by Sir Cuthbert Sharp, in his "Bishoprick Garland," has immortalised the memory of a poor foreign refugee, who took up his residence for some time in this dreary abode, and communicated his sobriquet to it. Being unable to speak the English language, his daily subsistence was gained among the farm houses in the neighbourhood, where he endeavoured to make himself understood by means of signs, and was known by the name of Spottee, on account of the variegated spots on his upper garment. Having lived for some time in this subterraneous habitation, he suddenly disappeared, and was supposed either to have died suddenly, or, by advancing too far into the cavern, to have fallen a prey to foul air. Poor Spottee, whoever he was, and whatever became of him, furnished the subject for one of the most racy local songs that ever was written, a song which Topliff used to sing with peculiar gusto, and which Captain Edward Robinson preferred to act in character, in a style which no one can ever hope to equal. The following stanza is a specimen of the composition :—

The aud weyves o'Wibburn they divv'nt knaw what for te dey ;
They darn't come alang the sands, wi' their sweels i' their hands,
te sell their lang tyel'd skyets at Jacob Spenceley's landin', as
they you'sd for te dey ;
Now they're fworced te tyek a cobble, an' come in by the sey.

"Flowter's Flowd," mentioned in one of the stanzas, seems to be a vulgarism for "Slater's Flood," and if so,

the reference is to one Slater, a bailiff of Durham, whose dead corpse, when being taken from St. Nicholas' parish in that city for burial at St. Oswald's, had to be carried round by Elvet and Rotten Row, owing to a great flood in the river Wear, which rose that day (8th July, 1721) higher than had ever been remembered. "The Life and Adventures of Little Spottee, the Hermit of the Rock" —entirely fanciful—are contained in a ballad written by John Young, Bishopwearmouth, and published and sold (without date) by W. Sutherland, Bedford Street, North Shields. The song is golden, the ballad only tinsel.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MISCELLANEOUS.

HOLY WELLS.

At Monkton, near Jarrow, the reputed birth-place of Bede, there is a famous well which bears his name. Its waters have long been in great repute for their health-giving properties. As late as the year 1740, says Brand, it was a prevailing custom to bring children troubled with any disease or infirmity to it. A crooked pin was put in, and the well laid dry between each dipping—a curious association of ideas, for here, as at the Pool of Bethesda, beside the sheep market in Jerusalem, only one patient could receive benefit, it seems, after each troubling of the waters. Brand's informant had seen twenty children brought together on a Sunday to be dipped in Bede's well, at which also, on Midsummer Eve, there was a great concourse of neighbouring people, with bonfires, music, dancing and other rural sports, This and other merry customs have long been discontinued. But still when the well is occasionally cleared out, a number of crooked pins (a few years ago a pint) are always found among the mud. These have been thrown into the sacred fount for some purpose or other, either in a general way as charms for luck, or to promote and secure true love, or for the benefit of sick babies.

In days when the ague was common in this country, the usual offering at this and other holy wells, by the shivering and shaking Gaffer Grays and Goody Blakes of the period, was a bit of rag tied to the branch of an overhanging tree or bush. The particularly fine springs of Houghton, from which the town receives its distinctive appelation of *le-Spring*, are all chalybeate. One of them, situated in Newbottle Lane, is still called the Holy Well. This name is said to have been imposed upon it in the year 700, when the Venerable Bede and his attendants passed through Houghton, and regaled themselves with "the fine beverage of nature" at this particular fountain. Of the Holy Wells at Shotley, Brancepeth, Butterby, Hartlepool, &c., little more can be said, but that they have all more or less powerful medicinal properties, though without any local traditions attaching to them.

THE HELL KETTLES.

Holinshed, in his "Chronicles of England," published in 1677, says:—"What the foolish people dream of the Hell Kettles, it is not worthy the rehearsal; yet to the end the lewd opinions concerning them may grow into contempt, I will say this much also of these pits. There are certain pits, or rather three little pools, a mile from Darlington, and a quarter of a mile distant from the These [Tees] banks, which people call the Kettles of Hell, or the Devil's Kettles, as if he should seethe souls of sinful men and women in them. They add also, that

the spirits have oft been heard to cry and yell about them, with other like talk, savouring altogether of pagan infidelity." Mr. Manson, of Darlington, in his "Zigzag Rambles," gives the best account I have seen of these mysterious ponds.

