
3 1761 05728473 9

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/englishfairypoet00delauoft

21

I

ENGLISH FAIRY POETRY

RB

A

DESCRIPTION

Of the King and Queene of *Fayries*, their habit, fare, their abode, pompe, and ſtate.

Beeing very delightfull to the ſenſe, and full of mirth. by R. S.

LONDON,
Printed for *Richard Harper*, and are to be ſold at his ſhop, at the Holpitall gate, 1635.

(BODLEIAN LIBRARY : L 78 ART.)

B34Te

ENGLISH FAIRY POETRY

FROM THE ORIGINS TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

BY

FLORIS DELATTRE

1410 54
13 1 2 16

LONDON, HENRY FROWDE, AMEN CORNER, E.C.
PARIS, HENRI DIDIER, 6, RUE DE LA SORBONNE.
MCMXII.

PN
6110.
F3D45

TO
MY WIFE
AND
MY DAUGHTER

PREFACE

No more has been attempted in the following essay—which may be considered as a by-chapter to the present writer's study on *Robert Herrick*[1]—than to examine the fairy mythology of the British Isles in its connection with, and influence on, English poetry. It aims at tracing the various phases of its development, from the earliest folk-beliefs, still rough and undefined, to the elaborate productions of the XVIIth century, with which English fairy poetry practically came to an end. The estimate of the æsthetic value of such literature has been purposely left aside to give more room for a critical survey of the progressive formation, the modifications, and the decay of the fairy themes, for an historical account of the successive steps that led up from popular tradition to the poetry of art. The matter may seem, at first sight, somewhat trifling : let it be remembered however that some of the greatest English poets have thought it worth their while to expend no small amount of time and labour on the descrip-

[1] Robert Herrick, *Contribution à l'étude de la poésie lyrique en Angleterre au XVII^e siècle*. Paris, F. Alcan, 1912.

tion of Fairyland, and have even made it the subject of several of their unquestioned masterpieces. Having thus cleared the ground, we may be able to go deeper into our research, and to enquire more closely into the important question of the dependence of poetry, of the individual poetry of art, upon folk-lore, that is upon the original beliefs, superstitions and customs of the whole race.

Separate aspects of the subject have already been treated at length by many others, and I beg to acknowledge my indebtedness to my predecessors, of whose writings, as will be easily detected, I have made free use. At the same time, no attempt has yet been made to establish the existence of a common tendency between the various fairy themes, and to trace the historical evolution which they underwent in English poetry from the origins to the XVIIth century. It is hoped that something may be gained by bringing together the hitherto scattered parts of the question; and that the following essay, strictly limited to the essentials as it is, will throw some new light on a few points which, by themselves, would appear but commonplace topics to the literary student.

It must be added that no statement has been taken at second hand, but has always been scrupulously verified. The quotations have been borrowed, whenever possible, from the earliest editions and I have thought it desirable to adhere faithfully

to the original texts. I have also given in an appendix a complete transcript of *A Description of the King and Queene of Fayries*, a short pamphlet of some interest which, published in London in 1635, has never been reprinted; one copy only is known to exist, and is now preserved in the Bodleian Library.

Lastly, I wish to express my sincere thanks to those who have helped me : to the officials of the British Museum and of the Bodleian Library, who have always shown me the utmost courtesy; to Professor R. Huchon, who has examined my manuscript; and to my friends Ch. Fleurant and J. K. Rooker who have, with the greatest kindness, gone over the proof sheets, and offered many valuable suggestions.

F. D.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

ELVES, FAIRIES, AND FAYS

The fairy belief is a very ancient one. It belongs to pre-historic times, to that unrecorded past over which hangs an all but impenetrable haze. It seems to have been widely spread, if not general, among the so-called Aryans. It consists of such mythical elements as lie at the root of all history. Primitive man, in his attempt to explain the natural phenomena around him, was apt to regard all objects as animate, as instinct with a life akin to his own, even as possessed of a conscious personality. These beings, haunting hill or forest, dwelling in the caverns of the earth or in the deep waters, appeared all the more awful to him as they were the more mysterious. They were no doubt far more powerful than men, hence they must be feared, paid homage to, made friends with if possible, that they might perform those services which the peasant expected at their hands ; or they must be appeased by some rites, lest they should visit the offender with dire punishment. These traditions may

have been strengthened in the minds of the people by the surviving memory of the Iberians, short, stumpy, dark-haired and dark-eyed men dwelling underground, who occupied Europe before they were subdued by the Aryans. Or these supernatural beings may be associated with the spirits of the dead coming back again to the earth. In any case, the fairy belief formed no little part of popular religion, of that occult system which, to the peasant's simple mind, controlled the world. It is found throughout Europe, its outline being only qualified by the particular characteristics of each nation. In Greece, for instance, these mysterious spirits were fair maidens named according to the different parts of nature which they represented: Ὠκεανίδες, Νηρείδες, or Νηιάδες, those of the watery element, whether of the Mediterranean or of the springs and rivers; Ὀρειάδες, the nymphs of mountains and grottoes; Ἀλσηΐδες, Ὑλήωροί, Αὐλωνιάδες, the nymphs of forests and groves; Δρυάδες, Ἁραδρυάδες, the nymphs of trees; and all these 'nymphs,' *νύμφαι*, were young and gracious, easily pleased with such petty sacrifices of goats, lambs, milk, or oil as were offered them by their rural worshippers. In the northern countries of Europe, on the other hand, where life wears a gloomier aspect, there entered into the conception of the fairy-world less the idea of beauty than that of fear, and even dread. Its inhabitants were harder to please, more fond of

darkness and solitude, cross-grained and, at times, deliberately harmful, though a few of them proved not incapable of some clumsy kindness. In England especially, and long before English literature began, three kinds of supernatural beings were to be met with, originally and essentially identical, no doubt, but marked with such distinct traits as will warrant a separate treatment: namely the *Elves* of Teutonic mythology; the *Fairies* of Celtic tradition; and the *Fays* of Arthurian romance.

I

The *Elves*,[1] who appear in the northern mythologies under various names and guises: *hobgoblin*, *brownie*, *nix*, *kobold*, *dwarf*, *bogle*, *troll*, *kelpie*, belong especially to the folk-creed. They are tiny beings in human shape, only a few inches high, and of a somewhat shrunken aspect. They form two well-defined classes: the *light* elves, or elves of the light and sky, "brighter than the sun," and the *dark* ones, "blacker than pitch," who dwell in the woods, or in the mountain-caves. The former are white, but frail and dainty; some of them are of dazzling beauty, and are often seen combing out their long golden hair in the moonlight. The latter are misshapen, almost like

[1] A. S. *ælf, ylf*; akin to M. H. G. *alp*, nightmare, incubus.

dwarfs in outward appearance, and, with their club-heads and hunch-backs, decidedly ugly.

Both the *light* and the *dark* elves live in large companies. They are fond of carolling and dancing at midnight in the meadows. The grass grows rank where they have stood, in "green sour ringlets whereof the ewe not bites." Woe to him who treads upon such places, as he may be struck blind, or pine away in some mysterious sickness. Again, the elves are much given to spinning and weaving overnight, and the gossamer that is found on the dewy leaves at break of day is the fruit of their labour. Their intercourse with man does not always run smooth. They are fond of teasing him and worrying him out of his wits. As they can make themselves invisible, they play all sorts of tricks upon him, skulking into the dairy and stealing his cheese, milking his cows dry in the meadows, robbing him under his very nose, pinching him black and blue. That love of mischief not seldom drifts into downright malice when the "good people," or "good neighbours," as they are called in a conciliatory way, either kidnap some buxom girl, snatch unbaptized children from their cradles, leaving in their stead their own unshapely brats, or visit with diseases both man and beast. More often, however, they appear less evil-minded. They live on peaceful terms with the country people, and are quite ready to help them as best they

can, especially with the household duties. Many a hobgoblin is attached to a particular family, on whom he will bestow all manner of good offices. Stealing at night through a chink into the stable, he despatches the work of the farm-boy : he rubs down the horses, combs their manes, fetches the hay from the loft, draws water from the well. In the kitchen, as nothing is more loathsome to him than slovenliness, he washes the plates and dishes, sweeps the floor, gets the fire ready, toils at the churn till the maid, on coming downstairs in the early morning, finds her milk already one solid lump of butter. In requital of his pains a trifling wage is all he asks for : a wee potful of cream, for instance, to be left on the window-sill, or on the bottom step of the stairs. Should the servant forget it but one night, the goblin would immediately leave the house, nor would he fail to tweak the neglectful wench out of her heavy sleep.

And yet, *light* and *dark* elves alike, whether those who haunt the streams in the shape of bewitching maidens, singing wild weird songs to men and luring them into the fatal depths ; or those who dwell in the woods, walk up to the woodcutters and beg them for a scrap of dinner, which they repay sooner or later after a fashion of their own ; or those who, red-haired and red-bearded, with a red pointed hat and its tinkling bells, are drudging in the house in the most obliging and neighbourly way, all of them, however harmful or

merely tricksy, stand somewhat in awe of man, whose enormous height and strength, as compared with their own dwarfish stature, fill them with no little reverence. They will call upon him on certain occasions to borrow baking and brewing vessels, or to assist their wives in travail. Their disposition towards him displays on the whole an odd combination of good and evil, of kindness and duplicity, a sort of hostile shyness, one might almost say, together with something heathenish, which makes it so hard for them to deal plainly with Christians. They partake of that sad, sombre outlook on life which is the main characteristic of Teutonic mythology. Through the whole elf belief there runs an under-current of morose gravity, a bitter sense of fate and doom, just as though the unsightly sprites were spitefully resenting their lowly condition, if not their kinship with the malignant demons.

II

The Celtic *Fairies* [1] resemble in some respects the Teutonic *Elves*. Both Celts and Teutons, who belonged to the same primitive race, the Aryans, shared in the same mythological beliefs ; and when the Picts, Jutes, Saxons, Danes or other

[1] O. F. *Faerie, Faierie* : the land or home of the fays ; hence a collective term for the inhabitants of fairyland ; and afterwards a name for every individual member of the fairy tribe.

sons of the North invaded England, the hardy paganism which they brought with them blended readily enough with the fairydom of their Celtic neighbours and subjects. Thus the fairy creed of the British Celts bears some resemblance to the elf belief of Teutonic mythology. Fairies, like elves, dwell underground and are fond of the green meads, where they indulge in their midnight revels, although in Wales a lake often takes the place of the Irish "fairy hill." Both usually assume the human shape, and are like men in not a few respects: they marry, and bear children, the female fairies, however, beautiful as they are, only giving birth to an ugly, ailing brood which they exchange, whenever they are given a chance, for healthy babes. Both love order and neatness. Both, and Celtic fairies especially, are quick at taking offence, and, often enough, lay the peasant or his cattle under a spell. The English *Hobgoblin* or *Robin Good-Fellow* is called *puck*, or more accurately *pwcca* in Wales, *pooka* or *púca* in Ireland, *poake* in Worcestershire, *pixy* in the West of England. He is chiefly an evil spirit, leading travellers astray into the bogs, taking all sorts of shapes, that of an ass for instance, when he beguiles some foot-sore passer-by to mount upon his back, of which the poor fellow soon repents. Another fairy connected with Teutonic elfdom, but quite peculiar to Ireland, is called the *Lepra-caun*. He is an old, withered, solitary goblin who makes shoes for the fairies, which, when

dancing, they wear out in no time ; he has grown very rich, but, an arrant curmudgeon, must be threatened, if not fairly cudgelled, into showing to the "little people" the mysterious places where his treasures lie hidden.

Besides these inferior, somewhat gross and barbarous, divinities of fairy mythology common to the peasant belief of Teuton and Celt alike, the Celtic fairy-world includes a good many denizens peculiar to and justly representative of the race. "Sentimental," wrote Matthew Arnold in his famous essay so keenly interpretative, despite its superficial knowledge, "if the Celtic nature is to be characterised by a single term, is the best term to take." And further on: "For good and for bad, the Celtic genius is more airy and unsubstantial, goes less near the ground than the German."[1] Thus, instead of the bustling crowd of stumpy, dwarfish elves, homely, practical, hard-working, so uncouth with their sturdy looks and rough, grotesque humour, there appear among the Celts whole families of fairies, graceful, restless, open-hearted, passionate, sensitive to joys and sorrows alike. In some parts of Ireland, the fairies, according to the peasant belief, were a number of the fallen Angels who, being less guilty than the rest, had escaped their brethren's dreadful fate, and were allowed to remain on earth. Or they belonged to such divine tribes as the Tuatha

[1] *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, pp. 100-2.

dé Danann, of the Gaelic myth, or their kin, the Welsh gods of the Mabinogion; they were the "givers of life," deathless therefore, and the bestowers of fruitfulness; but being no longer worshipped they had dwindled away in the popular mind, till they were only remembered as fairies. Such was Finvarra, the Irish king, who with his queen Onagh ruled over Fairyland. They lived in a "sidh," a barrow or hillock which was the entrance to the other-world, an Elysium of sensuous delight according to the Celtic imagination, planted with apple-trees always in fruit, and overflowing with never ebbing streams of wine or mead. Every fairy is for the Irish peasant, even to the present day, a "Fer-Sidhe,"[1] that is a man of the hill, and every goddess a "Bean-Sidhe," a woman of the hill, hence the "banshee" of popular legend, that ominous deity attached to the oldest agricultural families, who makes an appearance only to foretell the death of one of their members.

The contrast between Teutonic elves and Celtic fairies widens when we turn to their relations with men. Fairies are to be met with in most early Celtic myths. They do not, as a rule, share the tiny size of their northern kindred. In genuine folk-tales, they are generally described as of at least human stature; and they play an important part in Celtic romance, that body of imaginative fiction produced

[1] Pronounced *Far-shee*.

between the VIIth and the XIIth centuries, the themes of which were drawn from the heroic traditions of the race. They are chiefly women, wondrously fair with their pale long faces, and flowing hair "like red gold, or the flowers of the bog in summer." They dwell on "the blue verge of the sea," on the shores of "the Land of Youth," or in the "Island of the Blest." They take a keen interest in forwarding man's love, helping him in his quest after the lady of his heart, unless, as may happen, they refuse to share it with another. They contribute to Celtic lore that mysterious agency of sorcery and magic, that aërialness which we have come to consider as one of its essential features. They already suggest, with their infinite, aimless desires or their wistful regrets, the feminine ideal of Chivalry. The Celtic fairy-world never admits such dreadful fights or blood-thirsty vengeances as are so frequent in the Teutonic Eddas or the Niebelungenlied. It is the realm of "beauty and amorousness," where the stout warrior makes it his duty both to deal with his foe in a knightly way, as we see in the story of Cuchulinn and Ferdiad, and to treat the woman he loves, as is displayed in the wooing of Emer, with the most submissive delicacy. The difference was very small indeed which still separated the "good people" of the Celtic folk-belief from the magic maidens of the Romantic bards.

III

As the Celtic fairies glided away from their popular origins into the province of romantic fancy, and, from a pre-Christian, purely mythological conception of peasant-lore, came to be looked upon as one of the favourite themes of the more enlightened class of lords and ladies, their magic "amorousness" was made more and more conspicuous, and they soon came into contact with the fays of French romance.

One is struck, in wandering through the mazes of Arthurian romance, by the many characteristics which were already to be found in, if they were not actually borrowed from, the older Celtic world. The very word may be French.[1] The romance may have been produced on the Continent, written in French, popularized through England under that outlandish garb, the French language still being generally known on the other side of the Channel in the XIIth and XIIIth centuries, when the Arthurian legend was most in vogue : the spirit is quite different from that which informs the "matter of France," that is to say the cycle of Charlemagne and of his Paladins. The latter was chiefly historical, grounded on actual fact and worked on a very simple plan : the direct

[1] *Romance*, as is well known, first meant a tale told in *Romance*, the French language of the XIth or XIIth century, instead of in Latin.

protection of God, a guardian angel, for instance, constantly watching by the side of the mighty emperor. The " matter of Britain " on the contrary is essentially mythical. It gathers round the figure of the British hero-king all sorts of legends more or less connected with his character. It may be, as has been tersely put, " a complex mixture of Celtic tradition and French genius, " it is instinct, above all, with that " romantic " feeling which we generally miss in the genuine works of the Charlemagne cycle.

The romance of Arthur and of the Knights of the Round Table is the very land of Faëry. Everything there is dim, misty, elusive, weird. The horizon merges into ancient Celtic heathendom, or is lost in early, mystic Christianity. The fays, a countless host, symbolize supernatural existence. They are thus described in an often quoted passage from the romance of Lancelot du Lac:

A celui tens estoient apelées fées totes iceles qui savoient d'anchantement et de charaies; et moult en estoit en celui termine en la Grant-Bretaigne plus que en autres terres. Eles savoient la force des paroles et des pierres et des herbes, par quoi eles estoient tenues en joveneté et en biauté, et en si granz richeces com eles devisoient; et tot fu establi au tanz Merlin lo prophète. [1]

The fays may be traced back, as the word

[1] *Roman van Lancelot*, Ed. W. J. A. Jonckbloet. The Hague, 1849, p. X.

indicates,[1] to the ancient idea of Fate, and as such, like the classical *Parcae*, the "Weird sisters," they spin the thread of man's life, preside over his birth and rule his destiny. They are women of fascinating beauty, bestowing their love upon the most valorous knight, and urging him on to the boldest adventures. They carry him away to the other-world where, ever in their enchanting presence, he soon forgets all things mortal and passes entirely under their magic spell. Even if they allow him to return to earth, they never again release the hero whose love they have once beguiled.

Three powerful fays, as is well known, are portrayed in the "matter of Britain." The first one, Morgan le Fay, sister to Arthur, is essentially "the Fairy queen of Arthurian legend." Her attributes are manifold. She is described as the lady of the mist-enclosed island of Avalon, as the magic maiden who heals the King's wounds after the battle of Camlan; as the slighted mistress who seeks dire revenge upon her lover; as endowed also with the gifts of prophecy, with the power of shape-shifting, and even of changing the appearance of mortals. Again, she is the mother of Auberon, the little king of Faëry who dwells in a wood, which his wizard power makes it perilous for any one to pass through, and who,

[1] Fay: O. F.: *fae, faie;* Pr. and Pg.: *fada;* Sp.: *hada;* It.: *fata;* Latin: *fata*, the Fates, misconstrued as a feminine singular.

like herself, is possessed of a truth-testing drinking vessel :

> Auberon, le petit roi sauvaige,
> Que tout son tans conversa en boscage.
> Chil Auberons, que tant ot segnoraige,
> Sachiés k'il fu fieus Juliien Cesare...
> Jules ot feme une dame moult sage,
> Morge ot à nom, moult ot cler le visaige;
> Cele fu mere Auberon le sauvaige [1]...

The two other fays, La Dame du Lac and Niniane, have less numerous legends attached to them than those of the Morgan Saga. Neither of them is found outside the strictly Arthurian romances. La Dame du Lac is the guardian of Lancelot, who is brought up in Fairyland. She trains him up in arms and brave exploits. She fits him for the task that awaits him when he shall be a man, whereby the youth shall win the right to her love ; for her protection is only due to her having chosen Lancelot for her lover, after he shall have attained manhood and proved himself a hero. Niniane, lastly, or Vivien as she is more familiarly known, is the beguiler of Merlin the enchanter, whom she meets in the forest, who imparts to her his skill in magic, is eventually charmed into an endless sleep, and confined within an air-bound prison by the very spells he himself has taught the malicious maiden. All the other fays

[1] *Huon de Bordeaux*, vv. 6-17.

of the Arthurian cycle are stamped more or less with the same characters. Being themselves exceedingly fair, they give their love to a hero for his valour. They lure him to their mysterious abodes by sorcery. And he stays with them for ever, either in willing thraldom or in complete oblivion, in the far-off land

> From whence there's never a return.

Such are, restricted to their essential features, the various aspects of the fairy creed, as it appears in the mythology of the British Isles. The belief, of course, admits of no hard and fast division, and these bare outlines aim at nothing more than singling out its leading conceptions. Reality is a far more complex matter, that reality especially which deals with popular legends handed down by oral tradition from one age to another. Thus the Celtic fairies, as has been seen, have no little in common with the elves of Teutonic mythology, while, on the other hand, they had a share in the evolution of the love ideal in the romances of Chivalry. Again, in the French romance, Huon de Bordeaux aided by Auberon, the fairy king, a Teutonic dwarf who, strangely enough, is the son of Julius Cæsar and Morgan le Fay, encounters some wonderful adventures, performs many valorous tasks which closely resemble those

of the Arthurian heroes. But whether we study the supernatural beings of the folk-belief in their primæval aspects or in their later stages, after they had undergone different influences, that of Court-life, for instance, or after they had been degraded, by the introduction of Christianity, into inferior, half-devilish powers, we find that they all spring from one main source: that natural desire of man which leads him to people his surroundings, and to construe a symbol out of everything. Under their blended forms, in which the student endeavours to discriminate several phases of development—the word *fairy* being in course of time indifferently applied to all the spirits of a lower order, to the full-sized *fays* of romance as well as to the dwarfish *elves* that haunt the woods and the streams—the *fairies* represent the primitive mythology of mankind, at a time when faith and imagination still reigned uppermost, in a twilight world not yet "dispeopled of its dreams."

CHAPTER II

EARLY FAIRY POETRY

The fairy belief which, from the most ancient times, had thus been prevailing in the mythology of the British Isles was bound to find its way into early English literature. The oral tradition, so widely diffused among the people, set working the fancy of individual songsters who found in the legends of their race a wealth of material that wanted very little indeed to assume an artistic shape. Even if we leave aside such prose-writers as Geoffrey of Monmouth who, in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, composed about 1130, gathered all the floating traditions concerning Arthur into a connected narrative, drawing not a little besides upon his own imagination, and exalted the then virtually unknown king into the national British champion and the acknowledged prince of Fairy-land ; or, on the other hand, Gervase of Tilbury who, about a century later, recounted in his *Otia Imperialia* many particulars of the fairy belief of the time, yet we find in the early poetry of England a good many allusions to the elfin world.

Short and occasional as they are, they none the less indicate what an important part the fairies, looked upon and believed in as supernatural beings, were still playing in the minds of men. Let us successively examine from this point of view the Popular Ballads, the Teutonic Epic, the Metrical Romances translated from the French, the work of Chaucer, and of the Chaucerian poets.

I

The Popular Ballads, as was to be expected, are "fulfild of fayerye." They represent the literature of a pre-literary period, the poetry of the crowd not yet bearing the individual touch. They narrate in a very simple way what was then uppermost in the minds of the common folk, so as to suit an unlettered audience that could only be interested in what was true to human nature, and expressed in the plain words of every-day language.

Fairy-lore constitutes, with war and love, one of the leading motives of the ballads. The twilight of primæval beliefs and superstitions which was hanging over man could not but be reflected in his song, just as were his rough passion for hunting and raiding, his love thwarted or treacherous, his revengeful hate only quenched by death. The technical characteristics of the ballad itself, which was originally intended to be sung,

or at least chanted, and to accompany the dance of the crowd: its absolute objectivity, its terseness, its leaping without the slightest transition from narrative to dialogue, its many incomplete or unexplained suggestions, all rendered it particularly fit for a representation of the fairy-world. Thus Young Tamlane has been carried off "when a boy just turn'd of nine" by the Elfin Queen:

Ae fatal morning I went out
Dreading nae injury,
And thinking lang, fell soun asleep
Beneath an apple tree.

Then by it came the Elfin Queen
And laid her hand on me;
And from that time since ever I mind
I 've been in her companie.[1]

It is only the ordeal of Fair Janet waiting on the gloomy heath at Miles Cross, on All-hallow eve "when the fairy folk will ride," and holding her lover fast through all his awful changes of form, that saves him from being given away to the fiend of Hell, and that can win back the "elfin grey," her child's father, to earth and human shape, while the "Queen of Fairies" exclaims:

"But had I kenn'd, Tamlane, she says,
A ladye wad borrow'd thee,
I wad ta' en out thy twa grey een,
Put in twa een o'tree."

[1] Child's *Ballads*, 26. Text G.

"Had I but kenn'd, Tamlane, she says,
Before ye came frae hame,
I wad ta' en out your heart o' flesh,
Put in a heart o' stane."[1]

In another ballad a woman has been carried away to the nether-world, to suckle the elf-queen's offspring. The latter however proves, this time, far more humane:

"O nurse my bairn, nourice," she says,
"Till he stan' at your knee,
An ye's win hame to Christen land,
Whar fain it's ye wad be."[2]

In the *Elfin Knight*, a woman again overcomes the unearthly spirit:

The elfin knight sits on yon hill,
He blaws his horn both lowd and shrill...

"I wish that horn were in my kist, *chest*
Yea, and the knight in my armes two."

She had no sooner these words said,
When that the knight came to her bed.[3]

But the maiden baffles her lover by setting him a preliminary and all but impossible task, more disheartening even than "sewing a sark without a seam." As a rule however, the fairy folk are not to be so easily thwarted. They are malicious, if not wholly evil-minded. *Allison Gross* had been

[1] *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, The Young Tamlane.—[2] Child's *Ballads*, 40.—[3] *Ib.* 2, Text A.

"trysted up" one day to the bower of "the ugliest witch in the north-country," and humoured with "monny fair speech." Then, on his refusal to be her leman,

She's turn'd her right an' roun' about
An' thrice she blaw on a grass-green horn,
An' she sware by the meen and the stars abeen
That she'd gar me rue the day I was born.

She eventually changed him into an ugly worm crawling about a tree;

But as it fell out on last Hallow-even,
When the seely court was ridin' by, *fairy*
The Queen lighted down on a gowany bank, *daisied*
Nae far frae the tree where I wont to lye.

She took me up in her milk-white han',
An' she's stroak'd me three times o'er her knee;
She chang'd me again to my ain proper shape,
An' I nae mair maun toddle about the tree.[1] *must*

Clerk Colvill was even less fortunate: entreated by the gay lady he had just married never to return to a certain haunted stream, he visited it again, and found the fairy waiting for him:

"Ye wash, ye wash, ye bonny may, *maid*
And ay's ye wash your sark o'silk." *shirt*
"It's a' for you, ye gentle knight,
My skin is whiter than the milk."

[1] Child's *Ballads*, 35.

He's ta'en her by the milk-white hand,
He's ta'en her by the sleeve sae green,
And he's forgotten his gay ladie,
And he's awa' wi' the fair mayden.[1]

At the end of the ballad, we see him riding home to his mother, a dying man : he has been struck to the heart by the mermaid's baleful kiss.

The fairies, such as we see them pictured in the popular ballads,[2] that is such as they were conceived of by the common folk, were on the whole more to be dreaded than to be loved. They were alluded to as the "good people," the "gude neighbours," the "men of peace" in a propitiatory way only, just as the Greek Furies were called the "Eumenides." They formed an uncanny, peevish, vindictive tribe, dangerous alike to rely upon and to disregard. In their intercourse with men they would act in the most compelling way, the mortals feeling their bewildering influence and unconsciously, but perforce, yielding to it. Above all they were real creatures, portentous beings in the flesh for those who spent the long winter nights reciting their misdeeds. Being ever invisibly present, they must be spoken of with no little reverence, and in as few words as possible. Both the minstrel and such as listened to his lay

[1] Child's *Ballads*, 42.—[2] See some other illustrations in *The Oxford Book of Ballads, chosen and edited by A. Quiller-Couch* (Oxford, 1910), the first Book of which (pp. 1-142) deals with Magic, the "Seely Court," and the Supernatural.

knew better than to pry too closely into the manners of those shadowy beings, and tarry too long in their weird country, by bracken bush and wan water, under "the lee licht o' the mune."

II

The ballad was a narrative in verse, with a traditional theme, and of unknown authorship; a rude piece of poetry of popular origin that passed down from generation to generation, and caught from each some fresh colour. The epic is a narrative usually longer, and dealing with heroic actions and characters; it evinces a tendency to aggregate all the details into a synthetic, harmonious whole; it is written by a single professional poet who stamps it with his own personality; and is destined, no more to be chanted or recited, the rustic chorus singing the refrain, but to be read as a book. Lastly, while the ballads, such as we possess them now, were only collected and written down within the last two centuries, the English epic goes back to far-off ages, and has woven into its poetical stories some of the most ancient beliefs and superstitions of the race, long before the Saxons left their Germanic shores and conquered Britain. [1]

[1] It has been kindly suggested to us that there appeared to be some anachronism in thus placing the Teutonic Epic after the Popular Ballads, the versification and language of which are but of comparatively recent date. The reasons for the plan here adopted

The oldest epic poem, *Beowulf*, supposed to belong to the VIIth century, wherein are narrated the fights of the Teutonic hero, still on the cont-

are briefly these. The problem of the origin of the ballads, a very complex one, has not yet been finally solved. While some critics hold them to be "usually a *précis* of a romance," (W. J. Courthope) or "a part of the literary *débris* of the Middle Ages," (G. G. Smith), no less scholars than the late Professor Child, in his monumental edition, A. Lang, F. B. Gummere, and G. L. Kittredge incline to the theory that ballads are "the legacy of a long oral tradition," and prefer to regard them as *Volkslieder*, or as popular *Märchen* in rhyme, that is as springing mainly from the people. "What marks them as popular, writes A. Lang, is their wonderfully wide diffusion, their close resemblance to prose *Märchen* (which are found all over the world, and are certainly not of literary authorship), with their folklore incidents, based on universal superstitions and customs." (*Chambers's Cyclopædia of English Literature*, new edit., 1903. Vol. I. p. 521). Mr. Henderson himself (*Scottish Vernacular Literature*, 1898), who defends individual authorship, and is strongly opposed to the theory of communal origin, is fain to admit that "in many ways the ballads bring us into immediate contact with the antique, pagan, savage, superstitious elemental characteristics of the race." It will now be easily understood why, being chiefly concerned, in this essay, with the influence of folk-lore, and especially of fairy-lore, upon individual poetry, we have thought it advisable to place the Ballad, in which we hear the voice not of any single poet, but of the multitude, or at least of the "blind crowder," before the Epic, the deliberate work of a poetical artist couched in "an ambitious, self-conscious,... aristocratic and accomplished style." (W. P. Ker : *Epic and Romance*, 1908, pp. 123-24). See, on this much debated question, the bibliography in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. II, 1908, pp. 492-95, to which must be added a recent monograph by W. M. Hart : *Ballad and Epic. A study in the development of the narrative art* (Boston, 1907), where the writer endeavours to show that the Ballad forms a step from popular poetry to the poetry of art, at the beginning of which stands the Epic.

inent, with the monster Grendel, its mother, and the Dragon, contains one distinct allusion at least to the fairy belief. Here of course we meet with the Teutonic elves, the gloomy, malignant spirits who are nearly related to the blood-thirsty fiends of the sea-caves, and reflect the crude heathen colouring of the whole. On the other hand, the poem, which has come down to us in a manuscript of the Xth century, bears evident traces of a revision dating from after the introduction of Christianity into the British isles. This may be easily accounted for: if the Saxons, even after their formal adhesion to the new faith, clung on to their heathen ways of thought, and never ceased to believe in the existence and power of the elves, the Catholic preachers made it a part of their duty to turn the national faith to their own use. The elves, they professed, were fallen Angels who "without openly joining Satan in his rebellion gave it no opposition,"[1] and were condemned to wander over the earth till Doomsday. Or else they were the descendants of Cain, the first murderer, who had been changed into evil monsters, who were dwelling on dreary moors or by dismal lakes, whose only occupation was to scare and scourge mankind. Thus we read in *Beowulf*:

> þanon untydras ealle onwocon,
> eotenas ond *ylfe* ond orcneas,

[1] See the note of Prof. Ker on "The Craven Angels," in *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 6, Jan. 1911.

swylce gigantas, þa wi*th* Gode wunnon
lange þrage; he him þæs lean forgeald,[1]

the second couplet being doubtless a later interpolation.

The elves play a more important part in Layamon's *Brut* (c. 1205), which embraces the more or less legendary history of all the British kings from the destruction of Troy and the landing of Brutus to the beginning of the VIIIth century. They continue, as in the purely Teutonic *Beowulf*, to plague the poor mortals and to haunt the wilds. Layamon thus describes a lake in Scotland:

þat is a seolcu*th* mere:
iset a middelærde.
mid fenne & mid ræode:
mid watere swi*th*e bræde.
mid fiscen & mid feoȝelen:
mid uniuele þige.
þat water is unimete brade:
nikeres þer badie*th* inne.
þer is *æluene* ploȝe:
in atteliche pole.[2]

[1] ll. 111-114. "Thence monstrous births all woke into being — Jotuns, and *elves* and ghosts, — as well as giants, which strove against God—for a long time; he for that paid them their reward." (Translation by Thom. Arnold).—[2] *Layamon's Brut.* MS. Cott. Calig., A. ix. ll. 21,740-49. "That is a marvellous lake, set in middle-earth, with fen and with reed, with water exceeding broad; with fish and with fowl, with evil things! The water is immeasurably broad; nikers therein bathe; there is play of elves in the hideous pool." (Translation by Sir F. Malden.)

Layamon is a true-born Saxon, and his *Brut* is professedly a patriotic epic. Taking up the fabulous history of Geoffrey of Monmouth written in a dignified, rhetorical Latin style, and the Anglo-Norman *Brut* of Wace, so redolent of the courtly French romance, he infuses into them the darker and more sturdy Teutonic spirit. He is proud of Arthur, whose story he thoroughly saxonizes. He praises him into the ideal British king. He not only adds freely to his originals: for the mysterious glamour with which the French romancers had enshrouded Arthur's name, he substitutes a robust manliness, well worthy of his countrymen's veneration. Thus, instead of connecting him only with such enchantresses as Morgan le Fay, Layamon places his hero in the company of the elves, who so characteristically belong to the general stock of the Teutonic saga. The elves presided at the birth of the king, welcomed him into the world, and presented him with various gifts:

Þe time co Þe wes icoren :
Þa wes Ar*th*ur iboren.
Sone swa he com an eor*th*e :
aluen hine iuengen.
heo bigolen Þat child :
mid galdere swi*th*e stronge.
hed ȝeue him mihte :
to beon bezst alre cnihten.
heo ȝeuen him an o*th*er Þing :

Þat he scolde beon riche king.
heo ȝiuen hi Þat Þridde :
Þat he scolde longe libben.
heo ȝifen him Þat kine-bern :
custen swi*th*e gode.
Þat he wes mete-custi :
of alle quikemonnen.
Þis Þe *alue* him ȝef :
and al swa Þat child iþæh.[1]

His arms, his "burne," or cuirass of steel, and Caliburn his sword had been wrought for him by elvish smiths :

And he warp on him :
one brunie of stele.
Þat makede an *haluis* smiþ :
mid his wise crafte...
Caliburne his sweord :
he sweinde bi his side.
hit was i-wroht in Auylun :
mid witfolle crafte.[2]

[1] *Brut.* MS. Cott. Calig., A. IX. ll. 19, 253-269. "The time came that was chosen, then was Arthur born. So soon as he came on earth elves took him ; they enchanted the child with magic most strong ; they gave him might to be the best of all knights ; they gave him another thing, that he should be a rich king ; they gave him the third, that he should live long ; they gave to him the prince virtues most good, so that he was most generous of all men alive. This the elves gave him, and thus the child thrived." (*Ib.*). —[2] *Brut.* MS. Cott. Otho, c. XIII. ll. 21,130-141. "And he threw on him a burny of steel that an elvish smith made, with his wise craft... Caliburn his sword, he hung by his side ; it was wrought in Avalon, with witful craft." *(Ib.)*.

At his passing away, Arthur declared he would repair to Avalon, the island of the "elf most fair," Argante, who would "make him hale" and entertain him till he returned to his beloved British kingdom:

> And ich wulle uaren to Avalu:
> to uairest alre maidene.
> to Argante þere quene:
> *aluen* swi*th*e sceone.
> & heo shal mine wunden:
> makien alle isunde.
> al hal me makien:
> mid haleweiȝe drechen.
> And seo*th*e ich cumen wulle:
> to mine kineriche.
> and wunien mid Brutten:
> mid muchelere wunne.[1]

Argante is of course Morgan le Fay, and these several episodes may be directly borrowed from French romance: their colouring is however distinctly Saxon. They bring home to us the national import of the priest-poet's work, and how, on the banks of the Severn at least, people, early in the XIIIth century, were already beginning to recover from the effects of the foreign conquest.

[1] *Brut.* M.S. Cott. Calig., A. IX. ll. 28,610-622. "And I will fare to Avalun, to the fairest of all maidens, to Argante, the queen, an elf most fair, and she shall make my wounds all sound; make me all whole with healing draughts. And afterwards I will come to my kingdom, and dwell with the Britons with mickle joy." (*Ib.*).

Finally, let us mention *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*, by William Langland, another Saxon epic, as perhaps we might call it, which, although written about a century and a half after the *Brut*, still preserved all its homely vigour. Here, amidst the intricate allegories of a Dream, a device no doubt imitated from the *Roman de la Rose*, comes out in bold relief the sturdy personality of an unsophisticated countryman, who earns his living by chanting psalms and requiems for hire, who speaks his mind bluntly and gives free vent to all his discontents, who on the other hand firmly believes in the supernatural, as the first lines of his work testify :

> ...Bote in a Mayes morwnynge· on Maluerne hulles
> Me bi-fel a ferly·[1] a *feyrie*[2] me thouhte;
> I was weori of wandringe· and wente me to reste
> Vndur a brod banke· bi a bourne syde...[3]

But Langland is a thorough, if somewhat restless and indignant, Christian, who sees in life a constant struggle between man's natural passions and the will of God, between the social forces and his own conscience ; who expresses, by means of his allegorical personifications, his thoughts on religion and the Church, on Truth and Falsehood, on the Deadly Sins, as Envy, Covetise, Gluttony, all ministers to the foul fiend ; who besides associates

[1] A wonder.—[2] A strange thing of fairy origin.—[3] *The Vision*... A. Prologue, ll. 5-8.

the elves haunting the hills with the wicked little imps of Hell, the *poukes*, as he calls them :

...ne helle *pouke* hym greue,
Neither fuyr, nother flod· ne be a-fered of enemye ;[1]
...ne brynge ous out of daunger,
Fro the *poukes* poundfalde...
Crist is hus name
That shal delyuery ous som day· out of the deueles [powere ;[2]
Thenne palle[3] ich a-downe the *pouke*· with the thridde [shoryere,[4]
The which is *Spiritus sanctus*...[5]

These several allusions, this scheme of expressing the most earnest and sacred beliefs by means of the commonest superstitions, go a long way to prove how persistently the Teutonic elves had been haunting people's minds, how deftly also they had been adapted to the changes of thought, the old, deep-rooted popular belief only developing in harmony with the new ideal of the time, and the personal temper of each writer.

III

When the Metrical Romances, which were in such high favour in France during the XIIIth and XIVth centuries, came over to England, they met with distinct success. The supernatural elements

[1] *Ib.* C. Passus, 16, ll. 164-65.—[2] *Ib.* C. Passus 19, ll. 281-84.—[3] I knock, I strike.—[4] Prop.—[5] *Ib.* C. Passus 19, ll. 50-51.

they contained being of course influenced by the national beliefs, there arose a very confused fairy mythology, made up of all sorts of discrepant fragments, the popular creed always entering into and qualifying the foreign, aristocratic, and purely literary ideas.

The romance of *Sir Launfal*, by a certain Thomas Chestre, affords us an example in point. It is an amplified version of a short lay by Marie de France, the translation containing some three hundred lines more than the original. The story may be summarized as follows : Sir Launfal, a handsome youth and a steward at Arthur's Court, had brought home the king's bride, Gwennere, who, soon after her marriage, caused him to leave the palace. He fell into poverty and deep distress. One day, as he sat under a tree, "yn sorrow and sore," two "gentyll maydenes," with faces "whyt as snow on downe", wearing kirtles of Indian silk and green mantles, suddenly came in sight. They led him to the rich pavilion of their lady :

> The kynges doughter of Olyroun,
> Dame Tryamour, that hyghte ;
> Her fader was kyng of fayrye,
> Of Occient fer and nyghe,
> A man of mochell myghte. [1]

[1] *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, Ed. Edm. Goldsmid, Edinburgh, 1884, ll. 278-82.

The damsel, who was :

> ... as whyt as lylye yn May,
> Or snow that sneweth yn wynterys day,[1]

gave the young knight a warm and even passionate welcome :

> Swetyng paramour,
> Ther nys no man yn Cristente
> That y love so moche as the,
> Kyng, neyther emperour.[2]

"They went to bedd, and that anon," but when she dismissed him on the morrow, she imposed one express condition :

> ...of o'thyng, syr knyght, I warne the,
> That thou make no bost of me...
> And yf thou doost, y warny the before
> All my love thou hast forlore...[3]

Sir Launfal returned full of joy and hope. He now prospered in everything. He grew very rich. He achieved brilliant victories in tournaments, as far afield as Lombardy, till he roused the envy of "all the Lords of Atalye." His reputation reached the ears of King Arthur, who recalled him to his court. The handsome knight had not been there very long when queen Gwennere began to entice him by soft words, and, one day, actually confessed her passion. Faithful to his elfin mistress, who was visiting him overnight, Sir

[1] ll. 292-93.—[2] ll. 303-06.—[3] ll. 362-66.

Launfal rebuked her sharply, going, unhappily, so far as to betray his secret:

> I have loved a fayryr woman
> Than thou ever leydest thyn ey upon,
> Thys seven yer and more.[1]

The queen was not long in devising her revenge:

> I spak to Launfal yn my game,
> And he besoghte me of my schame
> My lemman for to be,[2]

she went and told her husband, who condemned the pretended seducer to die if he could not, by a certain day, bring his mysterious mistress before the court; even then, if she did not outshine in beauty the queen herself:

> He schud be hongede as a thef.[3]

The appointed time was drawing near, and Sir Launfal, who, since he had broken his bond, had been deprived of his wondrous paramour's presence, was ready to pay with his life for his supposed felony, when the Lady Tryamour, having at last relented, rode into the castle-court in the most gorgeous apparel:

> Gentyll, jolyf, as bryd on bowe.[4]

When in the presence of King Arthur, she told him the plain truth about his treacherous wife. She then leapt again on her palfrey, and carried off her knight into Fairyland:

[1] ll. 695-97.—[2] ll. 716-18.—[3] l. 804.—[4] l. 932.

Fer ynto a jolyf ile,
Olyroun that hyghte...
Thus Launfal, wythouten fable,
That noble knyght of the rounde table,
Was take ynto the fayrye.[1]

When compared with the original of Marie de France, this beautiful romance almost reads as a new poem. To the facts which he had borrowed from the French authoress, the English translator has imparted some strange glamour, a sort of magic light that reminds one of the weird mystery of Celtic fancy. The courtly lay was thus brought nearer to the popular beliefs which, in times past, may have given it rise ; and it seems as though Thomas Chestre had been dealing with his own national fairies.

This process of suffusing the foreign stories with the supernatural light of English mythology, thereby adding to them considerably, is exemplified again in the romance of *Sir Orfeo* (c. 1320). Here the old classical fable, the French original of which has not been preserved, was turned into an English fairy tale pure and simple. Like the ballad of *Young Tamlane*, it tells of the retrieval of a lover lost in Fairyland, with this difference, however, that this time a lady is won back. Queen Heurodis fell asleep at noon, under the shadow of "a fair ympe-tree," in the palace orchard where she had gone "to see the floures sprede and

[1] ll. 1023-37.

spring." She was in a wild frenzy when she awoke, and told her distressed husband that she needs must leave him the next day to go and live with the Fairy King, under whose spell she had fallen. Orfeo repaired to the "ympe-tree" on the morrow, together with a thousand knights "ich yarmed stout and grim," resolved to attempt her rescue at any cost. But they had scarcely arrived on the spot when she was of a sudden snatched away from among the whole company.

King Orfeo left his kingdom. He retired to the wilderness where, with his harp, he subdued all sorts of beasts and birds :

> Oft in hot undertides
> þe king o'Fairi wiþ his rout
> com to hunt him al about. [1]

One day he espied in the distance a bevy of fairy damsels, among whom, on his drawing nearer, he recognised his lamented queen. He followed them a long time, and thus reached the gate of the fairy castle, "rich and reale and wonder heighe." He presented himself as a wandering minstrel, desirous to solace the lord with "his harp so miri of soun ;" and his melodies proved so delightful that he was promised whatever he should ask for. He of course demanded Heurodis, and led her back to his kingly town of Winchester, which he had left under the care of an old steward. But,

[1] Ed. O. Zielke, Breslau, 1880, ll. 280-82.

unlike the classical hero, he was able to regain his authority, for :

> þe steward him wele knewe...
> and fel adoun to his fet...
> now king Orfeo newe coround is,
> and his quen dame Heurodis,
> and lived long afterward
> and seþþen was king þe steward. [1]

In fact, the romance of *Sir Orfeo* is a thoroughly English poem, and, of the Greek legend of Orpheus and Eurydice, only the bare outline has been preserved. Orfeo was "a king in Inglond, who abode in Traciens," that is Winchester. He was himself in some way related to the fairy tribe, as :

> His fader was comen of king Pluto, [2]

and Hell being, in folk-lore, closely connected with Fairyland ; while, on the other hand, the castle he arrived at in Faërie was situated beneath the ground, like the classical Infernus no doubt, but also like the abode both of the Teutonic elves and Celtic fairies. The general terseness of the piece, moreover, so different from the long-windedness of French romances, puts one in mind of the rapid, direct style of the popular ballad ; and Prof. Child has actually found one, in Shetland, with a very similar motive.[3]

The same subject, as is the case with *Thomas the*

[1] ll. 575-94.—[2] l. 29.—[3] *Ballads*, I, 215.

Rhymer, sometimes appears both in ballad and romance. Which was the earlier form of the two is not easy to determine, though the ballad is generally supposed to be a remnant of the metrical romance. Both relate the journey of Thomas of Erceldoune to Fairyland, a man much renowned as a "rymour," that is as a poet and prophet, in the beginning of the XIVth century :

True Thomas lay on Huntlie bank;
A ferlie he spied wi' his ee;
And there he saw a ladye bright,
Come riding down by the Eildon tree.

Her shirt was o' the grass-green silk,
Her mantle o'the velvet fyne;
At ilka tett of her horse's mane, *lock*
Hung fifty siller bells and nine.[1]

She dared him to kiss her lips :

"Now, ye maun go wi' me," she said;
"True Thomas, ye maun go wi' me;
And ye maun serve me seven years,
Thro' weal or woe as may chance to be." [2]

She mounted on her milk-white steed with true Thomas up behind, and they both rode away towards Elfland. They heard the roaring of the sea, waded through crimson streams of blood, and at last reached a garden green, where he had to stay for seven years. Here the ballad comes to an end.

[1] *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, Thomas the Rhymer, Part first.—[2] *Ib.*

In the romance, we learn how the kindly queen of the Fairies, who would not allow Thomas to run into danger, hurried him back to earth the day before the foul fiend of Hell came among her folk and chose his fee, the "teind," or "kane" due to him, at the end of every seven years, by the people of Fairyland. And it was at the moment of parting that the Elfin queen bestowed upon Thomas the gift of soothsaying, in remembrance of his perilous love.

Various elements are to be discerned in this traditional story. The legend of a mortal's journey to the nether-world, a commonplace in popular belief, is also the exact counterpart to the visit of Ulysses to Hades, or of Æneas to the Infernus. Several religious traits may be found. When Thomas, like Ogier the Dane, first catches sight of the Elfin queen, he mistakes her for the Virgin :

> "All hail, thou mighty queen of heaven!
> For thy peer on earth I never did see."[1]

His seven years' sojourn in the subterranean region is not unconnected with the Christian notion of Purgatory, while :

> ...the path of wickedness,
> Though some call it the road to heaven,

is contrasted by the enchantress to :

> ...the road to fair Elfland,
> Where thou and I this night maun gae.[2]

Again Thomas' finding favour with the Fairy

[1] *Ib.* — [2] *Ib.*

queen, and being taken by her to her weird country, is but another version of the Arthurian legend in which Morgan le Fay carried off Ogier the Dane to live with her at Avalon for two hundred years, which seemed to him as twenty. Finally, the general atmosphere of the story, both in its scenery and incidents, is entirely of a popular character, the ballad being, so to speak, but the re-vulgarisation of the literary romance.

So much then for the Metrical Romances that deal with fairy-lore. They show the stage which the fairy mythology had arrived at in the later Middle Ages. They combine the earnestness of the folk-belief with the sweet vagaries of romance. They represent the courtly version of the people's simple faith. They exemplify the constant intercourse between the popular and literary elements in poetry. Or, more precisely, the fairy-lore in these romances gives us some insight into the state of mind of an ordinarily cultured Englishman in the XIIIth and XIVth centuries. He has almost thrown off the primitive superstitions of his race, and the dread of the monsters of old. He has been acquainted, by the priests and monks, with the tenets of Christianity, and, through the Latin poets, with some of the wealth of classical mythology. Though he still believes in supernatural beings, he begins, however, to embellish his faith, and even to make it the subject of some of his most fanciful poems.

IV

Chaucer, the "Father of English Poetry," that is the first writer whose personality pervaded his whole work, and informed it with a strong subjective element always lacking in earlier authors, paid no little attention to the "good people." Not that he entertained about them any definite notions. On the contrary, the very vividness of his style brought out into bolder relief the unsettled conceptions then prevailing with regard to fairy mythology. Thus, as was his wont, he first "rehearsed" some ideas, and a good many phrases, current at the time. Following the Metrical Romances, Chaucer identified the fairies with the inhabitants of the classical Hades:

> Pluto, that is the king of fayërye...
> ... Pluto, and his quene
> Proserpina, and al his fayërye.[1]

Again, in *Sir Thopas*, he placed the entrance to the subterranean land of Faery in the wilderness:

> In-to his sadel he clamb anoon,
> And priketh over style and stoon
> An elf-queen for t' espye,
> Til he so longe had riden and goon
> That he fond, in a privee woon,
> The contree of Fairye
> So wilde;
> For in that contree was ther noon

[1] *The Marchantes Tale*, ll. 983, 794-5.

That to him dorste ryde or goon,
Neither wyf ne childe...

Heer is the queen of Fayërye,
With harpe and pype and simphonye
Dwelling in this place...[1]

Elsewhere Chaucer associated Elfland with the story of Arthur, and even seemed to regard the fairy character of the hero-king as the only feature worth remembering, quite apart from the fervour of mystical faith and from the ideals of knight errantry which had given the British romance its essential aspect. The passage, in *The Tale of the Wyf of Bathe*, is a well-known one :

In th' olde dayes of the king Arthour,
Of which that Britons speken greet honour,
Al was this land fulfild of fayerye.
The elf-queen, with hir joly companye,
Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede ;
This was the olde opinion, as I rede.
I speke of manye hundred yeres ago;
But now can no man see none elves mo.
For now the grete charitee and prayeres
Of limitours and othere holy freres,
That serchen every lond and every streem,
As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem,
Blessinge halles, chambres, kichenes, boures,
Citees, burghes, castels, hye toures,
Thropes, bernes, shipnes, dayeryes,
This maketh that ther been no fayeryes.

[1] ll. 86-105.

For ther as wont to walken was an elf,
Ther walketh now the limitour himself
In undermeles and in morweninges,
And seyth his matins and his holy thinges
As he goth in his limitacioun.
Wommen may go saufly up and doun,
In every bush, or under every tree;
There is noon other incubus but he,
And he ne wol doon hem but dishonour.[1]

Here we detect the sly humour of the great poet. He will no longer believe, of course, in those superstitions "of manye hundred yeres ago." Our sceptic is not of "the olde opinion." A satirist besides, he is laughing in his sleeve when he ascribes the disappearance of the elf-people to the meddlesomeness of those holy monks and friars who, somehow, have taken the offices of the fairies into their own hands. Again, Chaucer's own tale of *Sir Thopas* is but a parody of romance in general. It turns into ridicule both its aristocratic tone and its straggling prolixity. It evinces a perfect knowledge of its usual themes, and of the Faery in particular:

"Me dremed al this night, pardee,
An elf-queen shal my lemman be,
And slepe under my gore.

An elf-queen wol I love, y-wis,
For in this world no womman is

[1] ll. 857-881.

Worthy to be my make
In toune;
Alle othere wommen I forsake,
And to an elf-queen I me take
By dale and eek by doune!" [1]

This is Chaucer's vein throughout his work. Yet, a cheerful humourist as he was, and decidedly bent on making fun, in a very quiet, graceful way, of romance, he was too much of a poet to deprive himself of the mysterious charm afforded by the fairy themes. We meet, in *The Marchantes Tale*, with :

Pluto, that is the king of fayërye,
And many a lady in his companye,
Folwinge his wyf, the quene Proserpyne. [2]

The fairy couple devote themselves to the exegesis of Scripture, discuss at length the moral character of Solomon, and, to avenge the wrong done by the "fresshe and gentyl" May to old January's honour, give him again his sight, and make him see "as wel as ever he mighte."[3] In *The Tale of the Man of Lawe*, the queen is compared to an elf, that is, in this case, to a sort of witch :

The moder was an *elf*, by aventure
Y-come, by charmes or by sorcerye,
And every wight hateth hir companye.[4]

We find again, *passim:*

"What! Nicholay! what, how! what! loke adoun!
Awake, and thenk on Cristes passioun;

[1] ll. 76-86.—[2] ll. 983-85.—[3] l. 1112.—[4] ll. 754-56.

I crouche thee from *elves* and fro wightes."[1]....
Maius, that sit with so benigne a chere,
Hir to biholde it semed *fayëryë*.[2]....
Greet was the prees, that swarmeth to and fro,
To gauren on this hors that stondeth so...
It was of *Fairye*, as the peple semed.[3]

To sum up, Chaucer, though a scholar and a courtly poet, may have looked with mild irony, nay with genial pleasure, on the popular superstitions of his day. Besides, he was too accurate a painter of his own time not to have made room in his tales for the fairies, though he himself felt sure, as he roguishly declared, they had been extinct for centuries. Lastly, he was too anxious for anything that could attract his ordinary readers to leave aside one of the favourite, if subordinate, themes of popular imagination.

With the most famous contemporary of Chaucer, the correct and "moral" Gower, the fairies make a much less picturesque figure. They have dropped all connection with the lively national elves. They appear as some pale transcriptions of the fays of French romance, savouring not a little of literary artifice. Thus, in the *Tale of Constance*, the king, on his being entreated to get rid of his wife, says to his father:

For every man it hath supposed
How that my wif Constance is *faie*;

[1] *The Milleres Tale*, ll. 291-93.—[2] *The Marchantes Tale*, ll. 498-99.—[3] *The Squieres Tale*, ll. 189-201.

And if that I, thei sein, delaie
To put hire out of compaignie,
The worschipe of my Regalie
Is lore.[1]

The same French meaning of *fay* as an enchantress, a treacherous woman who beguiles men into loving her, occurs frequently in Gower's poems, in *The Tale of Narcissus*, for instance :

He sih the like of his visage
And wende ther were an ymage
Of such a Nimphe as tho was *faie*,
Whereof that love his herte assaie
Began... ;[2]

or in *The Tale of Jason and Medea*, where the latter is depicted as a woman initiated into the mysteries and marvels of magic :

Sche semeth *faie* and no womman ;
For with the craftes that sche can
Sche was, as who seith, a goddesse,
And what hir liste, more or lesse
She dede...[3]

Nor did Lydgate himself, one of the most prolific XVth century writers in Chaucerian metres, fail to make a rapid allusion to Arthur, the romantic hero. It is to be found in *The Fall of Princes*, a long, shambling version of Boccacio's *De Casibus Illustrium Virorum*, which contains above thirty thousand lines :

[1] *Confessio Amantis :* II. ll. 1018-23.—[2] I. ll. 2315-19.—[3] V. ll. 4105-09.

He is a king ycronnid in Fairie;
With scepter, and sword, and with his regally,
Shall resort as lord and soveraigne
Out of Fairie and reigne in Britaine,
And repaire again the old Round Table... [1]

On the whole, up to the XVth century, the fairies — and under that comprehensive name were indiscriminately mingled all those spirits of a subordinate order which, for evil or for good, held any intercourse with men — entered but occasionally, and at distant intervals, into English literature. Forming one of the primæval myths of the race, and one of the most deeply rooted in the common people's minds, it was only little by little that they were granted admittance into the poetry of art. They appeared now as the mischievous, if not malignant, elves of Teutonic mythology, now as the inhabitants of the pagan, classical Hell, both of them equally loathed and relentlessly fought against by the Catholic priests, after the introduction of Christianity into England. They were moreover influenced by the romantic tales of Chivalry, and also perhaps, after the Crusades, by the gorgeous traditions of the East. A great confusion reigned among these different conceptions of the fairy-world, and the poet was

[1] Book VIII. ch. 24. Quoted by T. Warton, *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser*. Edit. 1754, p. 43.

yet to come who, grasping hold of these floating, unsettled traditions, would weld them into an harmonious whole. Or, may be, the fairy belief was still too lively and too potent a superstition to be made to fit in easily with a mere imaginative story, and to be looked upon as the subject-matter of a simple literary tale.

CHAPTER III

ELIZABETHAN FAIRIES

The Elizabethan period is the golden age of English fairy poetry. At no time did the poets come in closer contact with the people, or weave into their works a greater number of common beliefs, from the most spirited patriotic ideal to the humblest superstitions. It is a period unique in the rolls of English history, when men, just freed from their religious troubles and from the dread of foreign invasion, gave way to their intense imagination, to the passionate dreams of golden islands set in the distant seas, as well as to the hearty enjoyment, unchecked by any discipline, of their daily life, so gross, so turbid, doubtless, but all teeming with full-blooded energy. The poets, lyrists and dramatists alike, could not but share in the national enthusiasm. Let us examine what became of the fairy mythology during the reign of "the most high, mightie and magnificent Empress Elizabeth," how it first affected the literature of the people, was next taken up by different poets, and resorted to, lastly, both by the

chivalrous and aristocratic Edmund Spenser, and by such University Wits as John Lyly or Robert Greene.

I

The Reformation, which had done so much to enfranchise the popular mind, proved unable to overthrow the strongholds of superstition. The dim, awful twilight of Mediævalism lingered on for many years afterwards, and religion, leaving aside the earnest controversies and stubborn antagonisms of theologians, still consisted, for the ignorant masses, in something sad, grim, and ominous. "The Reformation," wrote Sir Walter Scott in the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, "swept away many of the corruptions of the church of Rome; but the purifying torrent remained itself somewhat tinctured by the superstitious impurities of the soil over which it had passed. The trials of sorcerers and witches, which disgrace our criminal records, become even more frequent after the Reformation of the church; as if human credulity, no longer amused by the miracles of Rome, had sought for food in the traditionary records of popular superstition."[1] The fairies did not enjoy better credit under Elizabeth than in the days of Chaucer and the Catholic priests. They were still regarded as actual demons, as

[1] p. 455.

members of that tribe of devils which had been denounced by theologians.