THE GIANTS COR, BEN, AND CON.

Corbridge, Benfieldside, and Consett, got their names, it is said, from three giants, whose names form the first syllables of the words respectively. They were brothers, and they had a huge hammer in common, which each, at a whistle, could throw nine miles. On one occasion, when Con, who had become blind, threw the hammer, it fell short, and made Howden, which, as the name indicates, is a hollow dene near Consett. I am inclined to suspect that Cor was no other than Thor, the Norse God of Thunder, whose hammer—the mauler or smasher—had the property of returning to his hand, like the Australian boomerang, after being hurled.

HOLY BIZONS.

In the good old times, to which some sentimental people would fain return, it was customary to make men or women guilty of certain misdemeanours stand on "the stool of repentance" in church, for three successive Sundays, in face of the whole congregation, and be rebuked by the minister. This penitential act was performed in a white sheet, and the misdemeanant so undergoing purification, was commonly known as a

"Holy Bizon," from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning "an example." But a "Holy Bizon," now, is any shameful person, scold, rogue, termagant or hypocrite, who by the judgment of his or her fellows, ought to be made a public example of. The word "bizon" used by itself, is a shame or scandal, anything monstrous or excessive. Thus, in the local song, "Canny Newcastle," the following verse occurs :—

Wiv a' the stravaigin aw wanted a munch,
An' maw thropple was ready te gizen ;
Se aw went tiv a yell-house, and there tyeuk a lunch,
But the reck'nin', me soul ! was a bizon.

TOO DEAR FOR THE BISHOP OF DURHAM.

The Bishops of Durham, now sadly stinted, were long proverbial for their riches. For a thing to be too dear for the Bishop of Durham to buy meant that it was priceless. In the thirteenth century, a piece of cloth, richly embroidered, was offered for sale, but was held up at so high a price that even the nobles themselves refused or durst not buy. This coming to the ears of Anthony Beck, who then filled the see as prince-bishop, he went immediately and bought it, and ordered that it should be cut into cloths for his sumpter horses. It is likewise recorded that at one time in London, the Bishop of Durham gave forty shillings for forty fresh herrings—the dearest fish of the kind ever heard of.

WHENCE DRYBURN HAD ITS NAME.

On the 27th of May, 1590, four seminary priests, "Papysts, tretors, and rebels to hyr Majestye," were hanged and quartered at Durham "for their horryble offences." Their names were Hill, Hogge, Holiday, and Duke. A brook, near the common gallows, ceased to flow at the time of their execution, and has remained dry ever since; therefore it is called Dryburn to this day. Mr. John Yaxley, a reverend priest, in a letter dated July 17, 1707, says:—"Above twenty years since, I have been shown the hole from whence it issued, and the marks of its former channel."

MARVELS AT BUILDING HILL.

In the year 1767, during a lawsuit raised by Mr. Teasdale Mowbray against Mr. John Thornhill for digging and carrying away stones from the quarry at Building Hill without paying dues for the same, a woman deposed "that her father went to the hill one night for his gavelock, and saw a "waugh;" also, that when a man of the name of Coward was "digging the rock about ninety years ago, he found in a cavity, several fathoms from the surface, a large toad alive, with a nob on its head as big as an egg, full of diamonds, and thereby got a great deal of money."

RHYME ON BULMER STONE, DARLINGTON.

"In Darntoun Towne there is a stane,
And most strange yt is to tell,
That yt turnes IX times round aboute,
When yt hears ye clock strike twell."

In Longstaffe's "History of Darlington," we are told that this truly wonderful revolving stone, though, by-the-bye, it is not singular in this property, stands in front of some low cottages constituting Northgate House, in the street bearing the same name. It is a water-worn boulder-stone of shap (Westmoreland) granite.

SIR JOHN DUCK.