> You bastards of the Night and Erebus,
> Fiends, *fairies*, hags, that fight in beds of steel!

exclaimed one of the characters in *The Battell of Alcazar*, a play by George Peele.[1] Those who pretended to hold intercourse with them were looked upon as sorcerers, and not unfrequently condemned to die at the stake.

That the fairies, together with the witches and other supernatural beings, were no trifling matter for the Elizabethans, there are plenty of documents to prove. Thus the well-known book of Reginald Scot: *The discouerie of witchcraft, wherein the lewde dealing of witches and witchmongers is notablie detected, the knauerie of conjurors, the impietie of inchantors, the follie of soothsaiers... Heereunto is added a treatise upon the nature and substance of spirits and divels*, (London, 1584), in which the atrocious dealings of the witch-finders are boldly exposed, affords much information on the superstitions of the day, and about the fairies in particular. The following passages may be considered as a nearly complete summary of the current folk-belief concerning them:

> The Fairies do principally inhabit the mountains and caverns of the earth, whose nature is to make strange apparitions on the earth, in meadows, or on mountains,

[1] 1594, Act. IV, sc. 2.

being like men and women, soldiers, kings, and ladies, children and horsemen, clothed in green, to which purpose they do in the night steal hempen stalks from the fields where they grow, to convert them into horses, as the story goes... Such jocund and facetious spirits are said to sport themselves in the night by tumbling and fooling with servants and shepherds in country houses, pinching them black and blue, and leaving bread, butter and cheese sometimes with them, which, if they refuse to eat, some mischief shall undoubtedly befall them by the means of these Fairies; and many such have been taken away by the said spirits for a fortnight or a month together, being carried with them in chariots through the air, over hills and dales, rocks and precipices, till at last they have been found lying in some meadow or mountain, bereaved of their senses and commonly one of their members to boot... [1]

Indeed your grandam's maids were wont to set a bowl of milk before him and his cousin, Robin Goodfellow, for grinding of malt or mustard, and sweeping the house at midnight; and you have also heard that he would chafe exceedingly, if the maid or goodwife of the house, having compassion of his nakedness, laid any clothes for him, besides his mess of white bread and milk which was his standing fee. For in that case he saith: What have we here? Hemton hamton, here will I never more tread nor stampen... [2]

We must also quote another curious paragraph about the generality and many-sidedness of the belief:

[1] Ed. B. Nicholson, London, 1886. Book III, chap. IV.—[2] *Ib.* Book IV, chap. X.

...But in our childhood our mothers' maids have so... fraid us with bull-beggars, spirits, witches, urchins, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, fauns, sylens, Kit with the canstick, tritons, centaurs, dwarfs, giants, imps, calcars, conjurors, nymphs, changelings, Incubus, Robin Good-Fellow, the spoorn, the mare, the man in the oak, the hell wain, the fire-drake, the puckle, Tom Thumb, hobgoblin, Tom tumbler, boneless, and other such beings, that we are afraid of our own shadows. [1]

In 1589, George Puttenham, in his *Arte of English Poesie*, mentioned it again as an opinion of the nurses that fairies used to steal unbaptized children and to leave ugly changelings in their stead. [2] A short time after the death of the famous comic actor, Tarlton, there came out a tract entitled *Tarlton's Newes out of Purgatorie..... Published by an old companion of his, Robin Good-fellow*, (London, 1590), in which we may read:

"Think me to be one of those *Familiares Lares* that were rather pleasantly disposed than endued with any hurtful influence, as Hob Thrust, Robin Goodfellow, and such like spirits, as they term them, of the buttery, famoused in every old wive's chronicle for their mad, merry pranks. Therefore, sith my appearance to thee is in resemblance of a spirit, think that I am as pleasant a goblin as the rest, and will make thee as merry before I part, as ever Robin Goodfellow made the country wenches at their creambowls." [3]

Thomas Nash, finally, the now bitter, now good-

[1] *Ib.* Book VII, chap. XV.—[2] Arber's Rpt., p. 144.—[3] Ed. Shakespeare Society, p. 55.

humoured satirist, made, in the course of one of his dullest pamphlets: *Terrors of the Nig(ht), or, A Discourse of Apparitions*, (London, 1594), another allusion to the fairies, very acute indeed in its comparison with ancient lore:

> The Robin-good-fellows, Elfs, Fairies, Hobgoblins of our latter age, which idolatrous former days and the fantastical world of Greece ycleped Fauns, Satyrs, Dryads and Hamadryads, did most of their merry pranks in the night. Then ground they malt, and had hempen shirts for their labours, danced in rounds in green meadows, pinched maids in their sleep that swept not their houses clean, and led poor travellers out of their way notoriously.[1]

Popular poetry was sure to make use of such a widespread belief, and the fairies played an important part in the broadsides, those coarse, facetious, often obscene street-ballads, which were written expressly for the amusement of the lower classes, sung to a popular tune, and hawked in the most frequented thoroughfares.[2] Here is the beginning of one:

> Tom Thumb is not my subject
> Whom Fairies oft did aide,
> Not that mad spirit Robin
> That plagues both wife and maid.[3]

Now, Tom Thumb, one of the numerous goblins who, according to Scot, made people afraid of

[1] *Th. Nash's Works*, Ed. Grosart, III. p. 223.—[2] Cf. *passim*: Ph. Stubbes: *The Anatomie of Abuses*; Robert Laneham's *Letter*.—[3] *A Book of Roxburghe Ballads*, Ed. J. P. Collier, London, 1847, p. 35.

their own shadows, seems to have been very well known. He was mentioned, for instance, in some verses prefixed to Thomas Coryate's *Crudities*, (1611):

> Tom Thumbe is dumbe, untill the pudding creepe
> In which he was entomb'ed, then out doth peepe,

and made the subject of two little chap-books, one in prose and the other in verse, which, though the only copies known to exist date from the XVIIth century, were very likely in existence when R. Scot wrote his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, namely: *The History of Tom Thumbe the Little, for his small stature surnamed King Arthurs Dwarfe...* Imprinted at London for Tho: Langley, 1621; and *Tom Thumbe, his Life and Death: Wherein are declared Maruailous Acts of Manhood, full of wonaer, and strange merriments: which little Knight liued in King Arthur's time, and famous in the court of Great Brittaine.* London, printed for John Wright, 1630.[1] In the latter, Tom Thumb, whose stature was:

> ...but an inch in height,
> or quarter of a span,

and who encountered all sorts of adventures, falling into a pudding-bowl, being tied to a thistle, or carried away by a raven, seemed to be a special

[1] Reprinted in *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England*, Collected and Edited by W. C. Hazlitt, London, 1866. Vol. II. pp. 167-192.

favourite of the Fairy Queen. She gave him his name and :

> ...with her traine of Goblins grim,
> Vnto his christning came.

The latter part of the pamphlet tells "How Tom Thumb did take his sicknesse, and of his Death and Buriall" :

> And so with peace and quietnesse
> he left this earth below ;
> And up into the Fayry Land
> his ghost did fading goe.
> Whereas the Fayry Queene receiv'd,
> with heavy mourning cheere,
> The body of this valiant knight
> whom she esteem'd so deare. [1]

II

While Robin Goodfellow, a typical popular goblin, was still looked upon either as a devilish spirit or, as time went on, as a mischievous one only whose tricks and coarse jokes would set the boors roaring at the street-corner, the fairies now won their way into higher literature. Those mysterious beings provided the poets with a myth which, though now stripped, in their eyes, of its forbidding and ominous aspect, still preserved a degree of supernaturalness not unfit for the purposes of poetry. "We were now arrived,"

[1] ll. 311-19. See also, *passim*: W. Chappell and J. W. Ebsworth: *The Roxburghe Ballads*. 7 vols. London, 1869.

wrote T. Warton, "at that point when the national credulity, chastened by reason, had produced a sort of civilized superstition, and left a set of traditions, fanciful enough for poetic decoration, and yet not too violent and chimerical for common sense." [1] The fairy-world, in fact, was now considered as a well-spring from which the poets drew some of their sweetest similes.

A few instances will here suffice. An anonymous lyric contained in William Byrd's *Psalmes, Sonets, & Songs of Sadness and Pietie*, 1588, begins with these lines :

> Though Amaryllis dance in green
> Like Fairy Queen,
> And sing full clear...[2]

Thomas Churchyard, in *A handeful of gladsome verses, given to the Queenes Maiesty at Woodstocke this Prograce*, Oxford, 1592, related the strange tales told by "old thin-faced wives" :

> ... of monsters in their lives
> That now prove shadows light.

These fairies used to dance "on Bednall Green," or:

> ... where good cheer was great,
> Hodgepoke would come and drink carouse
> And munch up all the meat.

[1] *History of English Poetry from the Twelfth to the close of the Sixteenth Century*. London, 1871. Vol. IV, p. 359.—[2] These lines are also to be found in *England's Helicon*, 1600. They are included in A. H. Bullen's *Lyrics from the song-books of the Elizabethan age*. London, 1891, p. 34.

But where foul sluts did dwell,
Who used to sit up late,
And would not scour their pewter well,
There came a merry mate

To kitchen or to hall,
Or place where spreets resort;
Then down went dish and platters all,
To make the greater sport.

A further sport fell out,
When they to spoil did fall;
Rude Robin Goodfellow, the lout,
Would skim the milk-bowls all,

And search the cream-pots too,
For which poor milk-maid weeps,
God wot what such mad guests will do,
When people soundly sleeps.[1]

Edward Guilpin, in his rough satire against the fashionable poetry, and most particularly the soft, amorous Petrarchan tone of his time: *Skialetheia, Or a Shadowe of Truth in certaine Epigrams and Satyres*, 1598, exclaimed:

Let's esteeme opinion as she is,
Fooles bawble, innovations mistris,
The Proteus Robin-goodfellow of change,
Smithfield of jaded fancies, and th'Exchange
Of fleeting censures...[2]

[1] First cited by E. K. Chambers in his edition of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* (The Warwick Shakespeare).—[2] *Satyra Sexta.*

A Scottish poet, Alexander Montgomery, thus described the "King of Pharie" in his green garb, with his Queen and all their court:

In the hinder end of haruest, on Alhallow euen,
When our good nighbours doe ryd, gif I read right,
Some buckled on a bunwand,[1] and some on a been,
Ay trottand in trupes from the twilight,...
The King of Pharie, and his court, with Elfe Queen,
With many elrich Incubus, was rydand that night.[2]

Barnabe Barnes, lastly, in *Parthenophil and Parthenope*, 1593, wrote a sprightly little ode to a cruel maid, the first two stanzas running thus:

On the plains
Fairy trains
Were a-treading measures,
Satyrs played,
Fairies stayed
At the stops' set leisure.

Nymphs begin
To come in
Quickly, thick, and threefold!
Now the dance,
Now the prance
Present there to behold![3]

One has noticed, in the piece just quoted from, that the fairies had been mixed with the nymphs and satyrs of ancient lore. This is a frequent

[1] Ragwort, an herb.—[2] *Poems*, Ed. Irving, 1821, pp. 113-14.—[3] Cited by S. Lee in *Elizabethan Sonnets*, Vol I. p. 291.

device in Elizabethan poetry. T.Nash, we remember, had already identified the classical deities with the elves of Teutonic mythology, and so did the translators of the Latin poets, who all rendered the word *nympha* or *naiades* by *fairy*. Thus these two lines of Virgil:

Haec nemora indigenae Fauni Nymphaeque tenebant,
Gensque virum truncis et duro robore nata,[1]

appear in Gavin Douglas's *Æneid* (1513) as:

With Nymphis and Faunis apoun every side
Quhilk Fairfolkis or than Elfis clepen we...

and in Thomas Phaer's (1555-60) as:

The woods (quoth he) sometime both fauns and nymphs
[and gods of ground,
And Fairy-queens did keep, and under them a nation
[rough...

Again, in Arthur Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (1565-67) we encounter such forms as:

Nymphis latura coronas... IX. 337.
Was to the *fairies* of the lake fresh garlands for to bear...

Pan ibi dum teneris jactat sua carmina *nymphis*... XI. 153.
There Pan among the *Fairie-elves*, that daunced round
[together...

...semicaper Pan
Nunc tenet, at quodam tenuerunt tempore *nymphae*...
XIV. 515-16.

[1] *Æneid*: VIII. ll. 314-15.

The halfe-goate Pan that howre
Possessed it, but heretofore it was the *Fairies'* bower.

Tum deus 'Arcadiae gelidis in montibus' inquit
'Inter *hamadryadas* celeberrima Nonacrinas
'*Naïas* una fuit.... I. 689-91.
Of all the *nymphes* of Nonacris and *Fairie* ferre and neere,
In beautie and in personage this ladie had no peere.

Solaque *naïadum* celeri non nota Dianae... IV. 304.
Of all the *water-fayries*, she alonely was unknowne
To swift Diana...

No wonder then that the fairy queen herself should soon be called either Diana, in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*,[1] or Titania, in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, one of the several titles which Ovid attributed to the Uranian queen. This idea, moreover, of mingling the English fairies with the classical deities was no novelty : the beautiful love-song of Thomas Campion to "all the ladies that do sleep" :

...if you let your lovers moan,
The fairy-queen Proserpina
Will send abroad her fairies every one,
That shall pinch black and blue
Your white hands and fair arms
That did not kindly rue
Your paramours' harms.

In myrtle arbours on the downs
The fairy-queen Proserpina,
This night by moonshine leading merry rounds,

[1] Book III, chap. XVI.

Holds a watch with sweet love,
Down the dale, up the hill ;
No plaints or groans may move
Their holy vigil... [1]

being, it will be remembered, an harmonious echo of Chaucer's above-quoted phrase on :

Pluto, and his quene
Proserpina, and al hir fayërye. [2]

Together with the deities of classical paganism, the fays of mediæval romance came in touch with the homely elves of the Teutonic folk-belief. The spirit of Chivalry, as is well-known, and might be easily exemplified, was still alive in the Elizabethan age. And the legend of Arthur, if

[1] St. 2, 3. From *A Book of Ayres*, 1601.—' A last example—which we have but recently come across—of the widespread use of the word *fairy* among Elizabethan lyrists may be added here. Lodge's translation of one of Ronsard's sonnets (*Amours*, I, cxix ; *Phillis*, xxxi ; cited by S. Lee : *The French Renaissance in England*, Oxford, 1910, p. 260) begins as follows :

Devoid of reason, thrall to foolish ire,
I walk and chase a savage *fairy* still,
Now near the flood, straight on the mounting hill,
Now midst the woods of youth, and vain desire.

Ronsard's original was :

Franc de raison, esclave de fureur,
Je vay chassant une *fere* sauvage,
Or' sur un mont, or' le long d'un rivage,
Or' dans le bois de jeunesse et d'erreur.

Here we have the French word : *fere*, a wild beast, (Latin : *fera*) rendered by the English word : *fairy*, which, of course, is totally different.

not so often resorted to as the gorgeous fictions of the Latin poets, of Ovid especially, still continued in vogue till the end of the century. Listen to the testimony of Roger Ascham, for instance, complaining of the popularity of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* :

...the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye : In which booke those be counted the noblest Knightes, that do kill most men without any quarrell, and commit fowlest aduoulteries by sutlest shiftes : as Sir Launcelote with the wife of king Arthure his master : Syr Tristram with the wife of king Marke his vncle : Syr Lamerocke with the wife of king Lote, that was his own aunte. This is good stuffe for wise men to laughe at, or honest men to take pleasure at. [1]

The deeply-read antiquarian Holinshed, on the other hand, also makes an ironical allusion to :

...the same Arthur of whom the trifling tales of the Britains euen to this day fantasticallie doo descant and report wonders... ;

and elsewhere ridicules :

...the follie of such as beleeued that he should returne and reigne againe as king in Britaine, whether it be a fiction or a veritie that there was such an Arthur or no...[2]

Besides, the XVth century metrical romances were

[1] *The Scholemaster*, 1570. Arber's Rpt. p. 80.—[2] *Chronicles of England*, 1577. The fifth Booke of the Historie of England. The xiiij. chapter.

often republished. Thus the translation of *Sir Launfal* by Thomas Chestre was printed in 1558, being licensed, with "a Jeste of syr Gawain," to John Kynge, as appears in the *Stationers' Register*:

> To John Kynge to prynte these bokes followynge, that ys to saye a Jeste of syr Gawayne, the boke of carvynge and sewynge, syr Lamwell. [1]

One book, especially, played an important part in the evolution of fairy poetry in Elizabethan England: namely the translation by Lord Berners of *Huon de Bordeaux*.

This popular work, assigned by its editor, Mr. Sidney Lee,[2] to "some date after 1533 and before 1542," [3] is the rendering into English, not of the famous French *chanson de geste* of the middle of the XIIIth century,[4] but of one of the various amplified versions in prose written about a century later. The translator, John Bourchier, Lord Berners, who had already published an English version of the Chronicles of Froissart (1523-25), was in full sympathy with, and thoroughly entered into the spirit of, his original. He may be looked

[1] Arber's Rpt. Vol. I. p. 24.—[2] *The Boke of Duke Huon of Bordeaux done into English by Sir John Bourchier, Lord Berners, and printed by Wynkyn de Worde about* 1534. Edited by S. Lee, 2 vols. E. E. T. S. 1882-3.—[3] A second edition was published c. 1570, a third in 1601, "and the rude English corrected and amended." In 1558 it was valued at the high sum of xviij d. (S. Lee. *Introd.*); and it was one of the romances which Cox, the old captain of Coventry described in R. Laneham's Letter, had "at his fingers' end."—Ed. F. Guessard and C. Grandmaison, Paris, 1860.

upon, together with Sir Thomas Malory, as one of those valiant compilers who not only imported into England some of the more notable French productions, but succeeded in handing down the romances of Chivalry, with renewed and almost original freshness, from mediæval to Renaissance literature.

The subject may be briefly stated. Huon of Bordeaux, who has slain Charlemagne's son while traitorously attacked by him, and has come victorious out of the ordeal of battle, is banished from the court and sent by the Emperor on an all but impossible expedition: he is to go to Babylon, to find his way to the Persian Admiral, Gaudisse, literally to beard him, and carry off his daughter. He starts through Rome, Brindisi, and Jerusalem, not without encountering obstacles or difficulties of all kinds. His meeting with Oberon is one of the most noticeable events, if not the essential feature, of the whole narrative. One day Huon came to a wood inhabited by the fairy king and considered perilous owing to the latter's magic power. He was warned not to speak to him, lest he should be bewitched, and his life endangered. Oberon greeted him, asked him questions and, on his remaining silent, struck him and his attendants with such fright that he was compelled to answer. They soon made friends however, and the fairy king, taken by the spirited loyalty of Huon, presented him with his wonderful

goblet and his horn of great virtue. Henceforward, with Oberon's marvellous help, the French knight succeeded in all his quests. Before dying, Oberon imparted to him his supernatural gifts, instructed him in all the devices of magic, and even crowned him king of Faerie.

The character of Oberon is a very complex one. It first of all belongs to Teutonic lore. *Auberon*, as the name is spelt in the French romance, is derived from *Alberich* (*Alb* = elf + *rich* = king), who, in the Niebelungenlied, watches over the hoard that Sigfried has won from the Niebelungen, and in the Heldenbuch, a collection of German romances of the XIIIth century, meets Ortnit, a German emperor journeying to Syria in quest of the king's daughter, and helps him in his enterprise, just as the French Auberon does Huon; while the dwarfish stature of the fairy prince: "he is of heyght but of III fote, and crokyd shulderyd," [1] is quite in agreement with the diminutive figure so characteristic of the Teutonic elves. In the second place, Oberon lives in the midst of all the pomp and luxury of an Asiatic monarch. He is himself of entrancing beauty; his enchanted palace, with its golden roof and diamond pinnacles, has been compared to the splendid mansion of a Caliph; and there is hardly anybody at his court who does not wear "a gowne so ryche that it were meruayll to recount the ryches and faysyon there-

[1] Chapt. XXI, p. 63.

of, and it was so garnyshed with precyous stones that the clerenes of them shone lyke the sone." [1] Sundry Christian features also appear in Oberon's character. He is the son of Julius Cæsar, who with Alexander, as Mr. S. Lee has pointed out, "typifies in the mediæval legend papal and imperial Rome, that is Christianity and the Western Empire." He ascribes his power to Jesus, and eventually prefers his seat in Paradise to the joys of Faerie. He borrows not a few traits, lastly, from Arthurian romance: he is the son of Morgan le Fay, that "great clerk in nigromancy;" his supernatural power was granted him at his birth by the fays; and when he dies, Merlin comes with King Arthur to his death-bed, in his Eastern realm of Momur. Several other points connect him with Celtic tradition: his "aungelyke vysage," his enchanted golden goblet, which is never to be drained of its wine when in the hands of a truthful man, his ivory horn compelling an instant answer after a single blast, and bringing immediate aid to him who blows it. The very idea that Huon entertains of fairies: "And yf ye speke to hym, ye are lost for ever," is distinctly representative of Celtic lore.

Nothing more heterogeneous then than the character of *le petit roi sauvaige*, such as it appears in Lord Berners' translation of *Huon de Bordeaux*, nothing more perplexing even, but more suggestive

[1] Chapt. XXII, p. 65.

as well. Oberon became, in Elizabethan literature, the recognized name for the fairy king. The book, in which the typical features of Breton story mingle with those of the Carolingian epic, was as a mine which many poets took to drawing from, as best suited their individual fancies. It was, in a special degree, freely used by Spenser, who borrowed from it the name of Oberon, which he was the first, it seems, to introduce into English poetry.

III

The *Faerie Queene* is to some extent, and as far as we are here concerned, a misnomer. The long romantic epic—which, in the poet's mind, was to consist of twelve books, only three of which were published in 1590, and three others in 1596,—never intended to relate the wonderful history of the fairy people. Its aim was much wider and more complex. The fairy mythology appears but as a piece of the allegorical machinery of the whole book, and is quite unessential to its main purport. In fact, owing to Spenser's having left his work uncompleted, the introduction and leading motives of which had been reserved till the end, it bears the name of a heroine who is now and then alluded to, but never actually depicted.

The *Faerie Queene* is, first of all, a morality, destined, not unlike those popular dramatic per-

formances of the Middle Ages, to exhibit the struggles between good and evil, between virtues and vices in the spirit of man. It is the delineation of an ideal, half-patristic, half-Platonic, world, and, so to speak, the pilgrim's progress of a soul. The poet's purpose is expressly didactic. "The generall end of all the booke," Spenser wrote in his prefatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, "is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline;" while, some years before, in the course of his famous conversation with his friend Ludowick Bryskett, he had announced that "he had already well entred" into a work tending "to represent all the moral vertues, assigning to euery vertue a Knight to be the patron and defender of the same, in whose actions and feates of arms and chiualry the operations of that vertue, whereof he is the protector, are to be expressed, and the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves against the same, to be beaten down and ouercome."[1] A deeply religious man, Spenser is earnestly alive to the sore trials that beset a man's soul. He believes that religion, once cleansed of sin and falsehood, is to be the source of all nobleness. He seems to have inherited much of the Calvinistic "criticism of life." He looks seriously, and even sternly upon it, as a means to an end. He sees it teeming with all sorts of allurements to evil, which his stout knights are constantly

[1] Quoted in R. W. Church's *Spenser*, p. 84.

struggling against. He feels sure that their example, their eager fight against wickedness, will do much to further truth and virtue. Like Milton, he considers his work as a God-imposed task, and himself as already "in his great Task-Master's eye."

He labours hard, on the other hand, to attract the gaze and win the favour of Elizabeth. The time he lived in was a momentous period, rife with court intrigues and political difficulties of every kind, while he was an eye-witness, during his residence in the county of Cork, of Lord Grey's savage pacification of insurgent Ireland. Hence the numberless allusions to historical events which continually break in among the moral and religious professions, one might almost say, of the *Faerie Queene*. Besides embodying some virtue, the knights, for instance, not seldom personate some of the most notable contemporaries. Prince Arthur, the ideal hero of the poem, who stands therein for Magnificence, is at times Philip Sidney, and at others Leicester. Sir Arthegal, the knight of Justice, is the unrelenting Puritan Lord Grey. Duessa, in the guise of Falsehood, is the arch-sorceress Mary Stuart, the "scarlet whore" of the Scots :

> A loathly, wrinckled hag, ill favoured, old,
> Whose secret filth good manners biddeth not be told.[1]

[1] Bk. I, c. viii, st. 46.

The place of honour is of course reserved for Elizabeth, in the dedication, one of the boldest that ever was penned, as well as in several characters portrayed in the epic: Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, Belphœbe, a paragon of sweetness and beauty, Britomart, a pure and high-spirited maiden, Mercilla, the gracious and the compassionate. She is the noblest goal of man, the very type of all womanly virtues, and, at the same time, "the most royal Queen or Empress of England." Among the grossest homages paid, during the last decade of the XVIth century, to the now aged Virgin-Queen, those of the romantic Spenser were not among the least shameless.

Now to enshroud "the generall end of all the booke," both these moral abstractions and contemporary allusions, or, in the poet's own words, to render it "most plausible and pleasing," he chose to "colour it with an historicall fiction," and steeped it in the supernatural atmosphere of Arthurian romance. Spenser was intimately acquainted with Malory's compilation, and even with the translation of Lord Berners, Sir Guyon, for instance, having "taken knighthood":

> ...of good Sir Huons hand,
> When with king Oberon he came to Faery land. [1]

That Fairyland in which knights-errant could achieve all sorts of wonderful deeds without ever

[1] Bk. II, c. i, st. 6.

getting beyond the bounds of credibility, was the precise scene which he required. And Spenser, making ample use of the materials at his disposal, transferred to the chivalrous times of Arthur's Round Table, of sturdy knights and fair damsels, whatever ethical meaning or political hint he wanted to convey. Thus he described Fairyland as "exceeding spacious and wyde,"

> And sprinckled with such sweet variety
> Of all that pleasant is to eare or eye ; [1]

while, in another place, he seemed to identify it with England :

> Of faery lond yet if he more inquyre,
> By certein signes, here sett in sondrie place,
> He may it fynd....
> And thou, O fayrest Princesse under sky !
> In this fayre mirrhour maist behold thy face,
> And thine owne realmes in lond of Faery,
> And in this antique ymage thy great auncestry. [2]

The country is peopled with ugly monsters of all description : loathsome dragons, half serpents and half women, skulking in caverns, [3] hideous giants "horrible and hye," [4] dwarfs who, "panting for breath, and almost out of hart," [5] carry messages from knight bold to lady fair, wicked witches who, of a sudden, by their hellish science, can raise :

[1] Bk. VI, Intr., st. 1.—[2] Bk. II, Intr., st. 4.—[3] Bk. I, c. i, st. 14.—[4] Bk I, c. vii, st. 8.—[5] Bk. III, c. v, st. 4.

A foggy mist that overcast the day,

and a dull blast that, breathing on a maiden's face:

Dimmed her former beauties shining ray.[1]

Here a vile magician tries to beguile the steadfast heart of a gentle lady,[2] or some wanton sorceress,

Clad in fayre weedes but fowle disordered,
And garments loose that seemd unmeet for womanhed,[3]

stands at the porch of the Bower of Bliss, and allures the passers-by to "lewd loves and wastfull luxuree."[4]

Merlin himself, the "learned" enchanter who:

...had in Magick more insight
Then ever him before, or after, living wight,[5]

appears frequently on the scene. The royal maid Britomart having repaired to his secret abode and found "the dreadfull Mage":

Deepe busied bout worke of wondrous end,
And writing straunge characters in the grownd,
With which the stubborne feendes he to his service
[bownd,[6]

he reveals to her the state of Arthegal, her destined husband that dwells:

...in the land of Fayeree,
Yet is no Fary borne, ne sib at all
To Elfes, but sprong of seed terrestriall.[7]

[1] Bk. I, c. ii, st. 38.—[2] Bk. III, c. xii, st. 31.—[3] Bk. II, c. xii, st. 55.—[4] Bk. II, c. xii, st. 80.—[5] Bk. III, c. iii, st. 11.—[6] Bk. c. iii, st. 14.—[7] Bk. III, c. iii, st. 26.

Prince Arthur, on the other hand, who, when a boy, had been instructed by Merlin, passes through the six books of the *Faerie Queene* in a somewhat mysterious way. He represents at times Magnificence ; or he is called :

> The famous Briton Prince and Faery knight ; [1]

or he is a paragon of chastity, who scorns :

> That ydle name of love, and lovers life,
> As losse of time and vertues enimy. [2]

Once, however, nothing being "sure that growes on earthly grownd," he had been ranging the forest and was resting on the verdant grass when he had a splendid vision :

> "Me seemed, by my side a royall Mayd
> Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay :
> So fayre a creature yet saw never sunny day.
>
> "Most goodly glee and lovely blandishment
> She to me made, and badd me love her deare ;
> For dearely sure her love was to me bent,
> As, when just time expired, should appeare.
> But whether dreames delude, or true it were,
> Was never hart so ravisht with delight,
> Ne living man like wordes did ever heare,
> As she to me delivered all that night ;
> And at her parting said, She Queene of Faeries hight." [3]

As to Gloriana herself, who is never introduced to the reader, and an excision of whose character

[1] Bk. III, c. i. st. 1.—[2] Bk. I, c. *ix*, st. 10.—[3] Bk. I, c. ix, st. 13-4.

from the poem would not affect its tenor in the slightest degree, she is endowed with the most noble virtues. She is :

> That soveraine Queene, that mightie Emperesse,
> Whose glorie is to aide all suppliants pore,
> And of weake Princes to be Patronesse.[1]

She "lays high behests" on her gallant knights who, all of them, are solely intent on pleasing, worshipping, deifying her.