Sir John Duck, the richest burgess in the civic annals of Durham, was bred a butcher under John Heslop, in defiance of the trade and mystery of butchers, who were fully as arbitrary and despotic in the good old times as trade unions in ours. In the books of the trade appears the following entry :—"That he (Heslop) forbear to set John Duck on work in the trade of butcher." Tradition tells that after he was thus cast out and was walking about in a state of extreme despondency, a raven, flying over his head, let fall a piece of silver, which lucky incident made a strong impression on his mind. With the money he bought a calf : the calf, with care and perseverance, ere long became a cow ; the cow became a herd of cattle ; and in the course of a few years he realised a splendid fortune. He built himself a noble mansion in Silver street, and endowed an hospital at Lumley, probably the place of his birth. His death took place on the 26th of August, 1691, and he was buried beside his wife (the daughter of his old master) at the church of St. Margaret, on Monday the 31st of the

same month. He was created a baronet by James the Second. The following rhyme was once current regarding him :—

On Duck, the Butchers shut the door ;
But Heslop's daughter Johnny wed :
In mortgage rich, in offspring poor,
Nor son nor daughter crowned his bed.

RUN AWAY, DOCTOR BOKANKI !

This saying is used by the school-boys and young collegians of Durham, to any of their chums or mates who are guilty of a mean or cowardly act. It arose from the circumstance of Dr. Walter Balcanqual, Dean of Durham, in the time of the Civil Wars, fleeing away from the city with extreme precipitation, after the battle of Newburn, for fear of the Scots. The reason was that he understood they had given out that they would seize upon and punish him as an incendiary, for writing the Kings' "Large Declaration" against them. Balcanqual was a Scotchman, who had followed James I. into England.

THE WANDERING PIPER.

I happened to encounter this famous personage in 1833, when travelling along the great North Road. He was said to be a "gentleman," some said a "nobleman," others more definitely "Lord Glenlyon," or "Lord John Gordon," who, to decide a wager whether he could collect a certain sum of money within a certain time,

without solicitation, by playing on the bagpipes, travelled from town to town, bestowing his receipts on the charitable institutions of each place. At Durham, he made a donation of £1 15s. to the Lying-in-Charity, established for the relief of poor married lying-in-women. It stands recorded in their books as from the "The Wandering Piper." Whether it really was a wager, and whether, if it was, he won it or not, we cannot say. We only recollect that he had a very fine ass to carry his pipes, that he spoke with a sharp Highland accent, and that he looked very like a real nobleman, with long fingers that would have pleased Lord Byron. A portrait of him was published at the time. Many Sunderland people well remember his visit to that town. As he walked about the streets he was followed by a group of boys. One gentleman threw him a sixpence which fell on the ground. A lad called his attention to it. He would not stoop to pick it up, but merely said "Put it into your pocket, my boy"—an order quickly complied with. All money offered to him the donor had to put in his sporran, or at least into his hand.

KING CHARLES I. AT BISHOP AUCKLAND.

On the night of the 4th February, 1646, His Gracious Majesty Charles lay at Christopher Dobson's house in Bishop Auckland. This much we learn from the parish register, quoted by Sir Cuthbert Sharp. And well-supported tradition relates that Gertrude, the eldest sister of Colonel Francis Wren, who was as earnest a

Royalist as her brother was a stern Republican, went to Dobson's to visit the King, and found him in the middle of a large guard room, the soldiers sitting round on benches, smoking tobacco—a practice Charles, like his father, held in utter abomination. Shocked at their uncourtly freedom and want of respect towards royalty, she dashed the pipes from the soldiers' mouths as she advanced towards the King, to whom kneeling, she tendered her respectful homage His Majesty, equally surprised and gratified at such a bold and unexampled proof of attention to his personal comfort, raised her up, saying, "Lady, I thank you ! you have done more than the boldest man in England durst have done." Charles, it may be proper to add, was then "in the hands of the Philistines," having been delivered up to the English Parliament by the Scottish Presbyterians, to whom he had fled for shelter, but with whose hard conditions he refused to comply : and he was then being conveyed to Holmby House, where he was seized and carried off by Colonel Joyce at the instigation of Cromwell.