The fairy mythology of Spenser is, on the whole, highly artificial. It is essentially allegorical, the reader being constantly reminded of the ethical or political meaning which hides behind the romantic scenery. It impresses one as a conventional masquerade, in which the poet has brought together the well-worn decorations, and all the machinery of knight-errantry. It remains confused, unsettled. The heroes are indifferently called elves or fairies, Sir Guyon, for instance, being now "the Elfin knight,"[2] and now "the warlike Elfe,"[3] or Prince Arthur "the Faery knight."[4] It is purely imaginary, no distinction having been drawn between the "little people" of the folk-belief and the fays of romance, save once or twice when *elf* seems to be taken as a masculine, and *fay* as a feminine word :

> But that he by an Elfe was gotten of a Fay ;[5]

and no allusion, except, may be, when Arthegal[6]

[1] Bk. V, c. i, st. 4.—[2] Bk. II, c. vii, st. 19.—[3] Bk. II, c. vii, st. 56. —[4] Bk. III, c. i. st. 1.—[5] Bk. III, c. iii, st. 26.—[6] *Ib.*

and the Red Cross Knight[1] were stolen away from their infant cradles, being ever made to the popular superstitions. The fairydom of Spenser is but a fanciful fabric, a peculiar modification of the common theme, a mere literary device, in short, imitated not only from the romances of Malory or Lord Berners, but from the classical mythology as well, the nymphs of ancient lore being often coupled, as in the Elizabethan translations, with the national fairies:

> But Nymphes and Faeries by the bancks did sit...[2]
> But frendly Faeries, met with many Graces,
> And lightfoote Nymphes, can chace the lingring Night.[3]

Though Spenser may have found a precedent in Chaucer's *Sir Thopas*, he caused the fairies to be presided over by a Queen only because they had to be ruled by Elizabeth-Gloriana. He went the length of making her one of Oberon's descendants, and identifying Oberon himself with her father, Henry VIII. The following stanzas, in which is given the genealogy-roll of Elfin Emperors, will afford us a typical instance of Spenser's treatment of the fairy-world:

> ...first Prometheus did create
> A man, of many parts from beasts deryv'd,
> And then stole fire from heven to animate
> His worke, for which he was by Jove depryv'd
> Of life him self, and hart-strings of an Aegle ryv'd.

[1] Bk. I, c. x, st. 65.—[2] Bk. VI, c. x, st. 7.—[3] *The Shepheards Calender*, June.

That man so made he called Elfe, to weet
Quick, the first author of all Elfin kynd ;
Who, wandring through the world with wearie feet
Did in the gardins of Adonis fynd
A goodly creature, whom he deemd in mynd
To be no earthly wight, but either Spright,
Or Angell, th' authour of all woman kynd ;
Therefore a Fay he her according hight,
Of whom all Faeryes spring, and fetch their lignage
[right.

Of these a mighty people shortly grew,
And puissant kinges which all the world warrayd,
And to them selves all Nations did subdew.
The first and eldest, which that scepter swayd,
Was Elfin ; him all India obayd,
And all that now America men call :
Next him was noble Elfinan, who laid
Cleopolis foundation first of all :
But Elfiline enclosed it with a golden wall...

After all these Elficleos did rayne,
The wise Elficleos in great Majestie,
Who mightily that scepter did sustayne,
And with rich spoyles and famous victorie
Did high advaunce the crowne of Faery :
He left two sonnes, of which faire Elferon,
The eldest brother, did untimely dy ;
Whose emptie place the mightie Oberon
Doubly supplide, in spousall and dominion.

Great was his power and glorie over all
Which, him before, that sacred seate did fill,

That yet remaines his wide memoriall.
He dying left the fairest Tanaquill,
Him to succeede therein, by his last will :
Fairer and nobler liveth none this howre,
Ne like in grace, ne like in learned skill ;
Therefore they Glorian call that glorious flowre :
Long mayst thou, Glorian, live in glory and great
[powre.[1]

After allowance has been made for the several shortcomings of Spenser's fairies, there is no denying that they contribute largely to the perennial beauty of his work. They may be destitute of all reality, but they bear a great part in the charm of the epic. They bestow upon it something of that hazy remoteness which is one of its most distinctive features. They carry us away into a strange world, an unbounded dream-land where mysterious figures are constantly rising up before our view. The *Faerie Queene*, as is well known, was written in Ireland, and it seems as though the poet had spread over it something of the Celtic glamour. The bold elfin knights and virtuous faery damsels move in a romantic wilderness where the moon is ever shimmering, the steel armour of the ones and the maidenly apparel of the others making :

A little glooming light, much like a shade.[2]

The fairies enwrap the whole book in "darke

[1] Bk. II, c. x, st. 70-76.—[2] Bk. I, c. i, st. 14.

conceit," no doubt, but also in a sort of magical mist, of fantastic and aerial beauty. They make it, besides an allegory, a magic pageant, of life.

IV

The last decade of the XVIth century witnessed the apparition of a good many poems concerning the fairies, and, specially, their introduction on the stage. Warton was no doubt right in ascribing the popularity of these little mysterious beings to the success of the *Faerie Queene*. The word *fairy* was henceforward adapted for elves and fays alike, the attributes of the tricksy, mischievous Teutonic goblins being now constantly mixed up with those of the weird ladies of Arthurian romance. A few instances borrowed from two of the chief pre-Shakespearean playwrights will be sufficient to point out the general drift of such production.

John Lyly, the founder of English comedy, the first, as has been said,[1] "to write comedy purged of all appeal to the gross popular taste, clear of all old English tradition, and depending on æsthetic and intellectual qualities alone," did not fail, for all that, to bring the dancing and

[1] T. Seccombe and J. W. Allen : *The Age of Shakespeare*, vol. ii, p. 21. This time-honoured opinion, however, has been strongly opposed, recently, by Prof. A. Feuillerat. See his important work on *John Lyly*, Cambridge, 1910, pp. 309-314.

antics of the national fairies into his plays. They are to be met with in the highly artificial *Gallathea* (1584-5):

Act II, Sc. 3. Enter *Raffe* alone.

...Would I were out of these Woodes, for I shall haue but wodden lucke, heers nothing but the skreeking of Owles, croking of Frogs, hissing of Adders, barking of Foxes, walking of Hagges. But what be these?

Enter Fayries dauncing and playing and so, Exeunt.

I will follow them: to hell I shall not goe, for so fair faces neuer can haue such hard fortunes...[1]

and again in the court allegory of *Endimion* (1585-6):

Act IV, Sc. 3. The Grove. Endimion sleeping on the lunary bank. *Corsites*, solus.

Enter Fayries.

But what are these so fayre fiendes that cause my hayres to stand vpright, and spirits to fall downe? Hags—out alas! Nymphes!—I craue pardon. Aye me, out! what doe I heere?

The Fayries daunce, and with a song pinch him, and hee falleth a sleepe: they kisse Endimion, and depart.

Omnes. Pinch him, pinch him, blacke and blue,
Sawcie mortalls must not view

[1] *The complete works of John Lyly*, Edit. by R. W. Bond. Vol. ii, p. 442.

What the Queene of Stars is doing,
Nor pry into our Fairy woing.

1 *Fairy.* Pinch him blue.

2 *Fairy.* And pinch him blacke.

3 *Fairy.* Let him not lacke
Sharp nailes to pinch him blue and red,
Till sleepe has rock'd his addle head.

4 *Fairy.* For the trespasse hee hath done,
Spots ore all his flesh shall runne.
Kisse Endimion, kisse his eyes,
Then to our Midnight Heidegyes.

Exeunt. [1]

In a dramatic entertainment given by the Earle of Hertford to Elizabeth in "Progresse, at Elvetham in Hampshire," 1591, the Fairy Queen herself appeared under the name of *Aureola*, with a silver staff and a garland, to deliver this speech :

I that abide in places underground,
Aureola, the Queene of *Fairy* land,
That euery night in rings of painted flowers
Turne round and carroll out *Elisaes* name :
Hearing that *Nereus* and the Syluane Gods
Have lately welcomde your *Imperiall Grace*,
Oapend the earth with this enchanting wand,
To doe my duety to your *Maiestie*.
And humbly to salute you with this Chaplet
Given me by *Auberon*, the *Fairy* King.
Bright shining Phoebe, that in humaine shape,
Hid'st heaven's perfection, vouchsafe t'accept it :

[1] *Ib.* Vol. iii, pp. 59-60.

And I *Aureola*, belou'd in heaven,
(For amorous starres fall nightly in my lap)
Will cause that heavens enlarge thy Goulden dayes,
And cut them short, that envy at thy praise. [1]

The fantastic compliment "so delighted Her Majesty," says Nichols, "that she commanded to hear it sung and to be danced three times over." [2]

Robert Greene, a very different writer from the delicate, witty, and frigid author of *Euphues*, also admitted the fairies into his work. Thus, in the course of one of his best known pamphlets: *Greenes Groats-Worth of witte, bought with a million of Repentance ...written before his death and published at his dyeing request*, 1592, an actor mentions one of the parts in which he had gained most applause:

"Nay then, said the Player, I mislike your judgment. Why, I am as famous for *Delphrygus*, and the *King of Fairies*, as ever was any of my time. *The Twelve Labours of Hercules* have I terribly thundered on the stage..."

Two years later, Greene introduced Oberon into a play, the full title of which ran as follows:

The Scottish Historie of James the Fourth, slaine at Flodden, Entermixed with a pleasant Comedie presented by Oboram (*sic*) King of Fayeries. [3]

[1] *Ib.* Vol. i, pp. 449-50.—[2] *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth.* Vol. iii, p. 119.—[3] Entered in the Stationers' Register on May 14, 1594; probably printed that year, though no copy is known before 1598.

Oberon, who bears very little resemblance to the personage in *Huon de Bordeaux*, is a happy, contemplative spirit that looks upon life as something of very little importance, but, on the whole, rather amusing. He thus describes himself, after the first act:

> I tell thee, Bohan, Oberon is King
> Of quiet, pleasure, profit and content,
> Of wealth, of honor, and of all the world;
> Tide to no place, yet all are tide to me.
> Liue thou this life, exilde from world and men,
> And I will shew thee wonders ere we part.[1]

He is styled "King of the Fairies," and, in a somewhat clumsy way, leads them dancing during the intervals. If the opinion of Churton Collins concerning the indebtedness of Shakespeare to this production is somewhat exaggerated, namely that "there cannot be the smallest doubt that he saw what Greene meant, and the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* only gave more articulate expression to what found stammering and partial expression in the Interlude portions of this play,"[2] the fact remains that Greene's Oberon is not totally different from the husband of Titania, and strikes one as a sketch, as rough and tentative as may be conceived, of the Oberon of the *Dream*.

In *The Maydes Metamorphosis*, lastly, an anonym-

[1] ll. 608-13.—[2] *Robert Greene's Works*, Edit. by J. Churton Collins, vol. ii, p. 84.

ous play to which Lyly, on no good grounds however, is supposed to have added some portions in preparing it for performance by the "Children of Paul's," [1] there occurs a fairy episode which, in more respects than one, recalls the author of *Endimion :*

Act II, Sc. 2.

Mopso. But soft, who comes here?

Enter the Faieries, singing and dauncing.

By the Moone we sport and play,
With the night begins our day:
As we daunce the deaw doth fall,
Trip it little vrchins all:
Lightly as the little Bee,
Two by two, and three by three:
And about go we, and about go wee.

Ioculo. What mawmets are these?
Frisco. O they be the Fayries that haunt these woods.
Mopso. O we shall be pincht most cruelly.
1 *Fay.* Will you haue any musick Sir?
2 *Fay.* Will you haue any fine musicke?
3 *Fay.* Most daintie musicke?
Mopso. We must set a face on't now, theres no flying. No Sir: we are very merry, I thanke you.
1 *Fay.* O but you shall, Sir.

[1] *The Maydes Metamorphosis. As it hath bene sundrie times Acted by the Children of Powles.* London, 1600, 4^to. The play has been ascribed either to John Day (Gosse, Bullen, Bond) or to Daniel (Fleay).

Frisco. No, I pray you saue your labour.
2 *Fay.* O Sir, it shall not cost you a penny.
Ioculo. Where be your Fiddles?
3 *Fay.* You shall haue most daintie Instruments, Sir.
Mopso. I pray you, what might I call you?
1 *Fay.* My name is *Penny*.
Mopso. I am sory I cannot purse you.
Frisco. I pray you Sir, what might I call you?
2 *Fay.* My name is *Cricket*.
Frisco. I wish I were a chimney for your sake.
Ioculo. I pray you, you pretie little fellow what's your [name?
3 *Fay.* My name is little, little *Pricke*.
Ioculo. Little, little Pricke? O you are a daungerous Fayrie, and fright all the little wenches in the Country, out of their beds. I care not whose hand I were in, so I were out of yours.

1 *Fay.* I do come about the coppes,
Leaping vpon flowers toppes:
Then I get vpon a flie,
Shee carries me aboue the skie:
And trip and goe.

2 *Fay.* When a deawe drop falleth downe,
And doth light vpon my crowne,
Then I shake my head and skip,
And about I trip.

3 *Fay.* When I feele a gyrle a sleepe,
Vnderneath her frock I peepe,
There to sport, and there I play,

Then I bite her like a flea.
And about I skip... [1]

Does not the scene we have just quoted put one in mind of the passage in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where Falstaff comes across Sir Hugh Evans, Pistol, Mistress Quickly and Anne Page, all disguised as Fairies? The punning upon their names, at any rate, recalls to us as famous a scene in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, when Bottom desires "the more acquaintance" of Titania's dainty attendants, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed. The idea, needless to say, is much more finely developed in Shakespeare, still it was already to be found in *The Maydes Metamorphosis*, the likeness being even too close to be a mere coincidence.

Towards the end of the XVIth century, in short, the English fairies have begun to be freely admitted into lyric and dramatic poetry. Their once discordant characteristics have been blended together into an harmonious convention, which the poets now expatiate upon and embellish as they deem best. The essential distinction between Teutonic elves and the fays of Celtic romance has long been forgotten. The *fairies*, as they are

[1] *Ib.* Vol. iii, pp. 359-61. The scene is rounded off with a chorus:

Round about, round about, in a fine Ring a:
Thus we daunce, thus we daunce: and thus we sing a....

most generally called, now please the unlettered folk and the cultured classes alike, as appears plainly enough in two passages from *The Scourge of Villanie, Three bookes of Satyres*, by John Marston, 1598, the first one alluding to the popular taste for the ballads connected with fairy-lore :

> Base mind away, thy master calls, begon,
> Sweet *Gnato* let my poesie alone.
> Goe buy some ballad of the Faiery King,
> And of the begger wench, some rogie thing... ;[1]

the other sketching some conceited poetaster who dreams of nothing less than donning the mantle of Spenser :

> Another walkes, is lazie, lyes him downe,
> Thinkes, reades, at length some wonted sleep doth [crowne
> His new falne lids, dreames, straight tenne pound to one
> Out steps some Fayery with quick motion,
> And tells him wonders, of some flowrie vale,
> Awakes straight, rubs his eyes, and prints his tale.[2]

The time has come when, after a long period of often imperfect or unsuccessful efforts, all the materials have been brought together, and only wait for a powerful hand to build them up into a supreme masterpiece.

[1] In Lectores prorsus indignos, B2.—[2] Liber Secundus, VI. E7.

CHAPTER IV

"A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM"

Shakespeare, who probed the heart of man to its most obscure recesses, seems to have been as intensely attracted by the unknown regions that lie beyond the limits of human existence, and has given to the supernatural a place of no little importance in his work. He shows us witches in *Macbeth*, with "the mystery and grandeur of their evil influence," and, in *Richard II*, *Julius Cæsar*, and *Hamlet*, some appalling, blood-curdling ghosts. Besides representing, in the tragic period of his work, these unearthly spirits of horror, he had, in his earlier days,—and was to do it again towards the close of his career—depicted the denizens of Fairyland, bestowing on the delineation of those imaginary, airy nothings the same psychological realism, so to speak, that pervades his whole work. The fairies are hinted at in a good many plays, in *The First Part of King Henry the Fourth*, where the king, seeing "riot and dishonour stain the brow of his young Harry," wishes :

...that it could be proved
That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged
In cradle-clothes our children where they lay...;[1]

in *Cymbeline*, where the sensitive Imogen commits herself to sleep with these words :

To your protection I commend me, gods.
From fairies and the tempters of the night
Guard me, beseech ye ;[2]

and again in *The Winter's Tale*, where the old shepherd exclaims to his son, after finding Perdita on "a desert country near the sea" :

...it was told me I should be rich by the fairies. This is some changeling : open't....
This is fairy gold, boy, and 'twill prove so : so up with't, keep it close.[3]

They form distinct episodes in *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and the *Tempest*. Above all, they constitute the chief characteristic of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, the first of Shakespeare's plays that, as has been said, "from the first scene, in which Hermia is given her choice between marriage with Demetrius and :

...living a barren sister all her life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon,

to the last, in which the fairies dance at midnight

[1] Act I, Sc. i, ll. 86-8.—[2] Act II, Sc. ii, ll. 8-10.—[3] Act III, Sc. iii.

in Theseus' palace, is unmistakably a work of genius."[1]

What does the fairy-lore of Shakespeare, in the *Dream* especially, consist of? What did he actually borrow from his predecessors? How much is to be traced back to literary models, to mediæval, feudal romance or to classical poetry, and how much to the traditions still current in his time? How did he qualify these inherited ideas, and what shape did his imaginative genius eventually give to them? What light, finally, does Shakespeare's particular treatment of the fairy themes throw over his mind and art in general,—such are the several questions which will now, in as few words as possible, be examined.

Shakespeare did in no way create his fairy-lore. A certain amount of literature bearing on the subject was in existence when he began his dramatic career, and we may be sure that, as was his wont, he availed himself of a good many hints and allusions scattered among the preceding writers we have already reviewed. Thus he seems to have been personally acquainted with Lord Berners' translation of *Huon de Bordeaux*. The fairy king in the *Dream* is called Oberon, as in the French romance. His kingdom, as that of Huon's protector, lies in that mysterious country east of Jerusalem which

[1] T. Seccombe and J. W. Allen: *The Age of Shakespeare*, Vol. ii, p. 74.

is called "the farthest steppe of India," [1] where the air is fragrant with spices.[2] Again, he holds a court, as in the pure romance themes, keeps a train of knights,[3] and a jester, "to make him smile." [4] His queen has some handmaidens attached to her person,[5] and is followed by a full attendance of fairy subjects. [6] The English, as the French, Oberon, interferes with mortals; he takes an interest, no longer in the affairs of Papacy, but in those of Athens; he displays a kind concern in the lovers' misunderstandings, being even instrumental in their reconciliation; while, on the other hand, his proud and rash consort falls in love with a simple-minded clown, the weaver Bottom. The resemblances between *Huon de Bordeaux* and the *Dream* do not, however, amount to much more, and Oberon's character is marked by other features which are not to be found in his mediæval prototype: his invisibility,[7] for instance, and his immortality.[8]

Latin poetry supplied Shakespeare with various traits. The great playwright was well aware of the assimilation, already popular in his day, of the fairies to the demi-goddesses of pagan antiquity. Thus, as they are extremely quick of motion, and:

> Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow, [9]

they have hurried away from India for Theseus' marriage, alighted in a grove near Athens, and

[1] II, i, 69.—[2] II, i, 124.—[3] II, i, 25.—[4] II, i, 44.—[5] II, i, 8.—[6] II, i, 17; II, ii, 5.—[7] II, i, 186.—[8] II, i, 101, 135.—[9] III, ii, 110.

there disport themselves wantonly, just like the nymphs and satyrs who used to haunt that ancient place. They attend the wedding, and acting, as it were, the part of the god Hymen, hallow the house with their songs,[1] and give the bridal bed "joy and prosperity."[2] They show no ignorance in classical myth, whether they make an allusion to "wing'd Cupid,"[3] and his "fiery shaft,"[4] or to "the triple Hecate's team."[5] Their queen seems to belong to the resplendent mythology of the Ancients, such at least as it was painted in the brilliant, sensuous poems of Ovid. She is called Titania, one of the several names attributed to Diana in the *Metamorphoses*[6] that is Titan-born, as Diana was sister to Sol, the Sun-god, a Titan. She is not, in the *Dream*, totally unlike the classical goddess. If she leaves aside her maidenly attributes and her patronage of chastity, she preserves, though not a goddess herself, some of her characteristics, with regard to the Moon especially: she appears now as a votaress bound to her service, dealing in occult influences and magic herbs,[7] now as a strange gleaming huntress starting on aerial quests in dim, dewy nights.[8] Her fairies, lastly, are also of the night, and run:

> From the presence of the sun,
> Following darkness like a dream,[9]

[1] V, i, 398-429.—[2] II, i, 73.—[3] I, i, 235.—[4] II, i, 161.—[5] V, i, 391.—[6] Bk. III, l. 173: Dumque ibi perluitur solita Titania lympha.—[7] II, i, 103, 170, 184.—[8] II, i, 82, *Sqq.*—[9] V, i, 3923-

her royal husband himself, like Pluto, being "king of shadows," [1] *umbrarum dominus*, as Ovid styled the latter.

Not content to derive the characters of his fairies both from French romance and classical antiquity, Shakespeare also had recourse to the elves of popular tradition. They were well known to him, either as recollections of his early days in rural Warwickshire, from his intercourse, as has been suggested, with some Welsh people, or from the perusal of R. Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, that complete treatise of all the superstitions of the time. Nay, the fairies of folk-belief play a far more important part in his work than those borrowed from mere literary sources.

From Celtic lore, first of all, Shakespeare adapted the name of *Mab*, the tricksy elf that Mercutio alludes to in *Romeo and Juliet*, and of *Puck*, the merry jester of Oberon in the *Dream*. The origin of the former, derived by some from the Welsh *mab*, a child, and considered by others as a contracted form of *Dame Abonde*, has been the subject of much discussion, and is not yet positively established ; the latter is only a generic word for all sorts of sprites, and Shakespeare, who was the first to use it as a proper name, also refers to the freakish wanderer of the night as "sweet

[1] III, ii, 347.

Puck," [1] "*an* honest Puck," [2] and "*the* Puck." [3] Many analogies, as noted before, are to be met with in the dialects of England, and the word itself is found, not only in Langland, but in Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* :

> The country where Chimaera, that same *pouke*,
> Hath goatish body, lion's head and breast, and dragon's
> [tail ; [4]

and even in Spenser's *Epithalamion* :

> Ne let the *Pouke*, nor other evill sprights,
> Ne let mischivous witches with theyr charmes,
> Ne let hob Goblins, names whose sence we see not,
> Fray us with things that be not, [5]

where it seems to mean, if not a devilish, at least a harmful spirit. Now Queen Mab and Puck, or Robin Goodfellow as he is indiscriminately called, have much in common. The Elfin-lady, who is but slightly connected with the high-born Titania, springs direct from folk-belief. Her description, which occurs in *Romeo and Juliet*, must be quoted here in full : it is, in a way, an epitome of all the common traditions about the fairy people which the boy Shakespeare may have heard many a time from the mouth of an old gossip, in the ingle-nook of some Stratford cottage :

[1] II, i, 40.—[2] V, i, 438.—[3] V, i, 442.—[4] ix, 646.—[5] ll. 340-3. Quoted by E. K. Chambers, in his excellent edition of *M. N's. D.* (The Warwick Shakespeare.)

O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
Her waggon-spokes made of long spinners' legs,
The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,
The traces of the smaller spider's web,
The collars of the moonshine's watery beams,
Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film,
Her waggoner a small grey-coated gnat,
Not half so big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid;
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out o'mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on court'sies straight,
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees,
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues,
Because their breaths with sweet meats tainted are:
Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit;
And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail
Tickling a parson's nose as a'lies asleep,
Then dreams he of another benefice:
Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,

Of healths five-fathom deep; and then anon
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes,
And being thus frighted swears a prayer or two
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab
That plaits the manes of horses in the night,
And bakes the elf-locks in foul sluttish hairs
Which once untangled much misfortune bodes.....[1]

Puck, on the other hand, that "shrewd and knavish sprite call'd Robin Goodfellow,"[2] resembles Mab in many respects. He too is country-born and bred. He is a popular goblin who will at night steal into houses, help in the domestic duties, sweep the floor, grind the corn,[3] or, when displeased, play all kinds of mischievous tricks, skim the milk, make the "breathless housewife" toil in vain at her churn,[4] or keep the beer from fermenting.[5] He roves through the village, scaring all the maids, pestering the old gossips till:

...the whole quire holds their hips and laugh,
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.[6]

He can invest himself with a variety of shapes, as of a "fat and bean-fed horse," a roasted crab, a three-foot stool, just in front of:

The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale....
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,[7]

[1] *Romeo and Juliet:* Act I, Sc. iv, ll. 53-91.—[2] *M. N's. D.* II, i, 33-34.—[3] II, i, 36—[4] II, i, 37.—[5] II, i, 38,—[6] II, i, 55-7.—[7] II, i, 51-3.

a hound, a hog, a headless bear,[1] even of a fire, when he tempts travellers astray, "laughing at their harm."[2] His roughness and hairy appearance, "a lob of spirits"[3] as he is called by one of the fairies, to wit a lout, make him the fright of homespuns and, in the course of the long winter evenings, the chief talk of the "villagery."

The fellow-fairies of Puck, though much finer and daintier, also borrow many traits from folk-lore. They appear at night, tripping "after night's shade,"[4] and "following darkness like a dream."[5] They steal away babies[6] and leave changelings in their stead. They love cleanliness: "Cricket," says Pistol, disguised as Hobgoblin in *The Merry Wives*,

> "...to Windsor chimneys shalt thou leap:
> Where fires thou find'st unraked and hearths unswept,
> There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry:
> Our radiant queen hates sluts and sluttery."[7]

Again, they are passionately fond of dancing: they form, with glow-worms as their lanterns,[8] "dewy orbs upon the green,"[9] "dance their ringlets to the whistling wind,"[10] and take immense pleasure in "moonlight revels."[11] All these characteristics Shakespeare must have become acquainted with in early life. They form no slight part of

[1] III, i, 112.—[2] II, i, 39.—[3] II, i, 16.—[4] IV, i, 101. [5] V, i, 393. — II, i, 22.—[7] *M. W.* V, v, 47-50.—[8] *Ib.* 82.—[9] *M. N's. D.* II, i, 9. —[10] *Ib.* 86.—[11] *Ib.* 141.

his knowledge of the country, and of the rustic and popular element of his genius.

These several contributions, however, constitute but a small part of the fairy-world that is depicted in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, and Shakespeare added much of his own. Thus Oberon, the fairy king who, in *Huon de Bordeaux*, is violent and particularly prone to anger, who bestows wealthy presents on the adventurous youth and, a moment after, orders his death because the latter has refused to heed his command, only retains a canny capriciousness in the *Dream*, which he displays either in his benevolence towards the parted lovers, or in his deliberate, malicious vengeance upon his queen. Still more different from her classical prototype is Titania. She is but a childish, impulsive woman, who falls under the shafts of "wing'd Cupid," and innocently loves the weaver Bottom, a conceited, self-complacent village tyrant. She is wilful, just a trifle haughty, as though she were conscious of her glorious descent, yet not unwilling to yield and confess her faults. She is coquettish withal, and the very type of feminine daintiness, as when, before being sung asleep with a pretty lullaby,[1] she sends the fairies of her train on various errands :

> Then, for the third part of a minute, hence ;
> Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,

[1] II, ii, 9-26.

Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
At our quaint spirits. [1]

Puck's popular character Shakespeare has likewise graced with not a few traits. Oberon's henchman has cast off all the harsher aspects of his personality in the Teutonic myth and, first of all, his downright evil-mindedness. He is connected neither with the remembrance of the primitive earth-dwellers, nor with the spirits of the dead; nor does he, in the *Dream*, represent the powers of terror and malignity, as he does in peasant-lore. He is now become a merry goblin, every inch of him. Though he enjoys teasing and vexing the poor "human mortals," [2] and laughs wantonly at their squabbles, which he "esteems a sport," [3] he never means any serious harm and, on the whole, rather brings them luck than otherwise.[4]

Now these different characteristics, discrepant as they may seem, are firmly welded together by the poet's creative imagination. Oberon has been removed from the world of romance, where he was still a dwarf, and brought among the tiny Teutonic elves, while Puck, on the other hand, so familiar to every country homestead, appears as Oberon's court jester, being thus put under the fairy king's direct subjection. The names of the chief fairies

[1] *Ib.* 2-6.—[2] II, 1, 101.—[3] III, 11, 353.—[4] II, 1, 41

and most of their attributes may have originated in different countries: the "little people" form in the *Dream* a well-defined realm, almost a single family, in which the slow process of assimilation that had been at work for centuries has reached its climax. Many elements: Saxon and Celtic folk-lore, French romance and Latin poetry, both the naïve mediæval creed and the luxuriousness of Renaissance culture, may have entered into the combination, the result is unique, and bears the stamp of genius.[1]

For the first time, moreover, the fairies became a very important, if not the essential, element in a drama. They were introduced on the stage not only by way of interlude, as in Greene and Lyly, but as actual *dramatis personae*. They are indispensable to the plot, Oberon, for instance, intervening between, and reconciling, the Athenian lovers, and Titania growing extravagantly fond of the weaver Bottom. They even form by themselves, and within the drama, a little by-play with a complete plot and well-defined characters, the "jangling" of the mortals being, in a way, but the counterpart to the sad disagreement of the royal elfin pair. More than that, they embody a

[1] Cf. the interesting note of J. O. Halliwell: "Charles Lamb, in a manuscript that I have seen, speaks of Shakespeare as having "invented the fairies;" by which, I presume, he means that his refinement of the popular notion of them was sufficiently expansive to justify the strong epithet." *Memoranda on the Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Brighton, 1879, p. 13.

distinctly Shakespearean idea. They bring Fairy-land itself before the play-goer's eyes, not a pure, ethereal country like that of Spenser, in which everything is serene, or fervently exalted, but a fairy-world where life is active, rapid, ever in a bustle. Availing himself of the most popular traditions and of some hints scattered in previous writers, Shakespeare imparted to the fairies a sort of aerial realism and, so to speak, sublimed them into the finest poetry, just as, in his dramas, he was to lay hold of some of the most common feelings of man, and to work them out into imperishable masterpieces.

A Midsummer-Night's Dream is, in a word, a dreamland drama. Shakespeare's fairies are much more tiny than those of the village gossips. They "creep into acorn-cups and hide them there."[1] They wrap themselves in the cast "enamell'd" slough of a snake,[2]

> And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
> To fan the moonbeams from... sleeping eyes.[3]

They travel with extreme rapidity, "swifter than the wind,"[4] "swifter than the moon's sphere,"[5] and Puck even promises his royal master to "put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes."[6] They strike us, with that minute etherealness of theirs, as the very personifications of dreams.

[1] II, i, 31.—[2] II, i, 256.—[3] III, i, 175-6.—[4] III, ii, 94.—[5] II, i. 7.—[6] II, i, 175-6.

They are "airy spirits," [1] or mere "shadows." [2] Congenial to them are the most delicate things in nature : flowers, dewdrops, butterflies and nightingales ; and they answer to such sweet names as Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed. They constitute a new supernaturalism, a sort of dainty, graceful world of the marvellous. They impersonate pastoral dreams, and all that is connected with fragrant and moonlit groves. They are spoken of, if not by such practical or sober men as Theseus, who does not believe in them, and considers the whole matter as the growth of a wild imagination :

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends, [3]

at least by the simple-minded Bottom or the entranced lovers. They body forth, in short, all those sweet witcheries of a warm, mellow, soothing Midsummer night, which vanish away with the first glimmer of the dawn.

The fairy-world of Oberon and Titania represents in some way, thrown into the semblance of a real world, the dreams of Shakespeare's youth. The lyrical poet appears first and foremost in this play, a dramatic poem, in fact, rather than a drama. The *Dream* has all the brightness and unsubstantiality of a youthful poet's view of life. Youthful

[1] III, i, 164.—[2] V, i, 430.—[3] V i, 4-6.

is the sensuous beauty of the fairies' domain, that aromatic, flower-scented kingdom of India where they "fleet" the time carelessly, and lead a merry, luxurious life, heedless of all that goes beyond the present moment; youthful also are the love troubles of Titania and Oberon, that pretty squabbling which scarcely ruffles the surfaces of their hearts. Now, before closing his career, Shakespeare will return once more to the principal theme of his earliest master-piece, and *The Tempest* may rightly be called a fairy romance. The scene is laid in an "un-habited Island," where "sounds and sweet airs" proceed from all quarters, and which is as imaginary as "the farthest steppe of India." Oberon has been superseded by Prospero, the Lord of nature, a magician who, by his "so potent art," can summon no less goddesses than Juno, Ceres and Isis; who has besides sounded the depths of mortality, till his character, as has been justly remarked, "conveys an impression of serenely wise goodness and self-centred detachment from the material interests of life."[1] Ariel himself is not without some likeness to Puck. He also is a preternatural courier, and flies nimbly through the air on his master's errands. He is more refined, however, more "dainty"[2] and "delicate"[3] than Oberon's body-servant, though, once at least, he fairly treats himself to a Puck-like trick when his invisible

[1] A. W. Verity, in his edition of *The Tempest*, p. xx.—[2] V, 95.—[3] I, ii, 272, 441.

interference leads to blows between Trinculo and Stephano.[1] He is besides more tender-hearted; he takes his share of the hardships of life; and instead of making fun of the mishaps that the poor "human mortals" are tormented with, he even seems at times to sympathise with the very woes he is inflicting on them, and of which he is but the irresponsible minister.

Upon the whole, it is not a little significant that both at the beginning and the end of his triumphant career, Shakespeare was attracted by the particular charm of the fairy-world, and made it the subject of two of his master-creations; that both as a youth but lately arrived from his little country-town, and in riper years, after he had fought out his battle with the world and won it, when, to use Bacon's words, he was "standing upon the vantage ground of truth," and could see "the Errours, and Wandrings, and Mists, and Tempests, in the vale below," [2] he chose to fill a play with fairy-lore, and to take "the little people" of the night as spokesmen of his most inward feelings. Nay, his very words of renunciation to the enchanted work of his life, which he put in the mouth of Prospero, a creation of his own genius, and the pure offspring of his most original imagination, were actually borrowed from country-side legend:

[1] III, ii.—[2] *Essays*, I, Of Truth.

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves,
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune and do fly him
When he comes back ; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites, and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew....
....I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.[1]

[1] V, i, 33-57.

CHAPTER V

POST-SHAKESPEAREAN FAIRIES

Shakespeare's fairydom achieved immediate success. Written between the years 1593-95, published in 1600 in two almost simultaneous quartos, after being, so the title-page says, "sundry times publickely acted," *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* continued, till far into the XVIIth century, to be one of the most popular of Shakespeare's comedies: the groundlings, whose superstitions became, under the Stuarts, more intense than ever, found many things in it which they would easily understand, and the poets, who could not but admire the great dramatist's invention, spared no pains in imitating and, if possible, improving upon it. Oberon, Titania, and their merry court of twilight frolickers soon stepped, in the minds of the common people, into the place of the romantic, unapproachable Gloriana. Shakespeare's presentment of the fairy-world was accepted as the ideal one, heartily admired, and perseveringly borrowed from.

I

An external reason contributed not a little, during the first decades of the XVIIth century, to the wide vulgarisation of Shakespeare's fairydom : it happened to express a current of thought which, in fact, still formed a large part of the popular creed. When James VI of Scotland ascended the throne of England in 1603, he brought with him his narrow prejudices and his pedantic, authoritative theology. He showed himself particularly zealous against sorcerers and all that was, in some way or other, connected with magic. A law was passed soon after his accession, which condemned witches to capital punishment on their first conviction, "even though they should have inflicted no injury upon their neighbours." In the very same year of his entry into London, he caused a short treatise on *Daemono-logie*, which he had published six years earlier in Edinburgh, to be reprinted,[1] in which he set forth his views upon the subject. The earth, he declared, was overrun with numberless hellish spirits troubling men and women, the fairies forming one class of those "diuells" :

"That fourth kinde of spirites, which by the Gentiles was called *Diana* and her wandring court, and amongst

[1] *Daemono-logie, in forme of a dialogue. Divided into three bookes. Written by the high and mightie Prince Iames....* London, 1603.

vs was called the *Phairie*, or our good neighboures, was one of the sortes of illusions that was rifest in the time of Papistrie... To speake of the many vaine trattles founded vpon that illusion : How there was a King and Queene of *Phairie*, of such a iolly court and train as they had, how they had a teynd, and dutie, as it were, of all goodes : how they naturally rode and went, eate and dranke, and did all other actions like naturall men and women : I think it liker *Virgils Campi Elisij*, nor anything that ought to be beleeued by Christians, except in generall, that, as I spake sundry times before, the diuell illuded the senses of sundry simple creatures, in making them beleeue that they sawe and heard such things as were nothing so indeed." [1]

Another arraignment of the fairies, both as creatures of the Devil and papistical inventions, appears again, but this time in a far more virulent tone, in a pamphlet published that same year 1603 by a certain Dr. S. Harsenet, afterwards Archbishop of York, and entitled *A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures to withdraw the hearts of her Majesties subjects from their allegeance, and from the truth of Christian Religion professed in England under the pretence of casting out deuils.* Thus we come, in the twenty-first chapter, upon such a paragraph as this :

" What a world of hel-worke, deuil-worke, and Elue worke had we walking amongst vs heere in England, what time that popish mist had befogged the eyes of our

[1] p. 73.

poor people?... If that the bowle of curds and creame were not duly set out for *Robin Good-fellow* the Frier and *Sisse* the dairy-maide, to meete at *hinch-pinch, and laugh not*, when the good wife was a bed, why then, either the pottage was burnt next day in the pot, or the cheese would not curdle, or the butter would not come, or the ale in the fat would never have good head. But if a *Peeter-penny*, or an houzle-egge were behind, or a patch of tyth vnpaid to the Church (*Iesu Maria*) thê(n) ware where you walke for feare of *bull-beggers, spirits, witches, urchins, Elues, hags, fairies, Satyrs, Pans, Fauns, Sylvans, Kit with the Candlesticke, Tritons, Centaurs, Dwarffs, Giants, impes, Calcars, coniurers, Nymphs, Changlings, scritchowles, Incubus the spurne, the mare, the man in the oake, the fire-drake, the puckle, Tom thumbe, hobgoblin, Tom Tumbler, Boneles* and the rest: and what girle, boy, or old wisard would be so hardy to step over the threshold in the night for an half-penny worth of mustard amongst this frightfull crue without a dosen *auemaries*, two dosen of crosses surely signed, and halfe a dosen *Pater nosters*, and the commending himself to the tuition of *S^t Vncumber*, or els our blessed Lady?" [1]

The erudite Doctor is not even ignorant of Chaucer's sly skit upon the "limitours," as appears by another passage:

"*Geoffrey Chaucer*, who had his two eyes, wit and learning in his head, spying that all these brainlesse imaginations of witchings, possessings, househaunting, and the rest, were the forgeries, cosenages, Imposturs, and legerdemaine of craftie priests and leacherous Friers,

[1] pp. 134-5.

either to maske their venerie, or to enritch their purses, by selling their Pope-trumpery (as *Medals*, *agnus dei*, *Blessed beades*, *holy water*, *hallowed Crosses*, *amulets*, *Smocks of proofe*, and such) at a good rate ; as who would not giue soundly for a Medal defensiue against the deuil ? writes in good plain termes of the holy Couent of Friers.... " [1]

Apart from this bitter anti-papal feeling, the fairy belief was still shared in by some of the most powerful minds of the century. Thus Bacon, who admits the existence of good and evil spirits, even looks upon them as a legitimate subject of study :

" So of degenerate and revolted spirits, the conversing with them or the employment of them is prohibited, much more any veneration towards them. But the contemplation or science of their nature, their power, their illusions, either by Scripture or reason, is part of spiritual wisdom. For so the apostle saith : we are not ignorant of his stratagems. " [2]

Nor does Robert Burton, the recluse of Christ Church, the learned but candid and humorous anatomiser of human folly, fail to admit the widespread superstition into his book :

" Terrestrial devils are those Lares, Genii, Fauns, Satyrs, Wood-nymphs, Fairies, Robin Good-Fellows, Trulli, &c., which, as they are most conversant with

[1] p. 137.—[2] *Advancement of Learning*, Book II, 1605, quoted by H. H. Stewart, *The Supernatural in Shakespeare*, 1908, p. 38.

men, so they do them most harm.... Some put our fairies into this rank, which have been in former times adored with much superstition, with sweeping their houses, and setting of a pail of clean water, good victuals and the like, and then they should not be pinched, but find money in their shoes, and be fortunate in their enterprises. These are they that dance on heaths and greens,... and leave that green circle which we commonly find in plain fields, which others hold to proceed from a meteor falling, or some accidental rankness of the ground, so nature sports herself; they are sometimes seen by old women and children.... Paracelsus reckons up many places in Germany where they do usually walk in little coats, some two feet long. A bigger kind there is of them called with us hobgoblins and Robin Goodfellows, that would in those superstitious times grind corn for a mess of milk, cut wood, or do any matter of drudgery work." [1]

And Sir Thomas Browne even goes so far as declaring it a riddle to him:

"...how so many learned heads should so far forget their metaphysics, and destroy the ladder and scale of creatures, as to question the existence of spirits: for my part, I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches. They that doubt of these do not only deny them, but spirits; and are obliquely, and upon consequence a sort, not of infidels, but atheists." [2]

While such beliefs were so boldly professed by

[1] *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621, Part I, Sec. 2, Memb. 1, Subs. 2.—[2] *Religio Medici*, 1643.

some of the loftiest thinkers of the time, they were made the subject, in the lower ranges of literature, of a vast amount of multifarious work. Numberless treatises appeared that dealt with witchcraft.[1] The particularly horrific trial of the Lancashire witches was recorded in two plays, one by T. Heywood and Rich. Brome,[2] the other, somewhat later, by T. Shadwell.[3] Ghosts and goblins were constantly alluded to, whether in a half-theological treatise as *The Hierarchie of the blessed Angells, their names, orders, and offices. The fall of Lucifer with his Angells...* by Thomas Heywood, 1635, in which we may read :

"...Such as wee
Pugs and Hob-goblins call. Their dwellings bee
In corners of old houses least frequented,
Or beneath stacks of wood ; and there conuented,
Make fearefull noise in Buttries and in Dairies;
Robin good-fellowes some, some call them Fairies.
In solitarie roomes these vprores keepe,
And beat at dores to wake men from their sleepe,
Seeming to force locks, be they ne're so strong,

[1] For instance : George Gifford : *A Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcrafts. In which is layed open how craftily the Divell deceiveth not onely the witches, but many others...* 1603 ; J. Cotta : *The Triall of Witch-craft, shewing the true... methode of discouery, with a confutation of erroneous wayes,* 1616; rpt. 1625; H. Goodcole: *The wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch, late of Edmonton,* 1621.—[2] *The late Lancashire Witches. A well received comedy,* London, 1634.—[3] *The Lancashire Witches and Tegue o Divelly the Irish priest. A comedy.* London, 1682.

And keeping Christmasse gambols all night long.
Pots, glasses, trenchers, dishes, pannes, and kettles
They will make dance about the shelues and settles,
And if about the kitchen tost and cast,
Yet in the morning nothing found misplac't.
Others such houses to their vse have fitted,
In which base murthers haue been once committed.
Some haue their feareful habitations taken
In desolat houses, ruin'd, and forsaken....." [1]

or in a mere satire as that of Samuel Rowlands :

"In old wives daies, that in old time did live...
Great store of goblins, fairies, bugs, night-mares,
Vrchins and elves, to many a house repaires.
Yea far more sprites did haunt in divers places
Then there be women now weare devils faces ;
Among the rest, was a good fellow devill
So cal'd in kinds, cause he did no evill,
Known by the name of Robin...
But as that time is past, that Robin's gone,
He and his night-mates are to us unknowne." [2]

The belief is represented, in these last lines, as dying out, but R. Scot, and Chaucer himself, we remember, had already averred as much. The higher and more enlightened classes may have repudiated such base superstitions : they none the less enjoyed, till far into the XVIIth century, a wide currency and, we may feel

[1] *Lib.* 9. The Angell, pp. 574-5.—[2] *More Knaves Yet ? The Knaues of Spades and Diamonds.* London, n. d. : On Ghoasts and Goblins.

sure, contributed to bring into vogue the new interpretation which Shakespeare had given of the popular theme. Just as most of the play-goers, the most thoroughly educated as well as the most ignorant, believed, when they saw the ghost of Hamlet's father striding across the stage, that such things would happen, thus the fairies of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, even leaving aside their unparalleled literary qualities, must have struck Shakespeare's contemporaries as well-known and, in fact, all but natural beings. One easily realises what additional interest accrued to the play from the popular belief in fairies, and how it enhanced its essential charm to a degree which, to-day, is hard for us to imagine.

II

The welcome which *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* met with soon influenced contemporary literature. There appeared, in 1628, an anonymous tract called *Robin Good-Fellow ; his mad pranks and merry jests*,[1] which, in many places, reminds one of Oberon's body-servant in the fairy drama. Now some version was surely in existence previous to that date, though not, as has been assumed, before the writing of Shakespeare's play, as the pamphlet rather seems to be founded on the drama than the drama on

[1] Edited by J. P. Collier for the *Percy Society*, 1841 ; rpt. in F. Sidgwick's *Sources and Analogues of "A M.-N's. D."* 1908.

the pamphlet. Several other chap-books, either in prose, in verse, or in both alternately, have also come down to us, which, as is always the case when we deal with popular literature, only make up a small portion of those that were actually hawked on the road-side : such, for instance, as *The merry Puck, or Robin Good-fellow: Describing his birth, and whose son he was, how he ran away from his Mother... how his Father, King Oberon, found him, together with all his merry Prankes. Very pleasaunt and witty*, a unique black-letter ballad privately printed by J. P. Collier ;[1] or as *The Mad Merry Pranks of Robin Good-fellow*,[2] a shorter and rhymed version of the prose pamphlet.

Another example, though somewhat different, may be noticed here. It is from the very text of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that Shakespeare borrowed his fairy queen's name, Titania ; the epithet at any rate never occurs in Golding, who translated it, whenever it applied to Diana, by *Titan's daughter*. Now when George Sandys, some ten years after Shakespeare's death, published another translation of the *Metamorphoses* (1621-6), the word Titania was freely used in many cases as a synonym for Diana, which innovation may be reasonably ascribed to the far-reaching influence of the *Dream*.

In the drama, the fairies, such as they had been

[1] Rpt. in Halliwell's *Illustrations of the Fairy Mythology of "A M.-N's. D."* Percy Society, 1845.—[2] Rpt. in Percy's Reliques, and F. Sidgwick's *op. cit.*

delineated by Shakespeare, exercised an influence of their own, and here are a few plays in which they are entrusted with more or less prominent parts. In *Lusts Dominion; or The Lascivious Queen*, a play mentioned in Henslowe's Diary for February 1600 as *The Spaneshe Mores tragedie*, and written in collaboration by Dekker, Haughton and Day,[1] Oberon appears with "Fairies dancing before him, and Music with them." He is a mere *deus ex machina*, or rather a sort of soothsayer: he foretells to the heroine Maria who, pressed too hard by the King of Spain, had just given him a sleeping draught, what fate is now awaiting her:

> "Before he wake, thou shalt be slain:
> His mother's hand shall stop thy breath,
> Thinking her own son is done to death:
> And she that takes away thy life
> Does it to be thy husband's wife:
> Adieu, Maria, we must hence:
> Embrace thine end with patience.
> Elves and fairies make no stand,
> Till you come in fairyland.
>
> *Exeunt dancing and singing.*
>
> *Maria*: Fairies or devils, whatsoe'er you be,
> Thus will I hide me from your company."[2]

[1] F. 67. "Layd owt for the company the 13 of febrearye 1599 for a boocke called the spaneshe mores tragedie vnto thomas deckers wm. harton John daye in pte of payement the some of iij ll." Rpt by W. W. Greg. 1904, p. 118.—[2] Act III, Sc. 2. The play was

The same diary of Philip Henslowe keeps record of a tragedy, the writer of which appears to have been Henry Chettle, on the adventures of the merry wanderer of the night:

> Lent vnto harey Chettell the 9 of September 1602 in pt. of payement of a [tragedie] called *Robingoodfellowe* some of } X^s. [1]

A play called *Narcissus, a Twelfth Night Merriment*, was acted at St. John's College, Oxford, in 1602: it is a kind of burlesque, not unlike that of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Dream*, which contains besides many verbal resemblances that plainly bespeak an imitation of Shakespeare's fairy drama.[2] A poetaster, William Percy, who in 1594 had published a sonnet-sequence called *Cœlia*, wrote some years later *The Faery Pastorall or Forrest of Elues*, the end of which bears "Finis 1603. Wolues Hill my Parnassus." It is a very sorry production indeed, in which Oberon is shown in the character of a pedantic and cavilling philosopher, who discusses with the Queen of the Fairies, "stickt with Flowres all her body," about inconstancy in Love, and whether man or woman is capable of the greater affection.[3] The fairies appear again in

first published in 1657, and erroneously attributed to C. Marlowe. It has been reprinted in *Dodsley's Collection of Old English Plays*, 4th Edit. 1875. Vol. 14.—[1] Ed. W. W. Greg, p. 181.—[2] Edited by Miss M. Lee from the Rawlinson Poet. MS. 212. Cf. E. K. Chambers' Edition of *M.-N 's. D.* Appendix F. On the play of "*Narcissus.*" — Printed by the Shakespeare Press, 1824, from a private MSS.

A verie excellent and delectable Comedie, intituled "Philotus," wherein we may perceive the great inconveniences that fall out in the mariage betweene olde age and youth, sometimes attributed to Heywood, and published in Edinburgh in 1603, where the little people of the night associate both with the Virgin and with Hell :

> First I conjure thee by Sanct Marie,
> By Alrich King and Queene of Farie,
> And by the Trinitie to tarie...
> Gang hence to hell or to the Farie,
> With me thou may no longer tarie... ;[1]

as also in *A Pleasant Comedie called, Wily Beguiled*, printed in London in 1606, where Robin Good-Fellow comes to the rescue of two unfortunate lovers whom a cruel father would keep apart. This is the way he speaks to the hard-hearted parent, and how, playing the bug-bear, and showing himself in an "ougly uncouth shape," he scares him into granting his immediate consent to the marriage :

> The high commander of the damned soules,
> Great *Dis* the Duke of Diuels, and Prince of *Limbo* lake,
> High Regent of *Acheron*, *Styx* and *Phlegeton*,
> By strict command from *Pluto*, Hels great Monarch,
> And faire *Proserpina* the Queene of Hell,
> By full consent of all the damned Hagges
> And all the fiends that keepe the *Stygian* plaines,

[1] ll. 122-132 ; Rpt. in 1612.

Hath sent me here from the depth of under-ground,
To sommon thee to appeare at Plutoes Court ![1]

Lastly, in the course of a "Drammatical Poem," *The Whore of Babylon*, in which he endeavoured "to set forth the Greatness, Magnanimity, Constancy, Clemency, and other the incomparable Heroical vertues of our late Queene, And (on the contrary part) the inueterate Malice, Treasons, Machinations, Underminings and continual blody Stratagems of that purple Whore of Rome," Thomas Dekker addressed Elizabeth as Titania, the now apparently recognised name for the queen of the Fairies, England being of course Fairyland itself. Florimell, a councillor, speaks thus of Henry VII's time:

...when great *Elfiline*
(Our grandsire) fild his throne, your bowers did shine
With fire-red steele, and not with Fairies' eies,
You heard no musicke then, but shriekes and cries,
Then armed Vrchins, and stearne houshold Elues,
Their fatall pointed swords turn'd on themselves.[2]

Henry VIII is, in his turn, called:

...great king *Oberon*
Titaniaes royall father,

while his daughter's

[1] H. 3.—[2] *The Whore of Babylon.... Written by Thomas Dekker*, London, 1607. B. 4.

...maiden hand
Shall with a silken thred guide Fairie land. [1]

The reader who remembers the passage from the *Faerie Queene* we have quoted above, in which Spenser also had descanted upon Elizabeth's fairy genealogy, will remark the significant change that has taken place : Gloriana, Tanaquil, Britomart, Belphœbe, all the romantic and allegorical appellations have made room for the simpler, and now firmly established, name of Titania.

III

The success of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* kindled the emulation, not only of such minor playwrights as have just been reviewed, but also of two of the greatest dramatists of the age, two of Shakespeare's personal friends, and who, during the XVIIth century, were considered as, at least, his equals: namely John Fletcher and Ben Jonson.

To the charm of Shakespeare's earliest masterpiece Fletcher could not but be keenly alive. They had known each other for a good many years. They had, in 1613, written two plays in collaboration, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *Henry VIII.* Above all, Fletcher's keen sense of youthful beauty, his sweet wantonness of mind, though it not seldom

[1] B. 4. Titania is described, in the list of "Dramatis Personae," as "The Fairie Queene, vnder whom is figured our late Queene Elizabeth."

verged upon mere licentiousness, made him an ardent sympathiser with, and no doubt admirer of, the romantic fancy wherein, as we have attempted to show, lay the main characteristic of Shakespeare's fairy drama. No wonder then that he tried to introduce into his own work the very theme that had proved so felicitous in his friend's hands.

In fact, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, probably produced in the winter of 1608-9, and published before May 1610, bears ample evidence of the influence of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. The subject may be quite different, and, with its tender grace and melodious volubility, remind one rather of Spenser, yet it is far more positive, "of the earth, earthy;" its soft, voluptuous, and at times lewd dialogues, are obviously reminiscent of Shakespeare's playful little imps, a good many details being thrown in, of fresh and exquisite beauty. Hark for instance to the soliloquy of Clorin, in the wood, after the departure of the Satyr:

...Yet I have heard (my mother told it me,
And now I do believe it), if I keep
My virgin-flower uncropt, pure, chaste and fair,
No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,
Satyr, or other power that haunts the groves,
Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion
Draw me to wander after idle fires;
Or voices calling me in dead of night,

To make me follow, and so tole me on,
Through mire and standing pools, to find my ruin... [1]

In another passage, Fletcher adds to the fairydom of Shakespeare a dainty flourish of his own. Perigot begs Amoret to lend an ear to his suit, and they agree to meet in the neighbouring wood, there, continues the enamoured shepherd :

...to plight our troths
With interchange of mutual chaste embraces,
And ceremonious tying of our souls.
For to that holy wood is consecrate
A virtuous well, about whose flowery banks
The nimble-footed fairies dance their rounds
By the pale moonshine, dipping oftentimes
Their stolen children, so to make them free
From dying flesh and dull mortality. [2]

The Satyr, lastly, who seems to be one of Puck's family, thus explains what he is commissioned to do during the revels of Pan :

...here must I stay
To see what mortals lose their way,
And by a false fire, seeming bright,
Train them in and leave them right;
Then must I watch if any be
Forcing of a chastity ;
If I find it, then in haste
Give my wreathèd horn a blast,
And the fairies all will run

[1] Act. I, Sc. 1.—[2] Act. I, Sc. ii.

Wildly dancing by the moon,
And will pinch him to the bone,
Till his lustful thoughts be gone....[1]

Ben Jonson himself, the erudite poet who, in his comedies and dramas, contrived to blend so much classicism with a minute, though sturdy and vivid, realism, often suffered his lyrical, lighter muse to trifle with the tiny revellers of the night. Many are the allusions to the fairies to be found in his works. We read, for instance, in *The Silent Woman*:

Dauphine: 'Slight, they haunt me like fairies, and give me jewels here; I cannot be rid of them.
Clerimont: O, you must not tell though...[2]

and in *The Satyr*, when Mab gives a jewel to the queen:

Utter not, we you implore,
Who did give it, nor wherefore:
And whenever you restore
Yourself to us, you shall have more.
Highest, happiest queen, farewell,
But beware you do not tell;[3]

an allusion, in both cases, to the popular belief already mentioned by Shakespeare's shepherd in *The Winter's Tale*, and long before in the romance of *Sir Launfal*, that it was very dangerous to

[1] Act. III, Sc. i.—[2] Act V. Sc. I. *Works*, Ed. F. Cunningham. Vol. I, p. 454.—[3] Vol. II, pp. 574-5.

betray the confidence of the fairies, who never allowed their favours to be boasted of. On another occasion, Jonson says of one of his characters in *The Alchemist* that :

> He is of the only best complexion
> The queen of Fairy loves, [1]

and he notices how fond her subjects are of dancing, first in the Epilogue to *Every Man out of his Humour* :

> The throat of War be stopt within her land,
> And turtle-footed Peace dance fairy-rings
> About her court...[2]

and again in *A Tale of a Tub* :

> To shew your pomp, you'd have your daughter and maids
> Dance o'er the fields like faies to church.....[3]

In addition to these widespread and indeed trite notions concerning the fairies, Jonson seems, in some places, to have gone to *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* for direct inspiration. Thus, in *The Satyr*, "A Particular Entertainment of the Queen and Prince at Althorpe, at the Right Honourable the Lord Spencer's, on Saturday, being the 25th of June, 1603, as they came first into the Kingdom," Ben Jonson, who produces on the stage the realistic mythology of "Merry England," is mostly

[1] Act I. Sc. I. Vol. II, p. 13.—[2] Vol. I. p. 140.—[3] Act II. Sc. I. Vol. II, p. 448

content, with regard to the fairies, to take up those traits already exhibited in Shakespeare. If Queen Mab now, for the first time, fills the place of Titania as the "Mistress Faery," her pranks and those of her tiny elves are most likely imitated from the *Dream*. The words with which the Satyr, a wood-spirit, alias Pug, the "skipping jester," addresses Mab, at the head of a bevy of fairies, closely resemble those of the original court-jester of Oberon :

Mab. Satyr, we must have a spell
For your tongue, it runs too fleet.
Satyr. Not so nimbly as your feet,
When about the cream-bowls sweet,
You and all your elves do meet.
This is Mab, the Mistress-Faery,
That doth nightly rob the dairy,
And can hurt or help the cherning,
An she please, without discerning...

She that pinches country wenches,
If they rub not clean their benches,
And with sharper nails remembers
When they rake not up their embers :
But if so they chance to feast her,
In a shoe she drops a tester.....[1]

We may also notice that Jonson's masque was written, as the poet himself mentioned, for performance "on Midsummer-day at night," which

[1] Vol. II, p. 573.

makes the parallelism between the two plays still more significant.

Two other masques of Ben Jonson acted, in the midst of splendid "formalities and shews," in June 1610, when Prince Henry, who had just reached his sixteenth year, was created Prince of Wales, are again connected with Fairyland. One, known as *Prince Henry's Barriers*, introduced the Lady of the Lake, Arthur, the British hero-king, and Merlin the learned magician who all extolled the unequalled virtues of the heir to the throne, and prophesied his glorious future. The other masque, *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*, concerns us more nearly. Here again, in spite of the continuous un-Shakespearean confusion of classical deities with both romantic fays and Teutonic elves, the influence of the *Dream* is clearly felt. Something of the wanton grace and refined realism of the older poet has passed into the dialogue of the satyrs who, in the beginning of the play, gambol around Silenus, and beset him with questions :

Silenus. ... These are nights
Solemn to the shining rites
Of the Fairy Prince and knights :
While the moon their orgies lights.

2 *Satyr.* Will they come abroad anon ?

3 *Sat.* Shall we see young Oberon ?....

4 *Sat.* Will he give us pretty toys,
To beguile the girls withal ?

3 *Sat.* And to make 'em quickly fall ?

Silen. Peace, my wantons ! he will do
More than you can aim unto....
2 *Sat.* Tie about our tawny wrists
Bracelets of the fairy twists ?
4 *Sat.* And, to spight the coy nymphs' scorns,
Hang upon our stubbed horns
Garlands, ribbands, and fine posies,
3 *Sat.* Fresh as when the flower discloses ?....[1]

As they are waiting for daybreak, when the Prince is to come out of the palace, the petulant elves fall to dancing again, and sing a ballad to the moon, the lightness of touch and glowing fantasy of which have quite a Shakespearean ring :

1 *Sat.* ...Let us sport
And make expectation short.
Silen. Do, my wantons, what you please,
I'll lie down and take mine ease.
1 *Sat.* Brothers, sing then, and upbraid,
As we use, yond' seeming maid.

Song

Now, my cunning lady : moon,
Can you leave the side so soon
Of the boy you keep so hid ?
Midwife Juno sure will say
This is not the proper way
Of your paleness to be rid.
But perhaps it is your grace
To wear sickness in your face,

[1] Vol. III, pp. 73-4.

That there might be wagers laid
Still, by fools, you are a maid.
Come, your changes overthrow,
What your look would carry so ;
Moon, confess then what you are,
And be wise, and free to use
Pleasures that you now do lose,
Let us Satyrs have a share.
Though our forms be rough and rude,
Yet our acts may be endued
With more virtue : every one
Cannot be *Endymion*.[1]

At the close of the masque, Oberon, that is the Fairy Prince, having stepped into the midst of the "bright Faies and Elves," they all together, lest they should have :

...no more worth
Than the coarse and country Faerie
That doth haunt the hearth or dairy,[2]

"let their nimble feet tread subtle circles." The "gentle knights" themselves dance the whole night out round the "high graced Oberon," till the dawn rises:

...from her blushing wars
And with her rosy hand puts back the stars.[3]

A short masque presented at Court during the Christmas festivities, 1610-11 : *Love Restored*, gives

[1] *Ib.* p. 75.—[2] *Ib.* p. 77.—[3] *Ib.* p. 77.

us a sprightly account of one "coarse and country faery," Robin Good-fellow. He himself relates, in an amusing monologue, the pains he has been at to get admittance into Whitehall, where he wishes to procure a sight of the entertainment that is to be given. Now, on hearing that the performance has been postponed, he thus gives vent to his spite :

'Slight, a fine trick ! a piece of England's Joy this ! Are these your Court sports ? Would I had kept me to my gambols o' the country still, selling of fish, short service, shoeing the wild mare, or roasting of robin-red-breast. These were better than, after all this time, no masque : you look at me. I have recovered myself now for you, I am the honest plain country spirit, and harmless ; Robin Goodfellow, he that sweeps the hearth and the house clean, riddles for the country maids, and does all their other drudgery, while they are at hot-cockles : *one that has discoursed with your Court spirits ere now* ; but was fain to-night to run a thousand hazards to arrive at this place ; never poor goblin was so put to his shifts to get in to see nothing. [1]

This Robin Good-fellow is, of course, a near relation to Shakespeare's Puck, who even may have been alluded to in the sentence italicised.

He reappears under the name of Puck-hairy, in *The Sad Shepherd*, that unfinished pastoral published after Ben Jonson's death, in the folio of 1641. We are struck here with a new departure,

[1] Vol. III, p. 84.

not only from old Ben's usual style, but even from the standard of the pastoral drama. This is a distinctly national composition. Its chief characters: Robin Hood and his merry men, who are dwelling in the forest of Sherwood, as well as the country folk of Belvoir Castle, are all flesh and bone Englishmen, far removed from the artificial and somewhat languid atmosphere of Elizabethan Arcadia. The idealised descriptions, copied from the Italian pastoral, have been ousted by simple popular legends. We thus meet with an ugly witch, Maudlin, with her son, the doltish swineherd Lorel, her daughter, the haughty Douce, and her familiar sprite, Puck-hairy. Jonson, who, in his *Masque of Queens*, had already exhibited an accurate knowledge of, and deep sympathy with, witchcraft, connects it closely now with fairy-lore. He improves upon Fletcher. For the ideal pictured in *The Faithful Shepherdess*, he substitutes a "hempen home-spun" atmosphere. If he never reaches, perhaps, to the perfect and easy workmanship, the dainty luxuriance, or, in Swinburne's phrase, the "lyrical jewellery" of Fletcher, he is, however, with both his artless familiarity and healthy, cheerful burlesque, far more true to English life. Puck-hairy is an obliging fiend in the service of Dame Maudlin who, he says,

> ...grows high in evil,
> And thinks she does all, when 'tis I, her devil,

That both delude her, and must yet protect her...[1]

Once, when Robin Hood, who, in spite of her disguise, suspects her of being a witch, has caught her by her girdle and the girdle has snapped, she flies into a rage, deluges him with threats and curses, till her devoted Puck, happening to be about, undertakes to talk her into reason again:

Maud. O Puck, my goblin! I have lost my belt,
The strong thief, Robin Outlaw, forced it from me.
Puck. They are other clouds and blacker threat [you, dame;
You must be wary, and pull in your sails,
And yield unto the weather of the tempest.
You think your power's infinite as your malice,
And would do all your anger prompts you to;
But you must wait occasions, and obey them:
Sail in an egg-shell, make a straw your mast,
A cobweb all your cloth, and pass unseen,
Till you have 'scaped the rocks that are about you...[2]

And, the argument concludes, it is owing to the aid and delusions of Puck that Maudlin escapes the huntsmen who, chancing upon her foot-prints, fall a pricking after her as hard as ever they can. The pastoral breaks off unhappily, leaving the third act itself unfinished. One cannot help being sorry to hear so little of the benevolent sprite who is, in fact, little more than caught a glimpse of, and speaks such exquisite words as:

[1] Act. II, Sc. 2. Vol. II, p. 507.—[2] Act. III, Sc. 2. Vol. ii, p. 509.

...I do love, madam,
To shew you all your dangers,—when you're past them![1]

On the whole, it is of some curiosity to see the robust, burly playwright of *The Fox* or *Sejanus* soften down, take in hand the delicate fairy themes, and privilege the homely goblins with a by no means unimportant place in his work. Even in what he meant to be a genuine English pastoral, and, in his own words, made of :

...such wool
As from mere English flocks his muse *could* pull,[2]

he but followed in the steps of "his beloved master William Shakespeare,"[3] and borrowed the very name of the most popular, if not the most characteristic, fairy in the *Dream*.

So much then for those we have ventured to call the "post-Shakespearean fairies." The performance of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, in 1594-5, its double publication in 1600 undoubtedly contributed something new to the national literary stock. It revealed all the capacities of Fairyland and its mysterious denizens as a poetical theme. It did not actually create it, the subject being a very ancient one, as we have seen, and which more than one writer had tried his hand at. Yet Shakespeare may be said to be the discoverer of it. He first realised

[1] Act. III, Sc. 2. Vol. ii, p. 509.—[2] *Prologue*, *Ib.* p. 486. —[3] *Underwoods*, XII. Vol. iii, pp. 287-89.

its hidden resources, brought them to light, and made them accessible to every one. It was chiefly from the *Dream* that, for the first two decades of the XVIIth century, the generality of English poets, and the dramatists especially, copied their fairy-lore, in proportion, of course, as it suited their own imaginations. Too powerfully, however, had the figures been stamped to allow of their being easily tampered with and distorted. Even a Fletcher and a Jonson, with their robust personalities, could not help imitating the master's pattern and, in spite of a few alterations, copying its main features. Both the Shakespearean and post-Shakespearean fairies are extravagantly fond of dancing on moonlit meadows. They take an intimate interest in human affairs, either to help them on, or, mayhap, to cross them mischievously. They like beautiful things, and associate freely, during their midnight revels, with the nymphs and satyrs of classical mythology. Though the spectator is not so often reminded, in Jonson's and Fletcher's plays, of their diminutive stature, they continue to be, as regards their shape, totally different from mere "human mortals." They still belong, in a word, to that particular vision of the world which is so characteristic of the English Renaissance, when life looked new and bright, was overbrimming with joy, untrammelled, and not a little wild, with, moreover, something mysterious, unexplained, suggestive of far-off countries and perilous departures.

CHAPTER VI

FROM DRAYTON TO HERRICK

A distinct change occurred in the fairy poetry written in England between the years 1620 and 1650. It was not yet past its vogue, though altered and degraded. The delineation of the fairies had been carried by Shakespeare and his contemporaries well-nigh to the pitch of perfection, and those who followed were left nothing better than to fall back upon a few exterior and minute details. The fairy belief, still a part of the popular creed in Shakespeare's youth, was now dying out, till it became but an artificial literary device, and a mere poetical commonplace. From the stage, where they had been so boldly portrayed, the fairies retired into narrower forms of literature, where all the poet wrote for was to express his own personality, and his enjoyment thereof, instead of creating characters, and giving voice to such feelings as were easily understood by one and all. Out of the mass of fairy poetry that was composed during the first half of the XVIIth century, let us select a few representative works, namely by

Drayton, W. Browne, Milton, Randolph and Herrick, which, from *Nimphidia*, published in 1627, to the *Hesperides*, published in 1648, will afford us a sufficient idea of the slow but obvious decay of fairy poetry in England.

I

It was only about the end of his long literary life that Drayton felt attracted by, and actually ventured into, Fairyland. Though a fellow shireman of Shakespeare, and born within a twelvemonth of the great dramatist, his proved a very different career. The former developed rapidly his dramatic power, and climbed up, after a comparatively short period of apprenticeship, to the summit of human genius ; the latter experimented, for over a half-century, on the many topics that successively came into vogue, passing from amatory lyrics to pastoral, then to historical and patriotic poetry, till, towards the close of his life, when he had at last thrown off the heavy labour of his *Poly-Olbion*, he displayed a light and fantastic playfulness which he would never have been given credit for. By dint of dogged perseverance, he contrived to retain the admiration of his contemporaries and pass for a first-rate poet, though, in fact, he was only a follower, a sturdy, untiring worker, no doubt, but whose chief talent consisted in detecting the feeling of the moment or even the

coming fashion, and, on the other hand, in leaving upon his laboured poems an impression of sweet and graceful ease.

The fairydom of Drayton marks one of the last stages of his literary career. It was only in *The Battaile of Agincourt...*, a volume that came out in 1627, when he was sixty-four years of age, that he published his poem of *Nimphidia*. The work is manifestly a burlesque. It is a circumstantial account of how the faithless Queen Mab, who has yielded to the suit of a fairy knight, Pigwiggen, and has gone to meet him at night in a fair cowslip bower, is missed by her husband, the fiery, madly jealous Oberon. She is immediately pursued by the king's devoted goblin, Puck, who has received a command to bring her home "alive or dead." The guilty queen hurries away from her lover, and hides with all her attendants in a hazel-nut, which the little fairy Nimphidia succeeds, by some mysterious charm, in rendering invisible to Puck's "sharp and piercing sight." Meanwhile, Pigwiggen has already defied Oberon, and is fighting him in single combat when Proserpina, a friend of Mab, interposes, and orders them both to drink a draught of Lethe water, "in dreadful Pluto's name." A moment after:

> King Oberon forgotten had,
> That he for iealousie ranne mad:
> But of his Queene was wondrous glad,
> And asked how they came thither:

Pigwiggen likewise doth forget,
That he Queene Mab had ever met;
Or that they were so hard beset,
When they were found together.[1]

Upon this slender theme, Drayton built up a long and highly polished burlesque, containing no fewer than eighty-seven stanzas of eight lines each. The simple, unsophisticated folk-belief has almost disappeared, or strikes one here as a hackneyed tradition, when the poet says of the fairies, for instance, that:

They make our Girles their sluttery rue,
By pinching them both blacke and blew,
And put a penny in their shue,
The house for cleanely sweeping:
And in their courses make that Round,
In Meadowes, and in Marshes found,
Of them so call'd the *Fayrie* ground,
Of which they haue the keeping.[2]

One thing however was quite new: the mock-heroic tone that prevails throughout the poem. Thus, when king Oberon hears that his faithless queen has deserted the palace, he flies into a raving passion; he clasps in his arms a poor wandering wasp:

As though his breath he forth would graspe,
Him for Pigwiggen taking;[3]

[1] St. 85.—[2] St. 9.—[3] St. 25.

he mistakes a glow-worm for the devil, and thrashes her hard:

> For carrying fier in her tail;[1]

he rushes into a hive, besmears his face with wax, daubs his beard with honey, meets an ant which he bestrides:

> And post thereon away he rides;[2]

hits against a mole-hill, tumbles down into a lake, but:

> ...in his Oaken Cup doth float,
> As safe as in a Wherry.

> Men talke of the Aduentures strange,
> Of *Don Quishott*, and of their change
> Through which he Armed oft did range,
> Of *Sancha Panchas* trauell:
> But should a man tell euery thing,
> Done by this franticke *Fayrie* king,
> And them in lofty numbers sing
> It well his wits might grauell.[3]

At times, the mock-heroic poem drifts into downright parody. Gathering a few hints from *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Drayton contrives to transpose them into a humorous key. Shakespeare's Oberon was only wittily and smilingly malicious towards his heady consort: he is stark mad in

[1] St. 27.—[2] St. 30.—[3] St. 33-4.

Nimphidia, as much so "as any hare." His henchman addresses him somewhat irreverently :

> Hoh, hoh, quoth Hob, God saue thy grace,
> Who drest thee in this pitteous case ?[1]

while Puck is himself drawn into the snares laid for him by the serviceable Nimphidia :

> A plague vpon Queene Mab, quoth hee,
> And all her Maydes where ere they be,
> I thinke the Deuill guided me,
> To seeke her so prouoked.
> Where stumbling at a piece of Wood,
> He fell into a dich of mudd,
> Where to the very chin he stood,
> In danger to be choked.[2]

Elsewhere Drayton burlesques the old romancers, in such sentences as :

> Thorough Brake, thorough Brier,
> Thorough Muck, thorough Mier,
> Thorough Water, thorough Fier...[3]
> Hobgoblin fumes, Hobgoblin frets...[4]
> Poore Puck doth yell, Poore Puck doth rore...[5]

which were so characteristic of the chivalric ballad.[6] The sudden fancy, finally, which Titania

[1] St. 35.—[2] St. 57.—[3] St. 38.—[4] St. 56.—[5] St. 58.—[6] True to say, the above-quoted alliterative sentences may have been simply imitated from *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, II, i, ll. 2-5 :

> Over hill, over dale,
> Thorough bush, thorough brier,
> Over park, over pale,
> Thorough flood, thorough fire...

takes to the fairy knight Pigwiggen may have been suggested by, and certainly recalls, the illicit love of Guinevere and Launcelot.

To sum up, *Nimphidia* evinces a lower kind of imagination. The playful ingenuity that pervades it impresses one not uncommonly as a mere straining after effect. Different as it is from *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, it has taken up one of its features, the tiny stature of the fairies, and emphasised it to an extreme. What was but a detail in Shakespeare, or at most one of the several distinctive traits of the fairy people, was now made their essential characteristic. *Nimphidia* has been rightly called a "Lilliputian extravaganza," its heroes being mere puppets. It is a joke, very cleverly sustained stanza after stanza, but in which Drayton appears as more of a wit, and even a punster, than of a true poet :

> *Hop*, and *Mop*, and *Drop* so cleare,
> *Pip*, and *Trip*, and *Skip* that were
> To *Mab* their Soueraigne euer deare :
> Her speciall Maydes of Honour ;
> *Fib*, and *Tib*, and *Pinck*, and *Pin*,
> *Tick*, and *Quick*, and *Iill*, and *Iin*,
> *Tit*, and *Nit*, and *Wap*, and *Win*,
> The Trayne that wayte vpon her.[1]

Nothing has been preserved of the idealized atmosphere of Shakespeare's fairy drama : here

[1] St. 20.

everything is clearly defined, stands out in full day-light, or else is wrapped in a most unimaginative darkness. Compare with the mysterious suggestiveness of the *Dream* the hard and dull accuracy of the descriptions in *Nimphidia*, that, for instance, of Pigwiggen's arms, as he is ready to shed his blood for the sake of his high-born paramour :

His Helmet was a Bettles head,
Most horrible and full of dread,
That able was to strike one dead,
Yet did it well become him :
And for a plume, a horses hayre,
Which being tossed with the ayre,
Had force to strike his Foe with feare,
And turne his weapon from him.

Himself he on an Earewig set,
Yet scarce he on his back could get,
So oft and high he did coruet,
Ere he himselfe could settle :
He made him turne, and stop, and bound,
To gallop, and to trot the Round,
He scarce could stand on any ground,
He was so full of mettle. [1]

In spite of this, *Nimphidia* remains a very interesting piece of literary work. The style is polished to a degree, by turns graceful and piquant, while the versification is uniformly smooth,

[1] St. 63-4.

with an all too elaborate but sprightly and pleasant lilt. It is an elegant trifle, in which, obviously, the fairy theme serves as a mere pretext for a display of patient and strenuous workmanship.

Nimphidia was not the first poem in which Drayton dealt with fairies. In some previous work, at a time when he was still under the spell of Spenser, he had already made a few allusions to the *Faerie Queene*. Thus, in the third eclogue of the *Pastorals* (1593), Perkin declares that :

> ...learned Colin lays his pipes to gage
> And is to Fayrie gone a pilgrimage ;

while, in the next one, Gorbo is heard piping :

> ...amongst the lowly sort,
> Those silly herd-grooms who have laughed to see
> When I by moon-light make the Fairies sport.

The fairies appear again in Drayton's bulky work, the *Poly-Olbion*. England is said to be swarming with Oreades, Dryades, Naiades, and the like, who keep company with the national goblins of the streams or hills, while Merlin himself is alluded to, in the fourth Song, as one who :

> ...by loving of an elf
> (For all his wondrous skill) was cozen'd by himself.
> For, walking with his Fay, her to the rock he brought
> In which he oft his nigromancies wrought :
> And going in thereat his magics to have shown
> She stopp'd the cavern's mouth with an enchanted stone ;

Whose cunning strongly cross'd, amaz'd whilst he did stand,
She captive him convey'd unto the Fairy land.

Drayton returned to the fairy themes in his last book, *The Muses Elizium, lately discovered by a new way over Parnassus...*, 1630, which has often been considered both as a compendium and the crown of all his work. The book is divided into "Nimphals," of which the eighth, perhaps the best, and the one done in the lightest and happiest vein, describes the preparations of a Fairy Wedding. Mertilla, Claia, and Cloris are talking about the coming marriage of the nymph Tita with a "dwarfish fairy Elfe," who is :

...deft and Wondrous Ayrye.

They think of the ornaments they will have to provide for the bride, and also of the wedding ceremony itself. Mertilla will give her a dainty jewel for her ear, Claia a fine cup "in fashion of a Fly," Cloris "a Tyer for her head," in which :

The yellowes in the full-blowne Rose
Which in the top it doth inclose
Like drops of gold Oare shall be hung.

Tita's wedding gown shall be :

Of Pansie, Pincke, and Primrose leaves,
Most curiously laid on in threaves....
A trayle about the skirt shalle runne,
The Silkewormes finest newly spunne....

As for the "feast" itself:

> The Nightingale, of birds most choyce,
> To doe her best shall straine her voyce;
> And to this bird to make a set
> The Mausis, Merle and Robinet;
> The Larke, the Lennet and the Thrush,
> That make a Quier of every bush....

Before parting, and setting about their several errands, the nymphs practise a pretty Prothalamion,

> A thing that much must grace our feast,

from which we must also quote the conclusion:

Claia: But when night comes and she must goe
To Bed, dear Nimphes, what must we doe?
Mertilla: In Posset must be brought,
And Poynts be from the Bridegroome caught.
Cloris: In Maskes, in Dances and delight,
And reare Banquets spend the night:
Then about the roome we ramble,
Scatter nuts, and for them scramble,
Over Stooles, and Tables tumble,
Never thinke of noyse nor rumble.
Mertilla } For our Tita is this day
Claia } Married to a noble Fay.

II

Quite different from Drayton's quaint, if somewhat laboured and artificial, treatment of the

fairy themes are the developments on that same subject which William Browne introduced into his *Britannia's Pastorals*. Here we come to a purely descriptive poet, very sincere, and even quite ingenuous, who sets forth in an easy, rambling, discursive way the many minute particulars which make up an English landscape. Browne who was scarcely over thirty when he had completed his work, who was besides an ardent admirer of Spenser, allowed himself to wander into endless descriptions, intermixed, frequently enough, with tedious and all but inextricable allegories; elsewhere, he leapt from the most conventional and long-winded Arcadianism into a delicate realism that already smelt of the open air; and he generally imparted something of his simple, unassuming sensitiveness to the delineation of his native Devonshire.

Browne's treatment of the fairies displays these various tendencies. He is, when dealing with the theme, both discursive and realistic, graceful and richly euphuistic. Here is an instance taken from the first book:

Near to this wood there lay a pleasant mead,
Where fairies often did their measures tread,
Which in the meadow made such circles g(r)een,
As if with garlands it had crowned been,
Or like the circle where the signs we track,
And learned shepherds call't the Zodiac:
Within one of these rounds was to be seen

A hillock rise, where oft the fairy-queen
At twilight sat, and did command her elves
To pinch those maids that had not swept their shelves;
And further, if by maidens' oversight
Within doors water were not brought at night;
Or if they spread no table, set no bread,
They should have nips from toe unto the head;
And for the maid that had perform'd each thing,
She in the water-pail bade leave a ring.[1]

The several features which the poet thus ascribes to the fairies are but gracefully expressed commonplaces. Their fondness for dancing, their love of cleanliness, their pinching the slatternly maids black and blue, their rewarding all such as prove duly painstaking are but conventional themes, which we have often met with before. The same almost holds good of several other passages, either in the first book:

...the fairy troop which nimbly play,
And by the springs dance out the summer's day,
Teaching the little birds to build their nests...[2]

or in the second, published in 1616:

The dancing fairies, when they left to play,
Then back did pull them[3] and in holes of trees
Stole the sweet honey from the painful bees.[4]

Another reference to the fairies, which occurs

[1] Bk. I, Song 2, ll. 389-404.—[2] Bk. I, Song 4, ll. 283-5.—[3] Lilies.—[4] Bk. II, Song 3, ll. 776-78.

in the third book of *Britannia's Pastorals* composed between 1624 and 1628, according to Mr. Moorman, about 1635, according to Mr. Bullen, and first printed in 1852, is of a somewhat different character. It consists in a long, circumstantial description of a feast offered to Oberon, and reminds one not a little of *Nimphidia*, which, as it was published in 1627, may have preceded it. It gives a full and particular account of the banquet, the Lilliputian minuteness of which recalls either the elopement of Queen Mab, in Drayton, her pursuit by Puck, or again the single combat between the king and his faithless liege, Pigwiggen. Browne first depicts the fairy banqueting hall, a "trim feat room":

> Out of the main rock cut by artful strength.
> The two-leav'd door was of the mother pearl,
> Hinged and nail'd with gold. Full many a girl,
> Of the sweet fairy ligne, wrought in the loom
> That fitted those rich hangings clad the room.
> In them was wrought the love of their great king,
> His triumphs, dances, sports, and revelling:
> And learned Spenser, on a little hill
> Curiously wrought, lay, as he tun'd his quill... [1]

A little mushroom served for a table, strewn over with white rose leaves for a cloth:

> ...for their bread, was put
> The milk-white kernels of the hazel nut;

[1] Bk. III, Song 1, ll. 718-728.

The cupboard, suitable to all the rest,
Was as the table with like cov'ring dress'd.
The ewer and bason were, as fitting well,
A periwinkle and a cockle-shell :
The glasses pure, and thinner than we can
See from the sea-betroth'd Venetian,
Were all of ice not made to overlast
One supper, and betwixt two cowslips cast... [1]

A little spruce elf brought in the bottles, cut out of cherry-stones :

To each a seed pearl served for a screw,
And most of them were fill'd with early dew.
Some choicer ones, as for the king most meet,
Held mel-dew and the honeysuckle's sweet. [2]

Then came the dishes :

In white broth boil'd a crammed grasshopper ;
A pismire roasted whole ; five crayfish eggs ;
The udder of a mouse ; two hornets' legs ;
Instead of olives, cleanly pickl'd sloes ;
Then of a bat were serv'd the pettitoes ;
Three fleas in souse, a cricket from the brine ;
And of a dormouse, last, a lusty chine. [3]

This first course being served in, the fairy nobles ushered Oberon into the hall. He was most gorgeously dressed "in a suit of speckled gilliflow'r," his hat "of a lily made,"

His ruff a daisy was, so neatly trim,

[1] *Ib.* ll. 755-764.—[2] *Ib.* ll. 775-78.—[3] *Ib.* ll. 786-92.

As if of purpose it had grown for him,...
His cloak was of the velvet flow'rs, and lin'd
With flow'r-de-luces of the choicest kind... [1]

Between the various courses, Oberon surveyed the " hawks and sports " of the fairy tribe, while his ear was delighted by an exquisite concert :

The treble was a three-mouth'd grasshopper,
Well tutor'd by a skilful quirister :
An ancient master, that did use to play
The friskings which the lambs do dance in May,
And long time was the chiefest call'd to sing,
When on the plains the fairies made a ring ;
Then a field-cricket, with a note full clean,
Sweet and unforc'd and softly sung the mean...
And to all these a deep well-breasted gnat,
That had good sides, knew well his sharp and flat,
Sung a good compass, making no wry face,
Was there as fittest for a chamber bass. [2]

These long quotations will enable the reader to estimate the quality of the new fairy poetry that was being written in England about 1630. The popular belief was gone for good, and had made room for ingenious wit. A few particulars, mainly borrowed from *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, were developed at length, many new, and even novel, details being grafted on, which aimed, above all, at piquancy. Graceful things were mixed with odd and far-fetched ones. Mere

[1] *Ib.* ll. 819-828.—[2] *Ib.* ll. 953-70.

desultoriness began to play the part of fancy. The once rough and awful folk-creed was fast dwindling into a recognized literary theme. Conventionality was ready to set in.

III

So widespread was the infection as to be caught even by Milton. An admirer both of Spenser and of Shakespeare, he paid special attention to the *Dream*, which was fraught with so many things his earlier years had delighted in. It may have been of that very play he was thinking when he wrote, in *L'Allegro*, of:

> ...sweetest *Shakespear* fancies childe,
> Warbl(ing) his native Wood-notes wilde.[1]

With his classical learning, that broad, deep, well-ordered culture which had mastered all the secrets of the poets of old, he combined a sincere taste of his own for nature and country simplicities, in which the fairy belief was naturally included. Thus, in *L'Allegro*, that fresh picture of innocent mirth belonging to the years of Milton's life at Horton (1632-8), the young poet found room for the villagers' tales of Queen Mab and Robin Good-fellow, the "drudging goblin," whilst a sprinkling of Shakespearean reminiscences supplemented the popular tradition:

[1] ll. 133-4.

How *Faery Mab* the junkets eat,
She was pincht, and pull'd, she sed,
And he by Friars Lanthorn led
Tells how the drudging *Goblin* swet,
To ern his Cream-bowle duly set,
When in one night, ere glimps of morn,
His shadowy Flale hath thresh'd the Corn
That ten day-labourers could not end,
Then lies him down the Lubbar Fend.
And stretch'd out all the Chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
And Crop-full out of dores he flings,
Ere the first Cock his Mattin rings.[1]

The same fairies reappear in *Comus*, 1634, also written during the Horton period, when Milton had retired from Cambridge to his father's house in Buckinghamshire, there to study by himself and plan out his future. In the midst of the long monologues that sing the praise of virtue, that unite to the festive associations of a masque some lofty thoughts on the identity of beauty and chastity, we are again given a glimpse of the little mischievous elves:

Som say no evil thing that walks by night
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen,
Blew meager Hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
That breaks his magick chains at *curfeu* time,
No goblin, or swart faëry of the mine,
Hath hurtfull power o're true virginity..,[2]

[1] ll. 102-114.—[2] ll. 432-7.

a passage that closely follows, and very likely imitates, the above-quoted lines from Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* on the advantages of purity. Again, speaking of the "guiltless" nymph Sabrina, Milton shows her, in her "maid'n gentleness," who :

> ...oft at Eeve
> Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
> Helping all urchin blasts, and ill luck signes
> That the shrewd medling Elfe delights to make,
> Which she with pretious viold liquors heals. [1]

Or else, as is often his way, Milton freely associates the Greek or Latin names and attributes of the pagan deities with those of British mythology, or the Christian religion. His refined language, overwrought with allusions, decks as with a rare embroidery his lofty and austere ideas, and gives them, to use Sir Henry Wotton's happy phrase, "a certain Doric delicacy," till the now trite assimilation of English fairies to classical nymphs gains, in *Comus*, a fresh beauty :

> The Sounds, and Seas with all their finny drove
> Now to the Moon in wavering Morrice move,
> And on the Tawny Sands and Shelves,
> Trip the pert Fairies and the dapper Elves ;

[1] ll. 843-47. See, on line 846, the note in Mr. Verity's edition of *Comus* : "*the*, as if he had some particular elf in view ; probably Robin Goodfellow, the influence of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* on Milton being so strong." p. 111.

By dimpled Brook, and Fountain brim,
The Wood-Nymphs deckt with Daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep :
What hath night to do with sleep ? [1]

Milton never totally renounced the ideals of his youth, and in the works of his stern maturity did not fail to return, now and again, to the dainty fairy theme which suggested to "the admirable dramaticke poet W. Shakespeare" [2] one of his most signal masterpieces. Just as, in one of his earliest productions : *At a Vacation Exercise in the Colledge*, Milton had taken up the Shakespearean notion that the fairies would dance upon the hearth, as a sign of favour, and bless children "in nativity" :

Good luck befriend thee Son ; for at thy birth
The Faiery Ladies daunc't upon the hearth ;
Thy drowsie Nurse hath sworn she did them spie
Come tripping to the Room where thou didst lie ;
And sweetly singing round about thy Bed
Strew all their blessings on thy sleeping Head... [3]

so, years afterwards, he remembers the fairies of the *Dream*, whether he alludes to one of the most familiar tricks of Puck :

...as when a wandring Fire...
Which oft, they say, some evil Spirit attends,

[1] ll. 115-22.—[2] The title of the epitaph composed by Milton and printed in 1632, in the Second Folio.—[3] ll. 59-64. Cf. *A M.-N's. D.* v, 398-421.

Hovering and blazing with delusive Light,
Misleads th' amaz'd Night-wanderer from his way...[1]

or, in another book of his *Paradise Lost*, speaks of their small stature, of their Indian dwellings, and of their "midnight revels":

...that Pigmean Race
Beyond the *Indian* Mount, or Faerie Elves,
Whose midnight Revels, by a Forrest side
Or Fountain some belated Peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees...[2]

Other instances might be adduced in proof of the strong influence *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* exercised on Milton.[3] In fact it was but natural that Shakespeare's fairy drama, a sort of epithalamium, a hymn, in some ways, both to the sanctity and passionate ardour of love, should delight the poet who, in *Comus*, was going to extol the rosy glow of virginal affections. And it is pleasant to think that the great Puritan himself felt the charm of Elizabethan Fairyland, strayed on its borders in his youth, and dallied, till late in his dark and lonely years, with its graceful memories.

IV

Thomas Randolph, one of Milton's contem-

[1] *Paradise Lost.* Book ix, ll. 634-40.—[2] *Ib.* Book i, ll. 780-85. Cf. *A M.-N's. D.*: II, i, 29, 84, 141.—[3] See, in Mr. Verity's edition of the *Dream*, Appendix I: "Milton and *A M.-N's. D.*"

poraries at Cambridge, an admirer and one of the most faithful "sons" of Ben Jonson, also entered the kingdom of the fairies. Among the rather voluminous writings which he composed before his early death in 1635, when he was scarcely in his thirtieth year, there occurs a comedy called *Amyntas, or The Impossible Dowry* (c. 1632) in which fairy-lore plays no little part.

It is a pastoral in the Italian style. Its materials are mostly drawn from Guarini's *Pastor Fido*, and other Italian pastoral dramas. Its main plot, a rather intricate affair, turns upon the wrath of Ceres, and upon some enigmatic oracles which Amyntas endeavours to interpret.

On the other hand, Randolph introduced into his play a comic under-plot, thoroughly English, quite fresh and brisk, sufficient by itself to raise his work above the mass of commonplace pastorals, and to put it almost on the same level as Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* and Jonson's *Sad Shepherd*. Thus Dorylas, "a knavish boy," with Jocastus, "a fantastic Shepherd and a fairy knight," and a jolly crew of country lads, gull everybody all round. In the first act, Mopsus, "a foolish augur," is madly enamoured of Thestylis. Jocastus tries to dissuade him, and to turn his attentions to a higher aim :

Jocastus : Choose a better match : goe love
Some *Fairy* Lady ! Princely *Oberon*
Shall stand thy friend: and beauteous *Mab*, his Queene,

Give thee a *maid of Honour*.
Mopsus : How Iocastus ?
Marry a puppet ? Wed a mote ith' Sunne ?
Goe looke a wife in nutshells ? wooe a gnat,
That's nothing but a voice ? no, no, Iocastus,
I must have flesh, and blood, and will have Thestylis.
A fig for Fairies ![1]

In the next act, Jocastus and Dorylas have plotted together, for mere fun, to cajole the proud Thestylis into marrying the silly dolt :

Thestylis : But what estate shall he assure upon me ?
Iocastus : A Royal joynture, all in Fairyland.
Dorylas knowes it... A curious Parke...
Besides a house made all of mother of Pearle ;
An Ivory Tenniscourt.
Dorylas : A nutmeg Parlour.
Io. : A Saphyre dary-roome.
Dor. : A Ginger hall.
Io. : Chambers of Agate.
Dor. : Kitchins all of Christall...
Thest. : ... Nay then lets in
To seale the writings.[2]

In the third act, Dorylas alone, who has disguised himself as Prince Oberon, now undertakes to steal all the apples in the orchard of his friend Jocastus. The scene is very amusing, but is unhappily too long to be quoted in full :

Enter *Dorylas*, with a Bevy of Fairies.

[1] Act. II, Sc. 6.—[2] Act. I, Sc. 3.

How like you now my Grace ? is not my countenance
Royall and full of majesty ? Walke not I
Like the young Prince of *Pigmies* ? Ha ? my knaves,
Wee'll fill our pockets. Looke, looke yonder, *Elves*,
Would not yon apples tempt a better conscience
Than any we have to rob an Orchard ? ha ?
Fairies, like Nymphs with child, must have the things
They long for. You sing here a *Fairy* catch
In that strange tongue I taught you : while our selfe
Doe clime the Trees. Thus Princely Oberon
Ascends his throne of State.

Elves : Nos Beata Fauni Proles,
Quibus non est magna moles,
Quamvis Lunam incolamus,
Hortos sæpe frequentamus.

Furto cuncta magis bella,
Furto dulcior Puella.
Furto omnia decora.
Furto poma dulciora.

Cum mortales lecto jacent,
Nobis poma noctu placent.
Illa tamen sunt ingrata,
Nisi furto sint parata.

Enter *Iocastus*, *Bromius*, his man.

Io. : What divine noyse, fraught with immortall harmony,
Salutes mine eare ?
Bro. : Why, this immortall Harmony
Rather salutes your Orchard !

Towards the end of the scene, after the blunt clown Bromius has whipped and pummelled the pretended fairies into mortality again, the latter retire with a show of well-assumed arrogance :

Dorylas : Come, noble Peers
Of Fairy, come, attend our Royall grace.
Let's goe and share our fruit with our Queen Mab,
And th' other Darymaids : where of this theam
We will discourse amidst our Cakes and Cream.

Elves : Cum tot poma habeamus,
Triumphos læti jam canamus.
Faunos ego credam ortos
Tantum ut frequentent hortos.

I domum, Oberon, ad illas
Quae nos manent nunc ancillas.
Quarum osculemur sinum,
Inter poma, lac, et vinum. [1]

All this is good comedy indeed. The humour, a trifle broad perhaps, is quite genuine. The dialogue is quick and racy. It owes nothing to the Italian pastoral. Randolph may have remembered *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* in some of his more serious scenes : those between Damon, in love with Laurinda, and Amaryllis, in love with Damon being somewhat similar to the squabbles of the Athenian lovers ; but, on the whole, *Amyntas* is far more in the vein of the

[1] Act. III, Sc. 4.

Merry Wives, where Falstaff is terrified at the sight of the counterfeit fairies, "lest he should be transformed to a piece of cheese." With Randolph, the fairies have lost all the romantic glamour of old. They have come down to the state of enticing dairymaids, "daintiest rogues" who :

> ...kisse
> As sweet as sillibubs; surely *Oberon*
> Lives a delitious life![1]

They are now the mere inventions of a sharp-witted poet, roguish, ease-loving, and not over-burdened with modesty.

V

With Robert Herrick, lastly, the fairy themes reached the height of elaborateness. The author of the *Hesperides* was well conversant with the preceding literature on the subject, and availed himself of all the features which Shakespeare in the *Dream*, Jonson in his masques, Drayton in his mock-heroic poem had severally dwelt upon. Herrick's fairy poems, though scattered in his book: *The Fairie Temple, or Oberon's Chappell* (223); *Oberon's Feast* (294); *Oberon's Palace* (444); *The Fairies* (557); *The Beggar to Mab, the Fairie Queen* (639), are obviously connected. They may be

[1] Act. IV, Sc. 6.

looked upon as the product of a long evolution, as the result of many previous attempts, or, in Mr. Gosse's words, as "a kind of final compendium of all that the poets of the XVIIth century imagined about fairies." [1]

Long before the publication of the *Hesperides*, 1648, there appeared, in a curious little pamphlet: *A Description of the King and Queene of Fayries, their habit, fare, their abode, pompe and state*, printed in 1635, a short poem entitled *A Description of his Dyet*, which is only an incomplete version of the piece called, in the *Hesperides*, *Oberon's Feast* (294). How Herrick's poem found its way into the booklet, we do not know. The initials only of the compiler have been preserved : *R.S.*, written by hand on the first page, and printed at the end of the address to the reader. Herrick's contribution may have been included either without the poet's consent, or without any knowledge of the real authorship, having only been copied, perhaps, off one of those commonplace books which were quite the fashion in the XVIIth century. It describes the feast of Oberon, but is much shorter than the final text of the *Hesperides*, thirty-two lines instead of fifty-four, and is, in fact, nothing more than a sketch.

The little duodecimo tract [2] consists of twenty-two pages, of which three are blank, and four

[1] *Seventeenth Century Studies*, London, 1883, p. 131.—[2] See Appendix I.

occupied by rude woodcuts. In addition to Herrick's poem, it contains a few other fairy pieces, of no little beauty in themselves, which moreover clearly show the stage of development that this kind of fanciful poetry had arrived at in 1635. Thus we find another anonymous poem : *A Description of the King of Fayries Clothes, brought to him on New-yeares day in the morning*, 1626, *by his Queenes chamber-maids*, which is again a fragment only, forty-four lines instead of seventy-six, of one of the best-known fairy pieces in the XVIIth century. The complete poem is to be found in a good many manuscripts, and, in most of them, is expressly ascribed to Sir Simeon Steward, a Northamptonshire gentleman, educated at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he undoubtedly made the acquaintance of Herrick, who even addressed to him, in January 1624, a sort of eclogue entitled *A New Yeares Gift* (320). Steward's poem is graceful and quaint, and might serve as a type of seventeenth century fairy poetry. Let us quote, from a manuscript preserved in the British Museum, the beginning of the piece, left out in the printed pamphlet :

When the monthly horned Queene
Grew jealous that the starrs had seene
Her rising from Endimions armes,
In rage did throw her misty charmes
Into the bosome of the night,
To dimme the curious prying light.

Then did the dwarfish Fairyes elves
(Having first attir'd themselves)
Prepar'd to dresse their Oberon King
In light robes for revelling...[1]

Herrick's *Oberon's Feast* is followed, first by a long poem of eight six-line stanzas: *The Fairies Fegaries*, a sort of ballad sung by the Fairy Queen to her little elves; and then by *The Melancholly Lovers Song*, the well-known ditty contained in Fletcher's *Nice Valour*, and beginning:

Hence all you vaine delights...

The appearance of the latter in the fairy book, twelve years before it was published in the complete folio edition of Beaumont and Fletcher (1647), is not one of the least interesting curiosities of our little volume.

One thing especially draws the reader's attention: the close resemblance of the several poems to the fairy pieces of Herrick. What is more, Steward's *Description of the King of Fayries Clothes* is so obviously in the manner of the Devonshire parson-poet, that one of his editors, W. C. Hazlitt, went so far as to question whether "Steward was not simply the copyist, and as such, agreeably to the common usage at that time, affixed his signature." With this conjecture we must confront the fact that Herrick, in his final edition in 1648, did

[1] Egerton MSS. 2725. Fol. 144 r.

not claim the poem as his own, which he did not fail to do with regard to two other pieces included in Carew's first collected edition in 1640; and also that no manuscript has been preserved with Herrick's name subscribed to it, while a good many others clearly attribute the *Description* to Steward. Be this as it may, several coincidences seem too exact to be merely accidental. The following lines, from Steward's poem in the 1635 pamphlet:

> A rich Wastcoat....
> Made of the Trout-flies gilded wing....
>
> ...a lace
> Drawne by the unctuous Snails slow pace....
>
> Diamond stars of morning dew:
> Dy'd Crimson in a maydens blush....
>
> About his necke a wreath of pearle
> Dropt from the eyes of some poore girle....

are faithfully echoed in Herrick's:

> ...pure seed Pearle of Infant dew
> Brought and sweetned with a blew
> And pregnant Violet....
>
> The unctuous dew laps of a Snaile....

or even in the *Hesperides:*

Grac't with the Trout-flies curious wings....224
With eyes of Peacocks Trains, and Trout-
Flies curious wings....
And all behung with these pure Pearls,
Dropt from the eyes of ravisht Girles....444.

And it is only the almost incredible fact that a man, capable of writing such pretty things, should have left us nothing else, whereas these very sentences are abundantly paralleled in the rest of Herrick's work, which induces a belief that Steward was merely the happy imitator of his talented friend. The same holds true again of the anonymous ballad: *The Fairies Fegaries*, the fifth stanza of which:

Upon the mushroomes head
Our table cloth we spread,
A graine o'th'finest wheat
Is manchet that we eate:
The pearlie drops of dew we drinke
In Akorne-cups fill'd to the brinke...

is quite Herrickian:

A little mushroome-table spred,
After short prayers, they set on bread;
A Moon-parcht grain of purest wheat,
With some small glit'ring grit, to eate....294.

The question of Herrick's originality becomes a more disputable one than ever when we now set off his *Oberon's Feast*, such as it finally

appeared in the *Hesperides*, against the description of Oberon's banquet contained in W. Browne's *Pastorals*. Here again we are met with striking similarities. We read in Browne :

> A little mushroom...
> Serv'd for a table...
>
> To each a seed pearl served for a screw,
> And most of them were fill'd with early dew...
>
> The treble was a three-mouth'd grasshopper....
> Then a field-cricket, with a note full clean,
> Sweet and unforc'd and softly sung the mean...
> And to all these a deep well-breasted gnat...[1]

Similarly Herrick in the *Hesperides* :

> A little mushroome-table spred...
> The Elves present to quench his [2] thirst
> A pure seed-Pearle of Infant dew...
> But that there was in place to stir
> His Spleen, the chirring Grasshopper;
> The merry Cricket, puling Flie,
> The piping Gnat for minstralcy... 294

Both Mr. Moorman, who first called attention to these resemblances, and Mr. Courthope decide for the priority of Browne. "There can be no doubt that the version of the *Hesperides* is posterior to Browne's third book of the Pastorals," the

[1] Book, iii, Song 1.—[2] Oberon's.

former writes,[1] and the latter: "A description of the fairy feast in the third book of *Britannia's Pastorals*, though not published till after Herrick's fairy poems had appeared in 1635, probably preceded them in composition, and may have been read by him in MS."[2] All this is mere conjecture. As a matter of fact, the third book of Browne's *Pastorals* was not published, as has been seen, before 1852, and, in Mr. Moorman's own words, "with our present knowledge of Browne's life, it is impossible to say whether the third book was written before or after the publication of Drayton's *Nymphidia* in 1627."[3] Now, according to the same critic, Herrick's fairy poems, at any rate his *Oberon's Feast*, were written in or about 1626,[4] and the poet of the *Hesperides*, therefore, may have been the first in the field. Browne, who was then in London, may have heard of the first draught of *Oberon's Feast* and, finding it a fit subject to expatiate upon, may have developed in that graceful, winding, and desultory style of his the terse octosyllables of Herrick. This, when we remember

[1] *W. Browne. His Britannia's Pastorals.* Strassburg, 1897, p. 146. —[2] *A History of English Poetry*, Vol. iii, London, 1903, p. 261.— [3] *Op. cit.* p. 146. The interesting chapter of Mr. Moorman on Browne and Fairies contains however a few inaccuracies: "Browne's observation on the fairies' love of cleanliness strikes us as original," p. 145. "The introduction of a reward for cleanliness Browne seems to have borrowed from the folk-lore of his native county," p. 145. "Browne's poem appeared between 1624 and 1628, at which time Herrick was an unknown Cambridge student," p. 148. —[4] *Robert Herrick*, London, 1910, p. 267.

how many poems of the latter were actually circulating in MS. is, to say the least, as likely as Herrick's getting sight of Browne's manuscript work, of which, so far as we know, there is but one copy extant, which was discovered in the library of Salisbury Cathedral and published at no earlier date than half a century ago.

All the more so that, whereas the Fairies' Banquet is but an episode in *Britannia's Pastorals*, loosely connected with the rest, Herrick's fairy poems, separated as they are from one another in the *Hesperides*, are markedly linked together by their opening lines, and form a complete series, as though their author had, at one time, dreamt of writing a sort of epic to the glory of Oberon. We have elsewhere described at length the literary characteristics of Herrick's fairy poems, too well known, or at least of too easy access, to need quotation here. Never did the light-hearted lover of Julia and Anthea more thoroughly evince his fondness for all that was pretty, dainty, and of elegant tininess, his taste for the "curious" dream of an idle hour, together with his elaborate workmanship, his gift of phrase, his unique way of suggesting the subtlest and most refined ideas with the help only of clear and simple words. His lusty Oberon, his amorous Queen Mab, "tender as a chick," may be some distant relations to the "King of Shadows" and to the passionate Elfin majesty of the *Dream*, just as the shimmering

twilight diffused through their palace is the very same that faintly glimmered over the lovers' grove near Athens. But on the whole, Herrick's fairy-world is essentially different from Shakespeare's. The one might be justly compared to the early evening of a fine summer day, when the country is all aglow with the last rays of the departing sun. The other is but an artificial summer night, such as we see represented on the stage, with painted scenery instead of a natural landscape. Herrick's fairies are brisk and witty puppets, and the play they are acting is but a sort of ingenious peepshow. They are the direct outcome less of actual life than of a great artist's patient labour.

*
* *

The middle of the XVIIth century witnessed the banishment of the fairies from English poetry, and Herrick has been rightly called by Mr. Gosse "the last Laureate of Fairyland."[1] Some poems were still written on the subject, no doubt, such as the *Mad Merry Pranks of Robin Goodfellow*, which, printed by Percy and attributed, without any valid reason, to Jonson, very likely belongs to that period; or as *The Faerie King Fashioning Love and Honour* by Samuel Sheppard, the amanuensis of Jonson, a long-winded "heroical" poem somewhat in the style of the *Faerie*

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 131.

Queene, in six books, each book of six cantos of eight-line stanzas, the manuscript of which, preserved in the Bodleian Library, has not yet found an editor. But, roughly speaking, the theme is now passing into the hands of a few eccentric poets, as the Duchess of Newcastle, a dear favourite of Lamb, "the thrice noble, chaste, and virtuous, but somewhat fantastical and original-brained, generous Margaret Newcastle." List to this frigid, stilted discourse of hers :

"I wonder any should laugh, or think it ridiculous to heare of *Fairies*, and yet verily beleeve there are spirits ; and *witches*, yet laugh at the report of *Fairies*, as impossible ; which are onely small bodies not subject to our sense, although it be to our reason. For Nature can as well make small bodies, as great, and thin bodies as well as thicke.... So there is no reason in Nature, but that there may not onely be such things as *Fairies*, but these be as deare to God as we...." [1]

And the Duchess proceeds, in a full series of poems, to expand Drayton's, Browne's and Herrick's fairy pieces, divesting them, as a matter of course, of their more notable characteristics, and foisting in, on the other hand, a number of trivial, tasteless, and even absurd passages, as a few instances will sufficiently prove :

The Fairy Queens large Kingdome got by birth,
Is in the *circled center* of the Earth,

[1] *Poems and Fancies*... London 1653, p. 139.

Where there are many *springs* and running *streams*,
Whose waves do glitter by the *Queens* bright beams...
There *Mountains* are of pure *refined gold*,
And *Rocks* of *Diamonds* perfect to behold...
Quarries of *Rubies*, *Saphirs* there are store,
Christals and *Amathists* many more... [1]

Then follows, in *The Pastime and Recreation of the Queen of Fairies in Fairy Land, the Center of the the Earth*, the long description of:

...a Bower
Where she doth sit under a flower
To shade her from the Moon-shine bright,
Where Gnats do sing for her delight,
Some high, some low, some Tenour strain,
Making a Consort very plain... [2]

She "on a dewy leafe doth bathe," while the feast is getting ready, and:

...on a mushroom there is spread
A cover fine of spiders web,

exactly as in Herrick and Browne. The moment the fantastic poetess attempts originality, she sinks into bathos, as in this description of the *City of the Fairies*:

The City is the Braine, incompast in
Double walls (Dura Mater, Pia Mater thin)...
Our fancies, which in verse or prose we put,

[1] *Ib.* p. 148.—[2] *Ib.* p. 151.

Are Pictures which they draw, or Figures cut...
When that our braine with amorous thoughts doth run,
Are marrying there a Bride with her Bridegoom. [1]

Nothing perhaps could have shown more plainly how hopelessly drained the fairy themes were in the latter part of the XVIIth century than the foolish, pseudo-metaphysical drivelling it had come down to.

Another reason may account for the decay of fairy poetry in England : the hostile attitude of the Puritans. They denounced it. They deemed its religious rites, its kingly and profligate court a sort of sacrilegious superstition. They even declared fairies to be things devilish, and looked upon them with the same savage hatred they entertained for witches. They regarded Fairyland as a province of Satan's immense kingdom, and as one of the most detestable inventions of the Papists. Two or three stanzas from the graceful ballad of Jonson's jolly friend, Richard Corbet, will show the truth of this :

The Fairies farewell, or God a mercy will.

St. 2. Lament, lament old abbies,
The fairies' lost command ;
They did but change priests' babies ;
But some have changed your land ;

[1] *Ib.* p. 164.

And all your children sprung from thence
Are now growne puritanes,
Who live as changelings ever since
For love of your demaines...

St. 5. ...the fairies
Were of the old profession ;
Their songs were *Ave Maries*,
Their dances were procession,
But now, alas ! they all are dead,
Or gone beyond the seas,
Or farther for religion fled,
Or else they take their ease.

St. 6. A tell-tale in their company
They never could endure ;
And whoso kept not secretly
Their mirth, was punisht sure :
It was a just and Christian deed,
To pinch such black and blew :
O how the common-wealth doth need
Such justices as you ! [1]

To the temper of the Restoration, at the same time gross and dandified, the little fanciful beings proved still less congenial. The judgment passed by Pepys upon Shakespeare's fairy drama was not far from being the general one :

" To the King's Theatre, where we saw A Midsummer-Night's Dream, which I had never seen before, nor

[1] *Certain Elegant Poems written by Dr. Corbet*, London, 1647. pp. 47-9.

shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life." [1]

And the Queen Anne school of English literature which worshipped common sense, which piqued itself on its repressed emotions and limited imagination, its haughty intellectuality and enthronement of reason,[2] felt no earnest interest in country life, nor would have anything to do with native, or popular, superstition further than occasionally to read into it some conventional allegory. When Dryden exclaimed, in his transcription of *The Wife of Bath*:

> I speak of ancient times, for now the swain
> Returning late may pass the woods in vain,
> And never hope to see the nightly train:
> In vain the dairy now with mint is dress'd,
> The dairy-maid expects no fairy guest
> To skim the bowls, and after pay the feast...

he was not only paraphrasing Chaucer, but expressing an obvious truth. Tickell, who, in his *Kensington Garden*, published in 1722, mingled the Teutonic elves with the Roman deities was not far from being thought, even then, ridiculous: his poem tells the story of a young English prince of royal blood who falls in love with an immortal fairy maiden; on Oberon's refusing his consent to the

[1] Sept. 29, 1662.—[2] See the excellent chapter entitled "Principal literary characteristics of the Augustan Age" in W. L. Phelps' *Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement*, Boston, 1899.

marriage, Neptune, "the sea's great sire" himself, crushes the whole fairy nation at one blow to take down the pride of the petty monarch, and "sooth Albion's ghost." It was Johnson who, with his acute, if dogmatic, judgment, pronounced the final sentence on the fairy poetry of England. "Wild and fantastical as this play is,—he declared about *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*—all the parts in their various modes are well written, and give the kind of pleasure which the author designed. Fairies in Shakespeare's time were much in fashion; common tradition had made them familiar, and Spenser's poem had made them great."[1]

[1] General Observations on Shakespeare's Plays. *The Works of S. Johnson*, London, 1825, vol. v. p. 148.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of English fairy poetry may be summarized as follows. Springing from folk-belief, from a very complex superstition in which purely Teutonic myths combine with French courtly themes, it but seldom appears in the literature of the Middle Ages, when the little people of the night are still to be dreaded, and it is a man's wisdom to hold his peace about them. At the time of the Renaissance, the fairy belief continues to obtain among the lower classes, and the poets, who have now outgrown it, feeling what a mysterious charm lies in the deep-rooted traditions, make them one of their favourite themes. Spenser borrows from fairy-lore the machinery for his romantic epic. Shakespeare, with that unerring dramatic instinct of his, seizes upon and fuses together the two essential characters of English fairies: their mythological origins, their unknown, awful power, their communion with nature, their influence, for good or for evil, upon "human mortals"; and, on the other hand, their romantic and merely literary associations, their king, queen, and court, so quaintly imitative

of feudal life, their diminutive stature, even their delicate parody of human surroundings. Shakespeare's fairydom achieved a remarkable vogue and the greatest poets of the XVIIth century, from Fletcher to Jonson and Milton, from Drayton and Browne to Herrick, set about imitating it. A not insignificant difference however was soon to be noticed. Of the two threads which the author of the *Dream* had so marvellously spun together, his followers retained only one. They no longer realised it as the essential characteristic of Puck and Ariel that they were fairies and nothing more, as unsubstantial as the night air they rode upon, and that, in fact, none but a poet of Shakespeare's genius would have dared to present them on the stage. The XVIIth century poets were most particularly attentive, on the contrary, to Oberon, Titania, and the fairy court. They may call Mab their fairy Queen: she has nothing in common with Mercutio's heroine, unless it be her tiny stature. She and all her train impress one as the least likely of spirits. She is too human, and, in particular, her quarrels with her jealous husband or her own graceful whims are too much like those of plain men and women. Taking up only a part of the subject, the Jacobean and Caroline writers tasked their wits to eke out the scanty theme with all sorts of ingenious devices, either approaching the trifling question with mock gravity, or indulging in elaborate and minute descriptions

Thus most of the XVIIth century fairies are in no way concerned about human affairs, but live in a miniature world of their own. Their employment has dwindled into mere literary artifice and tempts but those word-artists who, like Herrick, are exceedingly fond of the "curious and unfamiliar." In fact, fairy poetry may be said to be extinct in England about 1650. Only with the awakening of the Romantic movement, with the renewed influence of early literature and primitive traditions, with the fresh vogue of romance will the fairies of old come to their own again. The *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, published by Sir Walter Scott, some poems by Keats telling of :

> Magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faerie lands forlorn,

or of the wan country of *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, where :

> The sedge has withered from the lake
> And no birds sing,

succeed, now and again, in reviving the genuine ancient ring. But the true spirit of fairy poetry, that simple, spontaneous, unsophisticated faith of yore, has gone for ever, and is now replaced by a half-archaic, half-symbolical literature where the merry domain of Oberon has been exalted into :

The still strange land unvexed of sun and stars
Where Launcelot rides clanking through the haze.

The comparatively recent productions of such writers as Th. Hood and George Darley, William Allingham and "Fiona Macleod," who have endeavoured to raise from the dead the fairy people and restore them to their lost kingdom, do not amount, pleasant as they generally are, to much more than polished epithets and patiently gilded phrases.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I.

A Description of the King and Queene of Fayries.

1635

(Bodleian Library : L 78 Art.)

RB

A DESCRIPTION Of the King and Queene of *Fayries*, their habit, fare, their abode, pompe, and state.

Beeing very delightfull to the sense, and full of mirth. by. R. S.

LONDON,
Printed for *Richard Harper*, and are to be sold at his shop, at the Holpitall gate, 1635.

TO THE READER

Courteous Reader,

I Present thee here with the Description of the King of the *Fayries*, of his Attendants, Apparel, Gesture, and Victuals, which though comprehended in the brevity of so short a volume, yet

yet as the Proverbe truely averres, it hath as mellifluous and pleasing discourse, as that whose amplitude containes the fulnesse of a bigger composition : yet not so much presuming on the contentment that it will bring to thee, as partly relying upon thy connivence at the faults therein contained, which beeing innocent and harmelesse, can give no great disturbance to thy patience, but please thy palate with varietie of mirth,

and

TO THE READER

and not doubting but my labour will bee remunerable with your good approbation, I shall thinke my paines well taken, and my selfe really satisfied with your contentment, emboldning me to subscribe my selfe

Yours hereafter,
If now approved on,
R. S.

(1)

A Description of the King

of *Fayries* Clothes, brought to him on New-yeares day in the morning, 1626, by his Queenes Chamber-maids

FIRST a Cobweb-shirt, more thinn
Than ever Spider since could spin.
Chang'd to the whitenesse of the snow,
By the stormie windes that blow
In the vast and frozen ayre,
No shirt half so fine, so fayre.

A rich Wastcoat they did bring,
Made of the Trout-flies gilded wing;

At

(2)

At which his Elveship gan to fret,
Swearing it would make him sweat
Even with it weight: he neede would weare
A wascoat made of downy haire,
New shaven of an Eunuchs chin,
That pleas'd him well, t'was wondrous thin.

The out-side of his doublet was
Made of the foure leav'd true lov'd grasse,
Chang'd into so fine a glosse,
With the oyle of Crispie mosse:
It made a Rainbow in the night
Which gave a lustre passing light.
On every seame there was a lace
Drawne by the unctuous Snails slow space.
To which the fin'st pur'st silver thread
Compar'd, did looke like dull pale lead.

His breeches of the Fleece was wrought,
Which from Chlochos *Iason* brought:
Spun into so fine a yarne,
No mortall wight might it discerne,
Weav'd by *Arachne* on her loome,
Just before she had her doome.

A rich Mantle he did weare,
Made of Tinsell Gosameare,

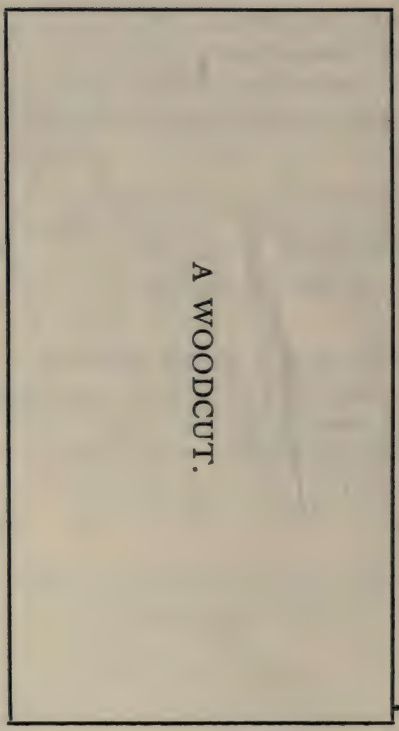
Beflowred

(3)

Beflowred over with a few
Diamond stars of morning dew:
Dy'd Crimson in a maydens blush,
Lin'd with humble Bees lost plush.

His Cap was all of Ladies love,
So wondrous light, that it did move,
If any humming gnat or flie
Buzz'd the ayre in passing by.

About his necke a wreath of pearle
Dropt from the eyes of some poore girle
Pinched, because she had forgot
To leave cleane water in the pot.


A WOODCUT.

Deep skild Geographers, whose art and
skill
Do traverse all the world, and with their q*(uill)*[1]
Declare the strangenes of each severall clime
The nature, scituation, and the time
Of being inhabited, yet all their art
And deep informed skill could not imp*(art)*
In what set climate of this Orbe or Ile
The king of Fayries kept, whose honor'd s*(tyle)*
Is here inclos'd, with the sincere descript*(ion)*
Of his abode, his nature, and the region
In which he rules: reade, and thou shalt fin*(d)*
Delightfull mirth, fit to content thy min*(d)*
May the contents thereof thy palate sute,
With its mellifluous and pleasing fruit:
For nought can more be sweetn'd to my m*(ind)*
Than that this Pamphlet thy contentm*(ent)*
fin*(d)*
Which if it shall, my labour is suffic'd,
In being by your liking highly priz'd.

Yours to his power,
R. S.

[1] The letters in brackets are inserted to supply the place of those lost through the fraying of the edges.

(4)

A Description of his Dyet.

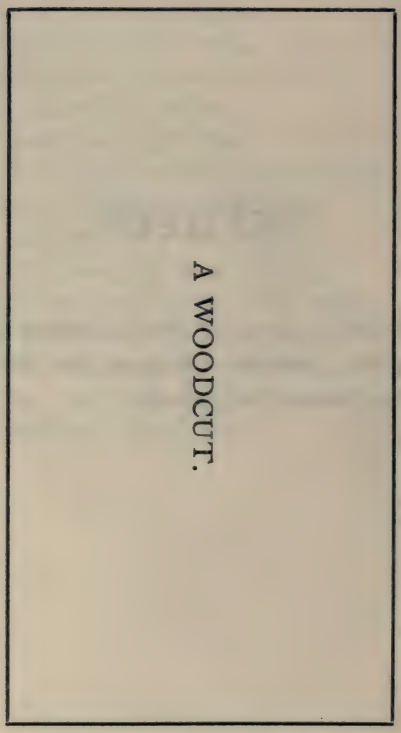
NOW they the Elves within a trice,
Prepar'd a feast lesse great than nice.
Where you may imagine first,
The Elves prepare to quench his thirst,
In pure seed Pearle of Infant dew
Brought and sweetned with a blew
And pregnant Violet; which done,
His kitling eies begin to runne
Quicke ore the table, where hee spyes
The hornes of water'd Butter-flies,
Of which he eats, but with a little
Neat coole allay of Cuckowe spittle.
Next this the red cap worme thats shut
Within the concave of a nut.
Moles eyes he tastes, then Adders eares;
To these for sauce the slaine stagges teares
A bloted earewig, and the pith
Of sugred rush he glads him with.
Then

(6)

Then he takes a little Mothe,
Late fatted in a scarlet cloth,
A Spinners ham, the beards of mice,
Nits carbonado'd, a device
Before unknowne; the blood of fleas
Which gave his Elveships stomacke ease.
The unctuous dew laps of a Snaile,
The broake heart of a Nightingale,
Orecome in musicke, with the sagge
And well bestrowted Bees sweet bagge.
Conserves of Atomes, and the mites,
The Silke wormes sperme, and the delights
Of all that ever yet hath blest
Fayrie land: so ends his feast.

ORPHEUS.

Thrice excelling, for the finishment of this Feast, thou must musicke it so, that the Deities may descend to grace it.


A WOODCUT.

THE FAIRIES

FEGARIES

OR,

Singing and dancing being all their pleasure,
Theyle please you most nicely, if youle be at leasure,
To heare their sweet chanting, it will you delight,
To cure melancholly at morning and night.

SUNG LIKE TO THE SPANISH GYPSIE.

COME follow, follow me,
You Fairie Elves that be:
And circle round this greene,
Come follow me your Queene.
Hand in hand lets dance a round,
For this place is Fayrie ground.

When Mortals are at rest,

And

And snorting in their nest,
Unheard, or unespy'd
Through key-holes we do glide:
Over tables, stooles and shelves,
We trip it with our Fairie Elves.

And if the house be foule,
Or platter, dish, or bowle,
Up staires we nimbly creepe,
And finde the sluts asleepe:
Then we pinch their armes and thighes,
None escapes, nor none espies.

But if the house be swept,
And from uncleannesse kept,
We praise the house and maid,
And surely she is paid:
For we do use before we go
To drop a Tester in her shoe.

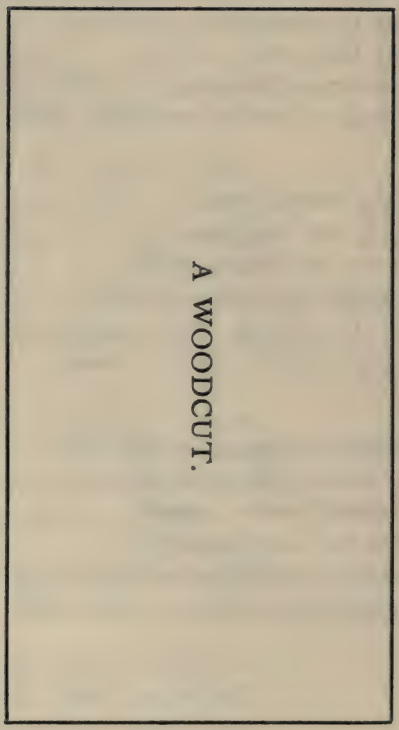
Upon the mushroomes head,
Our table cloth we spread
A graine o' th' finest wheat
Is manchet that we eate:
The pearlie drops of dew we drinke
In Akorne-cups fill'd to the brinke.

The tongues of Nightingales,
With unctuous iuyce of Snailes,
Betwixt two nut-shels stewde
Is meat thats easily chewde:
The braines of Rennes, the beards of mice
Will make a feast of wondrous price.

Over the tender grasse,
So lightly we can passe,
The yong and tender stalke,
Nere bowes whereon we walke,
Nor in the morning dew to seene,
Over night where we have beene.

The grasse-hopper, gnat, and flie,
Serves for our Minstrels three,
And sweetly dance a while,
Till we the time beguile:
And when the Moone-calfe hides her head,
The glow-worme lights us unto bed.

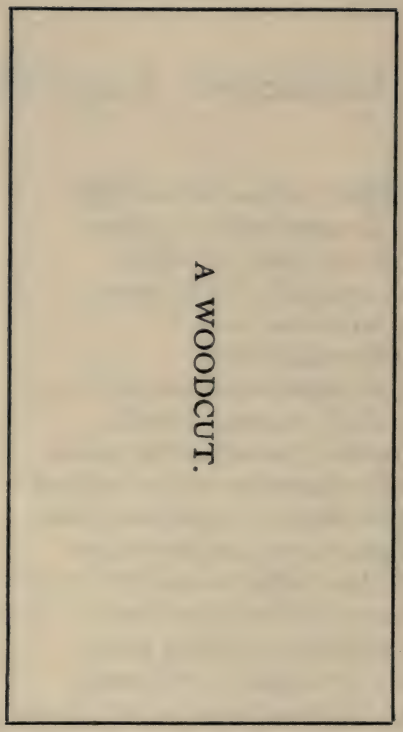
FINIS.


A WOODCUT.

The Melancholly Lovers Song.

HENCE all you vaine delights,
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly,
There's nought in this life sweet,
If men were wise to see 't,
But onely melancholly.
Welcome folded hands, and fixed eyes,
A sigh that's piercing, mortifies,
A looke that's fastned on the ground,
A tongue chained up without a sound:
Fountaine heads, and pathlesse groves,
Are places where pale passion loves.
Moone-light walkes, when all the fowles
Are warmely hous'd, save Bats and Owles;
A midnight bell, a parting grone,
These are the sighes I feed upon:
Then stretcht out bones in a still gloomy valley,
There's nothing dainty, sweet to melancholly.

FINIS.


A WOODCUT.

NOTES ON TEXTS.

A Description of the King of Fayries Clothes.

Is also to be found in Ashmole MS., 38, n° 116, ff. 99-100 : *King Oberons Apparell ;* (finis, S^r^ Simon Steward). — in Rawlinson MS., Poet,, 147, f. 102 : *The Faery King ;* (S^r^ S. St.). — in Add. MS., 11.811, ff. 18-20 : *The Fairy King ;* (S^r^ Simeon Steward). — *Id.*, 22.118, f. 1 : *The apparrelling of Oberon King of y^e^ Faryes.* — *Id.*, 22.603, f. 62 : *K. Oberons his Apparrell ;* (S^r^ Edmond Steward). — *Id.*, 25.303, f. 172 : *The Fayres Revellinge.* — *Id.*, 28.644, f. 72 : *Oberon King of the fairies by Sir Simon Stewart.*

Was printed without the author's name in *Musarum Deliciae*, 1655 ; and in Poole's *English Parnassus*, 1657 ; rpt. 1677.

A Description of his Dyet.

There are MS. versions of this piece at Oxford in the Ashmole MS., 38, n° 117, ff. 100-01 : *King Obrons Feast ;* (finis. Ro^bt^ Hericke). — in the Rawlinson MS., Poet., 160, ff. 169-170 : *King Oberons Feast ;* (Rob. Herrick). — and at the British Museum in Add. MS., 22.603, ff. 61-62 : *Kinge Oberon his feast ;* (Herricke).

The Fairies Fegaries.

The poem was printed in *The Mysteries of Love & Eloquence ; on the arts of wooing and complimenting... The Preface signed E. P.*, London, 1658. The British Museum catalogue attributes these initials to Edward Phillips, the nephew of Milton. It was included, later on, in Percy's *Reliques*, (Edit. 1812, vol. III, p. 260), and in D^r^ Bliss' *Bibliographical Miscellanies*, Oxford, 1813, p. 71-72.

The Melancholly Lovers Song.

Resemblances have often been pointed out between this poem, Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, and *The Author's Abstract of Melancholy* which Burton prefixed to the third (1628) and following editions of his work. Cf. *Notes and Queries*, 10 Ser., Vol. VI, Dec. 15, 1906. The song seems to have been a favourite one in the XVII^th^ century, and has been preserved in many MS. versions : we find it, at the British Museum only, in Add. MS., 15.226, f. 28 : *In laudem Melancholiae.* — *Id.*, 15.227, f. 75 : *Melancholicus.* — in Sloane MS., 842, f. 42 : *On Melancholy.* — *Id.*, 1792, f. 123 : *Verses made of Melancholy.* — in Egerton MS., 2.013, f. 4: *A Song.*

APPENDIX II

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The fairy literature is of enormous extent. The following lists only contain the *texts* quoted from or referred to in the preceding chapters, with such *critical studies* as have proved useful to the writer, and might be of some interest to a reader desiring further acquaintance with the subject.

I. TEXTS.

Ancient Ballads and Broadsides published in England in the XVIth century, ed. H. Huth, London, 1867.

Ancient English Metrical Romances, ed. Edm. Goldsmid, Edinburgh, 1884, 3 vols.

Ascham, R., *The Scholemaster*, ed. E. Arber, Birmingham, 1870.

Bacon, R., *Essays*, ed. W. Aldis Wright, London, 1896.

Beowulf, ... with a translation by Thomas Arnold, London, 1876.

Beowulf, ed. A. J. Wyatt, Cambridge, 1898.

The Boke of Duke Huon of Bordeaux done into English by Sir John Bourchier, Lord Berners, ed. S. Lee, London, 1882-3, 2 vols.

A Book of Roxburghe Ballads, ed. J. P. Collier, London, 1847.

Broadside Black-letter Ballads, printed in the 16th and 17th centuries, ed. J. P. Collier, London, 1868.

Browne, Sir Thomas, *Religio Medici and Other Essays*, ed. D. L. Roberts, London, 1898.

Browne, William, *Poems*, ed. Gordon Goodwin, London, 1894, 2 vols.

Burton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. A. R. Shilleto, London, 1893, 3 vols.

Byrd, William, *Psalmes, Sonets & Songs of sadness and pietie made into Musicke of five parts*, London, 1588.

Campion, Thomas, *A Book of Ayres*, London, 1601.

Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Complete Works of*, ed. W. W. Skeat, Oxford, 1894, 6 vols.

Churchyard, Thomas, *A handeful of gladsome verses, given to the Queenes Maiesty at Woodstocke this Prograce*, Oxford, 1592.

Corbet, Richard, *Certain Elegant Poems...*, London, 1647.

Coryate, Thomas, *Crudities...*, London, 1611.

The Cuchullin Saga, ed. El. Hull, London, 1898.

Curtin, J., *Tales of the Fairies and of the Ghost World*, London, 1895.

Daemono-logie, in forme of a dialogue, Divided into three bookes. Written by the high and mightie Prince James... London, 1603.

Dekker, Thomas, *The Whore of Babylon*, London, 1607.

Dodsley's Collection of old English Plays, London, 1875, vol. 14.

Douglas, Gavin, *Æneid*, ed. Bannatyne Club, 1839, 2 vols.

Drayton, Michael, *The Battaile of Agincourt... Nimphidia, the Court of Fayrie...* London, 1627.

— *The Muses Elizium...* London, 1630.

— *Poems*, Spenser Soc. Public., 1888, 2 vols.

Dryden, John, *Fables ancient and modern translated into verse from Homer, Ovid, Boccace and Chaucer...* London, 1700.

Elizabethan Sonnets, ed. Sidney Lee, London, 1904, 2 vols.

England's Helicon, London, 1600.

English and Scottish Ballads, The, ed. F. J. Child, Boston, 1882-98, 5 vols.

English Fairy and other Folk Tales, ed. E. S. Hartland, London, 1893.

English Fairy Tales, ed. J. Jacob, London, 1898.

Fairy Music, ed. A. E. Waite, London, n. d. (Canterbury Poets).

Fairy Poetry, ed. R. S. Bate, London, 1909.

Fairy Tales, Legends and Romances illustrating Shakespeare and other Early English Writers, ed. W. C. Hazlitt, London, 1875.

Fletcher, John, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, ed. F. W. Moorman, London, 1897.

Golding, Arthur, *Ovid's Metamorphoses, the XV bookes*. London, 1567.

Gower, John, *The Complete Works of*, ed. G. C. Macaulay, Oxford, 1899, 4 vols.

Greene, Robert, *Groats-Worth of witte, bought with a million of Repentance*... London, 1592.

— *The Scottish Historie of James the Fourth*, London, 1598.

— *Works*, ed. J. Ch. Collins, Oxford, 1905, 2 vols.

Harsenet, Dr. S., *A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures*... London, 1603.

Henslowe, Philip, *Diary*, ed. W. W. Greg, London, 1904-08, 2 vols.

Herrick, Robert, *The Poems of*..., ed. W. C. Hazlitt, London, 1869, 2 vols.

— *The Poetical Works of*..., ed. G. Saintsbury, London, 1893, 2 vols.

Heywood, Thomas, *The Hierarchie of the blessed Angells, their Names, orders, and offices*..., London, 1635.

The History of Tom Thumbe the Little, for his small stature surnamed King Arthurs Dwarfe..., London, 1621.

Holinshed, Raphael, *The firste volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*, London, 1577.

Huon de Bordeaux, ed. F. Guessard and C. Grandmaison, Paris, 1860.

JOHNSON, SAMUEL, *The Works of...*, London, 1825, vol. V.

JONSON, BEN, *The Works of...*, ed. Gifford-Cunningham, London, n. d., 3 vols.

— *The Sad Shepherd*, ed. W. W. Greg, Louvain, 1909.

LANEHAM, R., *Robert Laneham's Letter: describing a part of the entertainment unto Queen Elizabeth at the Castle of Kenilworth in* 1575, ed. F. J. Furnivall, London, 1907.

LANGLAND, WILLIAM, *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*, ed. W. W. Skeat, Oxford, 1886, 2 vols.

LAYAMON, *Brut*, ed. Sir F. Malden, London, 1847, 3 vols.

LOVER, SAMUEL, *Legends and Stories of Ireland*, London, 1899.

LYLY, JOHN, *The Complete Works of...*, ed. R. W. Bond, Oxford, 1902, 3 vols.

Lyra Celtica, An Anthology of Representative Celtic Poetry, ed. E. Sharp. Edinburgh, 1896.

Lyrics from the song-books of the Elizabethan Age, ed. A. H. Bullen, London, 1891.

Mabinogion, translated by Lady C. Guest, London, 1849, 3 vols.

The mad pranks and merry jests of Robin Goodfellow, ed. J. P. Collier, London, 1842.

The Magic Casement, A Book of Faëry Poems, ed. A. Noyes, London, 1908.

MALORY, Sir THOMAS, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. H. O. Sommer, London, 1889-91, 3 vols.

MARIE DE FRANCE. *Lais*, ed. K. Warnke, Halle, 1900.

MARSTON, JOHN, *The Scourge of Villanie, Three Bookes of Satyres*, London, 1598.

MILTON, JOHN, *The Works of...*, ed. H. C. Beeching, Oxford, 1900.

— *Comus and Lycidas*, ed. A. W. Verity, Cambridge, 1898.

The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, ed. Sir Walter Scott, London, 1897.

MONMOUTH, GEOFFREY OF, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, ed. A. Schultz, Halle, 1854.

MONTGOMERY, ALEXANDER, *The Poems of...*, ed. D. Irving, Edinburgh, 1821.

NASH, THOMAS, *Terrors of the Nig(ht), or, A Discourse of Apparitions*, London, 1594.

— *The Works of...*, ed. A. B. Grosart, London, 1883-85. 6 vols.

NEWCASTLE, The Lady Margaret, Duchess of, *Poems and Fancies*, London, 1653.

NICHOLS, JOHN, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, London, 1823, 3 vols.

Sir Orfeo, ed. Dr. Oscar Zielke, Breslau, 1880.

PEELE, GEORGE, *The Battell of Alcazar fought in Barbarie*, London, 1594.

PEPYS, SAM., *Diary*, ed. H. B. Wheatley, London, 1893-9.

PERCY, WILLIAM, *The Faery Pastorall, or Forrest of Elues*, London, 1824.

PHAER, THOMAS, *The nyne fyrst bookes of the Eneidos of Virgil converted into English vearse*, London, 1562.

Philotus, A verie Excellent and delectable Comedie intituled, Edinburgh, 1612.

PUTTENHAM, GEORGE, *Arte of English Poesie*, ed. E. Arber, Birmingham, 1869.

RANDOLPH, THOMAS, *Poems; with the Muses Looking-glasse: and Amyntas*, Oxford, 1638.

Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, coll. Thomas Percy, London, 1812, 3 vols.

Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England, ed. W. C. Hazlitt, London, 1866.

Romance van Lancelot, ed. W. J. A. Jonckbloet, The Hague, 1849.

The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune, ed. J. A. H. Murray, London, 1875.

The Roxburghe Ballads, ed. W. Chappell and J. W. Ebsworth, London, 1869, 7 vols.

ROWLANDS, SAMUEL, *More Knaves Yet? The Knaves of Spades and Diamonds*, London, n. d.

SANDYS, GEORGE, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished*, Oxford, 1632.

SCOT, REGINALD, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. B. Nicholson, London, 1886.

Scottish Fairy and Folk Tales, ed. Sir G. Douglas, London, 1893.

SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM, *The Works of...*, Globe Edition, London, 1891.

— *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, ed. H. N. Hudson, Boston, 1880.

— *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, ed. C. H. Herford, London, 1899.

— *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, ed. H. Cunningham, London, 1904.

— *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, ed. A. W. Verity, Cambridge, 1905.

— *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, ed. G. E. Woodberry, London, 1907.

— *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, ed. E. K. Chambers, London, n. d.

— *The Tempest*, ed. A. W. Verity, Cambridge, 1897.

Skialetheia, or A Shadowe of Truth in certaine Epigrams and Satyres, (Edw. Guilpin), London, 1598.

SPENSER, EDMUND, *The Works of...*, ed. Morris-Hales, London, 1899.

STUBBES, P., *The Anatomie of Abuses...*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, London, 1877-82, 2 vols.

Tarlton's Newes out of Purgatorie... Published by an old companion of his, Robin Goodfellow, London, n. d.

TICKELL, THOMAS, *Kensington Garden*, London, 1722.

TILBURY, GERVASE OF, *Otia Imperialia*, ed. F. Liebrecht, Hanover, 1856.

The Voyage of Bran, Son of Febal, to the Land of the Living, ed. D. Nutt, London, 1895-97, 2 vols.

WILDE, LADY, *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland*, London, 1887.

Wily Beguiled, A Pleasant Comedie called, London, 1606.

II. CRITICAL STUDIES.

ANDERSON, R. B., *Norse Mythology: the Religion of our Forefathers*, Chicago, 1875.

ARNOLD, MATTHEW, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, London, 1867.

BELL, WILLIAM, *Shakespeare's Puck and his Folklore, illustrated from the superstitions of all nations*, London, 1852, 3 vols.

BRAND, J., *Observations on Popular Antiquities*, ed. W. C. Hazlitt, London, 1870.

Cambridge History of English Literature, The, ed. by A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, Cambridge, 1908-10, 6 vols. (In Progress).

Chambers's Cyclopædia of English Literature, ed. by D. Patrick, London, 1903, Vol. I.

CARLETON, WILLIAM, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, London, 1893.

CHANTEPIE DE LA SAUSSAYE, P. D., *The Religion of the Teutons*, transl. B. J. Vos, Boston, 1902.

CHURCH, R. W., *Spenser*, London, 1892, (English Men of Letters).

COURTHOPE, WILLIAM, J., *A History of English Poetry*, London, 1895-1903, 4 vols.

COX, M. R., *An introduction to Folklore*, London, 1897.

DRAKE, NATHAN, *Shakespeare and his Times*, Paris, 1843.

DYER, T. F. T., *Folklore of Shakespeare*, London, 1883.

ELTON, OLIVER, *Michael Drayton*, London, 1905.

FEUILLERAT, A., *John Lyly*, Cambridge, 1910.

Folk-Lore: a quarterly review of myth, tradition, institution, and custom, 1890, etc.

Folk-Lore Journal, The, 1883, etc.

Folk-Lore Record, The, 1878, etc.

GEDDIE, J., *The Balladists*, Edinburgh, 1896.

GIBSON, J. PAUL, *Shakespeare's Use of the Supernatural*, Cambridge, 1908.

GOMME, G. L., *The Handbook of Folklore*, London, 1890.

GOSSE, EDMUND, *Seventeenth Century Studies*, London, 1883.

GOYAU, L. F. FAURE, *La vie et la mort des Fées*, Paris, 1910.

GREG, W. W., *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama*, London, 1906.

GRIMM, JACOB, *Teutonic Mythology*, transl. J. S. Stallybrass, London, 1883, 4 vols.

GUMMERE, F. B., *The Beginnings of Poetry*, New-York, 1901.

— *The Popular Ballad*, London, 1907.

HALLIWELL, J. O., *An introduction to Shakespeare's Midsummer-Night's Dream*, London, 1841.

— *Illustrations of the Fairy Mythology of A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, London, 1845.

— *Memoranda on the Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Brighton, 1879.

HART, W. M., *Ballad and Epic, A Study in the Development of the Narrative Art*, Boston, 1907.

HARTLAND, E. S., *The Science of Fairy Tales, An enquiry into Fairy Mythology*, London, 1891.

— *Folklore: what it is, and what is the good of it*, London, 1899.

HAZLITT, WILLIAM, *The Collected Works of*, ed. A. R. Waller and A. Glover, London, 1902, vol. V.

HAZLITT, W. C., *Faiths and Folklore*, London, 1905, 2 vols.

HENDERSON, T. F., *Scottish Vernacular Literature*, Edinburgh, 1900.

HENSE, Dr. C. C., *Shakespeare's Sommernachtstraum*, Halle, 1851.

— *Untersuchungen und Studien*, Halle, 1884. Vol. II.

HEPWORTH, W., *Fairies*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Vol. VIII.

JEANROY, ALFRED, *Les Fées*, La Grande Encyclopédie. Tome XVII.

KEIGHTLEY, THOMAS, *The Fairy Mythology; illustrative of the Romance and Superstitions of Various Countries*, London, 1834, 2 vols.

KER, W. P., *Epic and Romance*, London, 1908.

KER, W. P., *The Craven Angels*, Modern Language Review, Vol. 6, Jan. 1911.

KIRK, R., *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies* (1696), ed. A. Lang, London, 1893.

LEGOUIS, E., *Geoffroy Chaucer*, Paris, 1910.

LE ROUX DE LINCY, *Le Livre des Légendes*, Paris, 1836.

MACLEAN, MAGNUS, *The Literature of the Celts, Its history and Romance*, London, 1902.

MAC RITCHIE, D., *The Testimony of Tradition*, London, 1889.

MAURY, ALFRED, *Croyances et Légendes du Moyen-Age*, Paris, 1896.

MOORMAN, F. W., *William Browne, His Britannia's Pastorals*, Strassburg, 1897.

— *Robert Herrick*, London, 1910.

NUTT, ALFRED, *Celtic and Mediaeval Romance*, London, 1899.

— *The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare*, London, 1900.

PATON, LUCY ALLEN, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance*, Boston, 1903.

PHELPS, W. L., *The beginnings of the English Romantic Movement*, Boston, 1899.

PROESCHOLDT, LUDW., *On the Sources of Shakespeare's Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Halle, 1878.

REEVES, W. P., *Shakespeare's Queen Mab*, Modern Language Notes, Vol. 17, Jan. 1902.

RENAN, ERNEST, *La Poésie des Races Celtiques*, in *Essais de Morale et de Critique*, Paris, 1859.

RHYS, J., *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by Celtic Heathendom*, London, 1888.

— *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*, Oxford, 1891.

— *Celtic Folklore, Welsh and Manx*, Oxford, 1901, 2 vols.

ROOT, R. K., *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare*, New York, 1903.

RYDBERG, VICTOR, *Teutonic Mythology*, transl. R. B. Anderson, London, 1889.

SAWTELLE, ALICE E., *The Sources of Spenser's Classical Mythology*, Boston, 1896.

Schreiber, Dr. H., *Die Feen in Europa*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1842.

Seccombe, T., and Allen, J. W., *The Age of Shakespeare*, London, 1903, 2 vols.

Sidgwick, Frank, *The Sources and Analogues of 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream'*, London, 1908.

Sikes, Wirt, *British Goblins...*, London, 1880.

Spalding, T. A., *Elizabethan Demonology*, London, 1880.

Squire, C., *The Mythology of the British Islands*, London, 1905.

Stewart, H. H., *The Supernatural in Shakespeare*, London, 1908.

Thoms, W. J., *Three Notelets on Shakespeare*. London, 1865.

Van Gennep, A., *La Formation des Légendes*, Paris, 1910.

Voretzsch, Carl, *Die Composition des Huon von Bordeaux*, Halle, 1900.

Walther, Marie, *Malory's Einfluss auf Spenser's Faerie Queene*, Heidelberg, 1898.

Ward, A. W., *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, London, 1899, 3 vols.

Ward, T. H., *The English Poets*. Vol. II, *Ben Jonson to Dryden*, London, 1880.

Warton, Thomas, *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser*, London, 1754.

— *History of English Poetry from the Twelfth to the close of the Sixteenth century*, London, 1871, 4 vols.

Weston, Jessie L., *King Arthur and his Knights*, London, 1899.

— *The Romance Cycle of Charlemagne and his Peers*, London, 1901.

Yeats, W. B., *The Celtic Twilight*, London, 1893.

INDEX

ACHEVÉ D'IMPRIMER LE TRENTE
MARS MIL NEUF CENT ONZE
PAR EDOUARD VERBEKE & Co,
CANAL, PORTE STE CATHERINE
BRUGES, BELGIQUE

BINDING CLOTH JAN 2 7 '53

PN 6110 F3D45

Delattre, Floris
English fairy poetry
the origins to the seven
century

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY