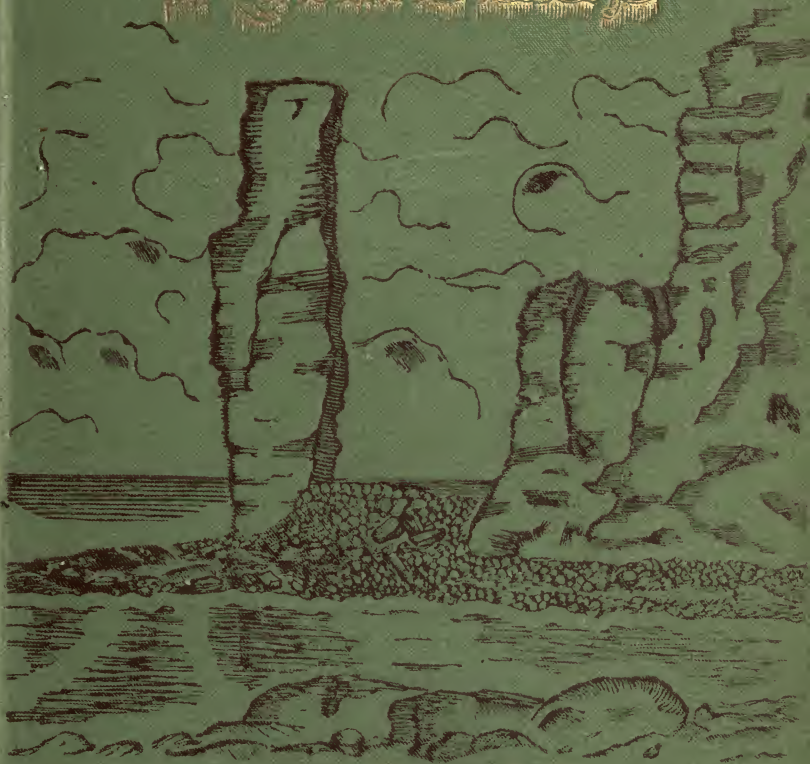


RAMBLES



IN THE FAR NORTH

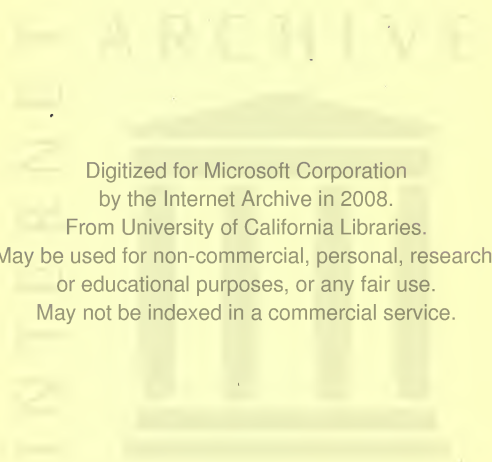
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THE OLD MAN OF HOY, ORKNEY

RAMBLES
IN
THE FAR NORTH.

BY
R. MENZIES FERGUSSON, M.A.

SECOND EDITION.

ALEX. GARDNER, PAISLEY,
AND 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1884

TO ORKNEY.



*“ Land of the whirlpool—torrent—foam,
Where oceans meet in maddening shock ;
The beetling cliff—the shelving holm—
The dark insidious rock :
Land of the bleak, the treeless moor—
The sterile mountain, sere and riven ;
The shapeless cairn, the ruined tower,
Scathèa by the bolts of heaven :
The yawning gulf—the treacherous sand—
I love thee still, my native land.*

*“ Land of the dark—the Runic rhyme—
The mystic ring—the cavern hoar ;
The Scandinavian seer—sublime
In legendary lore :
Land of a thousand Sea-kings’ graves—
Those tameless spirits of the past,
Fierce as their subject Arctic waves,
Or hyperborean blast ;
Though Polar billows round thee foam,
I love thee ! Thou wert once my home.”*

DAVID VEDDER.

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1884

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE purpose of the following Sketches is to bring more prominently before the travelling and reading public the attractions and historical features of places which, though lying so near their own doors, are little known. The Orkney and other Islands of the North Sea well merit the attention of the tourist no less than that of the antiquarian and the geographer. It would be a good thing for those inclined to travel into other and strange lands to know some, at least, of the beauties of these scenes which are so closely associated with the history of our own country. The many peculiar beauties of some of those Islands are touched upon in these Sketches, and some of the existing Folk-lore is for the first time introduced to the public. The concluding Sketch consists of a number of fairy tales, most of which have been collected at first hand, and may not be uninteresting to lovers of the marvellous.

The following pages are the hurried product of a two-summers' sojourn in the North Sea. Many of the Sketches

appeared last winter in the columns of the *Fifeshire Journal*.

Almost all the scenes described came under the writer's personal notice, and the historical matter is derived from the most reliable sources, which are acknowledged in their proper place. If this little volume creates in any a desire to visit the same scenes, it will not have been written in vain.

The "Orcadian Musings" that form the latter part of the volume are occasional attempts at versification, and do not aspire to the higher walks of poesy.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE rapid sale accorded to the first edition has necessitated thus early the issue of a second. The very hearty and favourable manner in which the volume has been received by the press has assured the author that his work fills a felt gap in the literature relating to the Far North. Several important improvements and additions have been made, which, it is hoped, will add to the value of the book. The Index is new, and will facilitate reference to the contents.

The "Orcadian Musings" have not been added to the present edition—the object being to make the Sketches as compact as possible. These may probably be re-issued in another form.

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Rambles in the Far North.

CHAPTER I.

“North, ever North ! we sailed by night,
And yet the sky was red with light,
And purple rolled the deep.”—*Aytoun.*

FROM the “Granite City,” with its noise and bustle, we found ourselves transported to the deck of one of the Orkney Steamers, the “Queen” by name. It was midnight; and, like Thomas Carlyle, we might have said that “upwards of five hundred thousand two-legged animals without feathers lie around us in horizontal position, their heads all in night-caps, and full of the foolishest dreams.” We all endeavoured to court the drowsy god, each dreading the slightest approach of “*mal-de-mer*”; but, ere we got well outside the bar, various peculiar sounds reminded those of us who were still safe that Neptune was demanding his usual kind of black mail from every landlubber. During our twelve hours’ passage two young student friends were being reduced to that unenviable

state in which one feels that it would be a blessing to be pitched into the sea. For them the grey streaks of the dawn had no charms. Even Homer's immortal verse had fled from their memories; and "rosy fingered morn" was allowed to usher in her glory without any rapture on their part. The writer of this sketch, however, escaped all such unpleasant sensations; was able to mount the deck and enjoy the glorious prospect of a glistening ocean with "water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink," until the Orcadian Islands came into view.

Orcadia ahoy! The first land was sighted as we steamed along towards the Pentland Firth. The morning was bright and sunny, which made the surface of the sea sparkle all around. Although there was a heavy swell, we could enjoy the fair prospect before us as we drew near the scenes of the ancient battles of the hardy Vikings. The island of Stroma was on our left; and the mainland of Scotland, with John o' Groat's House in view, was becoming remote behind. Beyond we could see the islands of South Ronaldshay, Walls and Hoy, Flotta and Switha; while in close proximity we passed the little island of Swona, on which only fourteen families reside. Green sloping uplands, not very high above the sea level, but still lofty enough in some parts to merit the name of hills, met our gaze; and we could see small but comfortable-looking houses and home-

steads closely planted together. On many parts of the coast line were steep and dangerous-looking cliffs, washed by the swift flowing tide of the Pentland Firth, which, bearing vessels on its bosom at a greater speed than the wind can drive them, flows past the southern shore of Walls like an enormous river. After passing Duncansbay Head the sea became smoother, and our passage began to be of a more agreeable nature. The day was brilliant though a heavy breeze was blowing; and we gladly welcomed the Bay of Longhope, where we quitted the side of the "Queen" and committed our precious frames to the care of a fishing yawl which was awaiting our arrival. Safely landed upon the beach, we felt tired and hungry, ready to devour the first viands we might chance to meet. The manse afforded us the first shelter, and within its hospitable walls we refreshed and rested our wearied bodies.

An Orcadian Manse! As a rule a Scottish manse is one of the most hospitable dwellings within which a traveller can set his foot. We found our Orcadian Manse no exception to the rule. We were soon on the most intimate terms with the hospitable minister and his lady, and felt already as if we were part of his numerous family. It is very often the case that a clergyman with a moderate income is blessed with a large number of "hostages to fortune;" and how so many manage to rear their families so creditably is

a problem I must leave unsolved. The manse was commodious and commanded an extensive view of the sea and islands, while the hills of Hoy rose to the northward like lone sentinels amid the surrounding isles. Like many a parish priest, our friend the parson was given to antiquarian research ; and, as he always kept his eyes open when roaming about his parish, he generally came home with some ancient arrow-head or some other equally interesting remnant of the stone age. Well-read, he could discourse pleasantly on any topic, and was fond of expatiating upon the folklore and traditions of his Orkney home. For a time the manse formed the centre of our rambles, the rendezvous to which we always retraced our steps or steered our boat. The weather was fine, and we coasted along the different sounds and islands, shooting a sea-bird now and then, and occasionally engaging in a seal hunt. These were days of happy memories ; and even now we fancy that we

“ Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.”

The pleasure of our Orcadian rambles was increased by the agreeable company of a retired Fleet Surgeon and his wife, the latter an especially fascinating conversationalist.

The parish of Walls, part of which lies between the

beautiful bay of Longhope and the rapid Pentland Firth, possesses a number of interesting remains of antiquity. Throughout the parish numerous *tumuli* are to be seen, some having been opened and others in their pristine form. These have been used at an early period as burial mounds, and later as "look-out" stations for approaching vessels. Within those that have been opened burned stones and ashes have been found, which speak silently of cremated corpses. The ecclesiastical remains are also interesting. Almost midway between the present Parish Church and the Manse are plainly seen the foundations of an ancient church, which must have been built in the twelfth or thirteenth century. Some time ago a silver coin, bearing the mark of King Robert the Bruce, was discovered amongst the debris. This coin is still, we believe, in the possession of Mr. Chalmers, watchmaker, Stromness. The old church seems to have borne the name of the "Rood or Reuid Kirk," though it is popularly known among the inhabitants as the "Red Kirk of the Burn." Besides this ecclesiastical building there was another in the parish of nearly the same date. It was situated close beside the bay of Osmundwall—the ancient Asmundarvagr—and within the present churchyard. This old church, like many more in Orkney, was dedicated to St. Columba, and is still mentioned by that name. The minister of Walls—

anciently called Waes or Waas—was Rector of St. Columba's Church. Near this edifice lay the church lands, which were cultivated by the ecclesiastics of that day. Most of the land in the neighbourhood belonged formerly to the church, as did many of the islands in the vicinity; but the hand of the spoiler has been busy here, as well as elsewhere, and what was once the property of the church has long been possessed by others. Disendowment was an easier process in those primitive times than it is likely to be now.

At a time when Norse galleys anchored in the bays and Norsemen roamed amongst the *geos** and *gloups*, † the hostile arrow sped across those fields. These were the times when Jarls fought against each other or against their Celtic foe. Here and there a flint arrow head has been found, a witness to that warring age, and the present minister of the parish, the Rev. James Russell, found one of those stone battle-axes, known as "Celts," upon the farm of Wards. This gentleman possesses a fine collection of stone weapons and implements, both Orcadian and Zetlandic. On the coast of the Pentland Firth, close to the farm of Snelsetter, is a detached mass of rock, wholly surrounded by the sea, upon

* A *geo* is a long narrow recess, formed by the sea, running into the steep rocks.

† A *gloup* is an underground recess which opens to the surface at one or more places, down which the sea can be seen far below.

which there formerly stood a Scandinavian stronghold or "keep," in which the fugitives of war could hide in safety and repel any number of assailants. Remains of this ancient "keep" are still visible. This part of the island is only about eight miles distant from Caithness, and would, doubtless, be the first land touched at by warlike parties coming from the mainland of Scotland. The bays of Osmundwall and Longhope, being fine natural harbours, would afford shelter and anchorage to vessels from the severest storms. Westwards along the shore of the Pentland Firth, on a headland called "the Gerth," are traces of what may have been an early Scandinavian colony. Peculiar stone implements have been found, of such a kind as would most probably have been used in the formation of arrow-heads and other flint weapons. After a heavy shower of rain a diligent searcher may be rewarded by finding either a complete arrow-head or a splinter of one, half buried in the soil; but such finds are now "few and far between."

The caves and *geos* of this parish are amongst the most romantic and picturesque in Orkney, and in the bright summer day they glisten in all their weird and natural beauty, amidst the rapid tides of the wild Pentland Firth. The lofty peaks of the Caithness and Sutherland hills gloom amid their misty coverings on the far off horizon, and the broad Atlantic heaves and swells far away towards the glowing sun-

set. The boom of the sea is heard far off as it dashes its spray against the precipitous cliffs of the Berry, which forms a huge barrier to the invading tide. The dull and heavy music of the ocean is relieved now and then by the shrill screech of the wild sea birds that circle round these rugged rocks in thousands. Behind the mansion house of Melsetter, the residence of the principal proprietor, J. G. Moodie Heddle, Esq., is a beautiful strip of smooth sea-beech, with a background of sandy links. Here the eager conchologist may spend an hour or two in picking up the variagated and tiny shells which the waves have strewn so plentifully at his feet. Northwards are two fresh water lochs that lie silently amid the hills of Hoy, like some lone Highland tarns. They bear the names of "Hilliel's Water" and "Hoglan's water," and are about a mile from the North Ness Hotel, which is the only licensed house in the parish.

At the entrance of Longhope, upon each side of the bay, are situated two Martello towers, erected a good many years ago as sources of protection to the islands. Beside the south tower an artillery fort or barracks was erected at the same time, the whole costing upwards of £20,000! The battery is occupied by two artillery men, who look after the big guns and powder magazine. Upon the point of Cantic Head, which juts out into the eastern entrance of the Pentland Firth, a fine lighthouse stands

“With a beacon star upon his head
And with a wild sea light about his feet.”

From the top an extensive view of the sea and islands can be obtained. Farming here is in an advanced state, and the most improved implements are in use. Almost every farm of any size possesses a reaping machine, which greatly shortens and lessens the labour during harvest. Sea-weed is much used for manure on the land, and along with other stuffs produces very fair crops of cereals. Scarcely any barley is sown, bere being much more successfully grown, and there is no wheat. Orcadian farmers enjoy as good prices for their cattle and produce as many further south.

CHAPTER II.

“Twas here long ages past the Norseman stood
And gazed far out across the northern sea,
O’er rocky islets where no waving wood
Recalled his home—the Norseland of the free.”

SOME of the wildest and most romantic sea coast in the world is to be seen amid the Orkney Islands, especially upon the coast of Hoy and Walls. From gentle sloping uplands we are immediately transferred to wild and precipitous cliffs rising in many places to from 300 to 600 feet, and presenting a romantic appearance with their *voes** and *gloups*. Stupendous precipices loom up against the sky beside shattered masses of rock lying at their base, to be dashed about at the mercy of every gale. In the midst of a storm the scene is full of grandeur and awe-inspiring magnificence. As they roll and dash towards the cliffs the mighty billows of the Atlantic sweep tempestuously over every obstacle, and scatter the spray far over the land above. Tame at other times, an Orcadian landscape is then worthy of the tourist’s notice, and fit to inspire every imaginative traveller

*A *voe* is a narrow bay.

who deems it worth his while to drink in the glories of such a scene. The roar of the wild waves as they break in foam upon the beach rises high above the sough of the wind. The ocean rolls and swells in mad, gleeful fury, and crushes the tumbling remnants of the cliffs to shingle on the shore below. But when the pale moonbeams burst through the gloom, and the tempest dies away in silent agony, the swelling sea once more becomes a scene of peaceful beauty and bewitching grandeur. Then it seems as if

“Night walked in beauty o'er the peaceful sea,
Whose gentle waters spake tranquility.
With dreamy lull the rolling billows broke
In hollow murmurs on the distant rock ;
The sea bird wailed along the airy steep ;
The creak of distant oars was on the deep.
So still the scene, the boatswain's voice was heard,—
The listening ear would almost catch each word,
From isles remote the house-dog's fitful bay
Come floating o'er the waters far away ;
And, homeward wending o'er the silent hill,
The lonely shepherd's song and whistle shrill ;
The lulling murmur of the mountain-flood,
That sung its night-hymn to the solitude ;
The curlew's wild and desolate farewell,
As slow she sailed adown the darksome dell ;
The heath-cock whirring o'er the heathy vale ;
The mateless plover's far forsaken wail ;
The rush of tides that round the islands ran,
And danced like maniacs in the moonlight wan,—
All formed a scene so wild, and yet so fair,
As might have wooed the heart from dreams of care !”

Amid such scenes the hardy Norsemen swept the seas in

search of plunder and of fame. These northern pirates were pursued in 366 by Theodosius the Great, who, as Claudian tells us in his ode upon the victory, stained Orcadian soil with Saxon blood.—

“*Maduerunt Saxone fusio
Orcades ; incaluit Pictorum sanguine Thule,
Scotorum cumulos flevit glacialis Ierne.*”

Through the succeeding centuries the sea-kings fought and died upon their favourite element, and cared little for the tillage of the soil. We need not here trace the gradual transmutation of these northern heroes from heathenism to Christianity, nor dwell upon their petty wars and daring voyages. These events have been sufficiently chronicled : we are dealing now with living men and present modes of life and action. Yet there is a fascination about that past, which tells us of Scandinavian conquest and Orcadian manners, which may excuse any lingering round its romantic history. Torfæus tells the story well, while Dr. Barry takes up and amplifies the theme. To these authors I would refer the student of its history.* This narrative must be of personal experiences and snatches of existing folklore.

* The reader may also turn to “The Orkneys and Shetland,” by John R. Tudor, (London : Edward Stanford), published while these sketches were passing through the press. Mr. Tudor’s work gives a very full and exhaustive account of these islands, though deficient in many important points.

Part of our summer sojourn was spent in the very pleasant island of Flotta, which lies opposite the mouth of Longhope and between Walls and the northern part of South Ronaldshay. A neat and comfortable church stands beside a little bay called Kirkhope, and close by are still to be seen the ancient foundations of an old church in which the Presbyteries of the North of Scotland and Orkney were wont to meet. Reference to it is made in a MS. in the Advocate's Library, Edinburgh, styled "A Description of the Orcadian Islands by me, Jo. Ben, an inhabitant of the same, in the year 1529." I give it in the original Latin :—

"Flotay haec insula est æquata mari et amoenissima. Vetus domus hic est diruta sola quam quidam ecclesiam allii Presbyterium vocant, longitudine magna, ubi singulis annis commitia agebantur sacerdotum: Ternæ Trophæ hic erectæ sunt, quæ nos crosses vocamus; aversa sunt fabro murario somniantem verò fantasmata ea, nocte deinde vexabatur mirabilibus, vigilante verò minus affectus est et decumbebat lecto per spatium octo hebdomadum ut author ipse fuit; fodiens verò postea tentorium invenit in tumulo, candelabra, zonas, et alia mirabilia quæ loco recenseri non expedit."

The traditions about this old ecclesiastical building are very scant. There is only one of the crosses, referred to in the above passage, to be seen; and it forms part of a wall adjoining the churchyard.

Except a muirland part to the east and north, the whole island is under cultivation. At the northern point there is a small island, with a few sheep

browsing upon it, called the "Calf of Flotta." In the narrow sound between many seals are sporting and basking on the rocks beside the shore. The bay on the east side, called Panhope, was so named from the circumstance that formerly there existed a "salt-pan" upon its shore. Among the many fowls along its coast were observed the burrough-ducks (shieldrakes), dunters (eider-ducks), terns, scarfs (cormorants), sea-pies, snipes, plovers, grouse, &c. Among the rarer plants are the *imperatoria* of Wallace, the *oxalis acetosella* (Fl. Suec.), the *rhodiola rosea* (Lin.), and *Asplenium Adiantum Marinum*. The soil is generally good, some of it very rich and loamy; and the farms are all small, many of them wrought by oxen. It is not at all unusual to see an ox and a horse yoked together in a plough. Like all Orcadians, the people are kind and hospitable. They are a hardy race descended from hardy ancestors. They appear to be very contented with their condition, and spend their time in farming and fishing.

In almost every island of any size are to be found numbers of *tumuli*, or burial mounds, all of which must be of a very remote date: relics, probably, of the Norse period. Of these mounds Flotta contains two, one of which is now almost unrecognisable. There are several large mounds of this kind in the close vicinity of the Standing Stones of Stenness. In the latter part of the tenth century a party

contest took place between two Jarls, Einar and Haarard, and their respective retainers, many of whom lie buried in these mounds. The spot on which they are situated used to be called Haarardshay, or the "field of Haarard." Many similar mounds are to be seen throughout the mainland, and in the parish of Walls a good many form conspicuous features in the landscape. In some of them burned stones have been discovered, which may favour the idea that the human remains interred there had been cremated. Some are of the opinion that a few of these mounds also served the purpose of look-out stations in times of war. However it may be, they silently remind the observer of that age in his country's history when men were rude, only half-civilized, and when the inhabitants of these islands were known as the roving Vikings of the Northern Sea.

CHAPTER III.

“ Nor can imagination quit the shores
 Of these bright scenes without a farewell glance
 Given to those dream-like issues—that romance
 Of many coloured life which fortune pours
 Round the crusaders, till on distant shores
 Their labours end ; or they return to lie,
 The vow performed, in cross-legged effigy,
 Devoutly stretched upon their chancel floors.”

—WORDSWORTH.

ORPHIR—the Orfjara of old Norwegians ! Under the hospitable roof of the manse, two very pleasant weeks were spent in Orphir during the latter part of July ; and the pleasure of the visit was greatly increased through the kindness of my host and hostess. The parish is romantically situated on the southern slope of the Pomona hills, and overlooks Scapa Flow. Especially on a summer day, the view is one of the loveliest in Orkney ; and the seascape is relieved with green islets here and there, like gems in a sea of silver. Undoubtedly the remains of the Old Church are the most interesting thing in Orphir. The Church was built in a style similar to that of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, and dates from the time of the Crusades. It is one of the few circular churches in Britain,

and is the only one of the kind in Scotland. Churches of this sort were introduced into the west during the time of the Crusades, when the voice of Peter the Hermit roused the heart of Christendom and sent forth the flower of her chivalry to rescue the Holy Sepulchre from the grasp of the infidel. Denmark contains a few of these churches, built in the twelfth century. In Britain are to be found the following:—Cambridge, consecrated 1101; the Temple Church, London, 1185; the small Norman Church in Ludlow Castle; and the Earl's Church at Orphir, in Orkney. All that remains of this last is the semicircular chancel and about nine feet of the walls of the circular nave on either side. The Rev. Alex. Pope of Reay, who visited Orphir in 1758, speaks of "The Temple of Orphir, or Gerth House." He also mentions that extensive remains, presumably of the Earl's palace at Orphir, have been found. Indications of these are still to be seen. It is supposed that the church was built as an expiatory offering by Lord Hacon, who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land after the murder of Magnus. He died in the year 1122. The present Parish Church has been built mostly of the stones which formed the old circular church! It is to be regretted that the churches of Orkney are so wanting in tasteful architecture. The principle adopted in their construction seems to have been that of uncouthness, for they are built as nearly as possible to

resemble huge barns. Alas ! Scotland possesses too many such structures, so characteristic of the stern feeling and cold ceremonialism which were the fruit of the Reformation period.

But there is hope of a finer spirit being introduced in connection with church building in Orkney as elsewhere in Scotland. It is beginning to dawn upon the Scottish intellect that people have feelings and emotions that can be influenced by the beautiful in art and architecture ; and, especially when there is so much room for its development, this laudable desire to make the House of Prayer beautiful and graceful is worthy of encouragement. The church recently built in North Walls through the exertions of the Rev. James Russell, the parish minister, is a tasteful and neat edifice, and far superior in point of architectural beauty to most of existing parish churches. The question may well be asked—What has become of the taste and love of art which produced so magnificent a structure as the Cathedral of St. Magnus in Kirkwall? That Cathedral is the most nearly complete in Scotland, and is undoubtedly one of the finest architectural monuments of the time. Although seven centuries have passed over its head, it still stands a magnificent witness to the taste of a bygone age, when art was more honoured in the observance than the breach. Its foundation was laid in 1137 by Jarl Rognvald, who dedicated it to his uncle St.

Magnus, the Patron Saint of Orkney, assassinated by his cousin, the founder of the Circular Church at Orphir, already referred to. It did not, however, attain its present proportions until three centuries later, when Bishop Reid completed the edifice. Built of red sandstone from the neighbouring islands, it measures, from east to west, 234 feet and 6 inches in length, and it is 56 feet in width. The length of the cross or transept is 101 feet and 6 inches from north to south, and it is 28 feet in width. The roof is 71 feet above the floor, and the present spire 133 feet. There are a set of very fine bells in the tower, furnished by Bishop Maxwell, who succeeded to the bishopric in 1525. Every visitor, it appears, is at liberty to ring these bells; it is quite a common occurrence to hear a chime at most unexpected moments. "The largest, or tenor, bell has been recast. The small bell, called the skellat or shrill-toned bell, also called the fire bell, is not hung, and bears no inscription or date. The three bells are not rung by the common process of wheel or crank; but by ropes attached to the tongues, which are thus made to strike against the sides of the bell—the ringer using his right foot and two hands to ring them. The notes produced are not at diatonic intervals; but are about four-quarter tones apart. They are G $\frac{1}{4}$ tone sharp, A $\frac{1}{2}$ tone sharp, C $\frac{1}{4}$ tone sharp. The third, or tenor, bell is 3 feet $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, and 2 feet 9 inches high."

The Cathedral of St. Magnus, which, says Worsaae, "is incontestably the most glorious monument of the time of the Norwegian dominion to be found in Scotland," was the Burial place of King Haco, who was interred in 1263,* and also that of the young Queen Margaret, the Maid of Norway, buried in 1290, whose remains were afterwards taken back to Norway and interred in the High Church of Bergen by King Eirik beside those of her mother. The spire was originally higher and more nearly in proportion to the building; but it met with an accident on Jan. 9, 1671—"Quhilk day there happened," according to the Cathedral Register, "ane fearful and sad accident in this place, to the great astonishment and terrification of the beholders, by thunder and lightning, which fell upon the steeple heid of the Cathedral Kirk of Orkney, called St. Magnus Kirk of Kirkwall, and fyred the samer, which burnt downwards

* King Haco, however, was soon afterwards re-interred in Norway. Professor J. S. Blækie refers to the event in the following stanzas:—

"And at early burst of spring-time,
 When the birds sang out with glee,
 They took the body of Haco
 In a ship across the sea—
 Across the sea to Norway,
 Where thy sires make moan for thee,
 That the last of his race was Haco,
 Who ruled the western sea."

Lays of the Highlands and Islands, pp. 64, 65.

until the steeple heid. Three loftings and all the timber work pertaining to the bells and the knock house were consumed to ashes. But, by the providence of God, the bells thereof, being three great bells and a little one, called the skellat bell, were preserved by the care and vigilance of the Magistrates, with the help of the town's people, who were active in that so sudden a mischance, and animated thereto by the liberality of my Lord Bishop, who was present." From all accounts, it seems probable that the Cathedral was erected chiefly for the purpose of receiving the remains of St. Magnus, which were removed thither from Christ's Church in Birsay. Before the edifice was completed, the relics of the Saint were probably deposited in the Church of St. Olaf, from which church Kirkwall owes its name of *Kirku-vagr*, the Creek of the Kirk. As a specimen of the curious records connected with this Cathedral, I give the following. In 1701 a complaint was made to the Presbytery of "the most unchristian and more than barbarous practice of the Town Guard of Kirkwall, at the time of the Lam-bas Fair, their keeping guard within the Church; shooting of guns; burning great fires on the graves of the dead; drinking, fiddling, piping, swearing and cursing night and day within the Church, by which means religion is scandalized, and the Presbytery most miserably abused; particularly that when they are at exercise in the said Church, neither

can the preacher open his mouth, nor the hearers conveniently attend for smoke ; yea, some of the members of the Presbytery have been stopped in their outgoing and incoming to the meetings, and most rudely pursued by the soldiers, with their muskets and halberts, all which are most grievous to the Presbytery, and to any that have any sense of godliness ; for remeed of which the Presbytery appoints Mr. Patrick Guthrie, Mr. Baikie, and Mr. Grant to represent the said abuse to the Magistrates of Kirkwall, and to desire of them to keep their guards elsewhere in all time coming ; which if they do, the Presbytery will give them no more trouble in this affair ; but if they will not, the Presbytery will endeavour to represent the said abuse to the *Privy Council* for redressing of them." The Lambas Fair referred to is held on the second Tuesday of August, and lasts for several days. It is the great event of the year in Kirkwall ; but it is to be hoped that the reverend fathers and brethren are now permitted to go out and in without molestation !

CHAPTER IV.

“Women may now go safely up and down.”—CHAUCER.

TO the southward of Kirkwall is a hill bearing the name of Gallowhall, so termed from the fact that it was on it that witches suffered the extreme penalty of the law. Reading the records of those superstitious times, when old women were burned and hanged and tortured for practising the “devilish art of witchcraft,” one must reflect that Scotch justice was no better than that of the Popish Inquisitions. A certain woman, Elspeth Reoch, was burned to death because she was in the habit of gathering millfoil. Pulling it betwixt her finger and thumb, she used to mutter “*In Nomine Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sanctus.*” The writer himself met upon one occasion an old woman of the kind referred to. She was a native of the island Pharay who prided herself on her skill in plants and medicines. Her favourite herb was burdock, from which she derived many a famous solution. Had she been alive in the times of Elspeth I am afraid she would have ended her days upon the barren top of Gallowhall. One of the means of torture was the

“caschiclaivis”—warm hose—an iron frame into which the leg of the victim was placed. It was then heated in a furnace, and questions were asked during the cruel process. The thumb-screw, boots, and heavy chains were among the other instruments employed for the same purpose. In November 1623 “Katherine Grant was dilatit for that she had gane to Henri Jamie’s house with a stoup in her hand with the boddome foremost, and sat down ryght fornent the said Henri and ganted thryce on him ; and going forth he followed her ; and beiyan the brigstane sche lukit over her shoulder and turned up the quhyt of her eye, quhairby her devilrie there fell ane great weight upon him, that he was forcit to set his bak to the wall, and when he came in he thought the hous ran about with him, and theirafter lay seik ane lang tyme.” For this very peculiar offence poor Kathrine had to stand at the stake and suffer herself to be enveloped by the flames of the faggots ; and her ashes were scattered to the four winds of heaven.

A certain Jonet Drever was reputed to have had communication with the fairies for over twenty years, and upon her own confession she was found guilty “of the fostering of ane bairn in the hill of Westray to the fary folk callit of hir own guid nichbouris.”* For this Jonet was scourged and banished.

* See Gregor’s *Folklore*, p.p. 65 and 59.

Another witch, Katherine Bigland, was condemned for afflicting her master, William Bigland in Swartmilne, with a heavy sickness, and then curing him by bringing what appeared to be water into his house, "and wesching of the said William his back therewith, And laying him doun, saying he wald gitt guid rest and lying doun betwix him and the dor, having refuissed to ly in any uther place. And the said William haveing walkuit with fear and crying and feilling a thing lyke a ruche schein abone him. In saying to him be not affrayit for it is the evill spreit that troublit yow that is going away. And in taking of the said William upon the morne at nicht efter sun setting under the bankis and wesching of him with salt wattir at that tyme. And fyve or six uther nichtis thereafter quhill he receavit healthe be her unlawfull and divelische airt of witchcraft." Poor Katherine was first hanged and afterwards burned. Instances of similar offences are numerous and need not delay us longer. They are the product of such dark and superstitious times.

In these days little was sufficient to condemn in Orkney. In 1629, for sundry misdemeanours of a witchcraft kind, one Mareoune Richart, *alias* Langland, was first hanged and then burned. One of her worst offences was that on one occasion she asked alms from "Andrew Coupar, skipper of ane bark"; but was rudely

repulsed with the exclamation, "Away, witch carling; Devil ane farthing will ye fall!" Having received that reply, Mareoune went away "very offendit," and "incontinentile he going to sea, the bark being under sail, he ran wode, and wild half luppen overboard; and his sone seeing him got him in his armes and held him, and his sone ran made; and Thomas Paiterson seeing him take his madness, and the father turn weill, ane dogg being in the bark, took the dogg and bladdit him upon the twa schoulderis, and theirefter flang the said dogg in the sea, quhairby those in the bark were saiffet." This same Marion or Mareoune was charged * with throwing some bait water, in which she had washed a cat's feet, into the sea to bring luck to the fishermen; also With throwing similar water, for the same purpose, upon the fishermen, "his sea caschie † and into his bait coube." ‡ when people were unable to get the churn to make properly, Marion had a plan which was usually adopted. They had merely to act up to the following instructions:—

"Goe thy way to the sea, and tell nine boares of the sea come in, that is to say, nyne waues of the sea and let the hindmost of the nyne go back againe; and the nixt thairefter, tak thrie loffullis§ off the water and put within thy stoupe, and quhen thow come home, put it within thy kirne,|| and thow wilt get thy profeit back agane."

* *Witchcraft Trials*, p. 160. † A wicker fish basket. ‡ A smaller basket for bait. § Handfuls. || Churn.

A certain Jonet Reid * was consulted by a Robert Sinclair about the apparition of his first wife that troubled his sleep at night. He was "troubleit in his sleip with apparitionnes of his 6 first wyiff, which wexit and disquietit him verie much, he was advysit be yow to go to his first wyifis grave, and to charge her to ly still and truble him no moir."

There used to be a very common proverb circulating in these islands to the effect that "Giff Bessie say it is weill it is weill." The Bessie referred to was one Bessie Skebeister, who had the power of informing fishermen and their wives whether any of the boats were in danger or not. Sir Walter Scott must have had this in mind when, in his novel of the "Pirate," he drew the character of Norna of the Fitful-head. This woman was strangled and burned for various offences, one of which was that of riding on the back of a certain James Sandieson, and flying with him through the air to Norway and Zetland, with a bridle in his mouth. Now, however, few, if any, traces of such superstitions are to be found. The schoolmaster is abroad; and before the light of education all the mystic vapours of witchcraft have dissolved "into thin air," and left "not a rack behind." History and tradition alone preserve those times; and there, also, we can

* *Witchcraft Trials*, p. 182.

find traces of the bold and fierce Vikings who swept the northern seas.

The Vikings ! Kirkwall and its neighbourhood was the scene of many a bloody battle in the days when the hardy Sea Kings roamed amidst the isles, and when the mighty Jarls ruled as lords of sea and land. One of these skirmishes is illustrated by a ballad entitled "The visit of Thorfinn, Earl of Orkney, to King Magnus," written by Sir Edmund Head for *Fraser's Magazine* of January 1868:—

" King Magnus sat at his mid-day meal,
Where his fleet at anchor rode,
When a stranger crossed the royal deck,
And straight to the table strode.

" He greeted the king ; he took the loaf
That lay upon the board,
And broke, and ate, as if of right,
Whilst neither spoke a word.

" King Magnus gaz'd, as he wiped his beard,
' Wilt thou not drink ?' he said,
And passed the cup. The stranger drank,
And bowed in thanks his head.

" ' Thy name ?' ' My name is Thorfinn, sir,'
' Earl Thorfinn !—can it be ?'
He smiled. ' Well, yes ; men call me thus
Beyond the western sea.'

" ' And is it so ?' the King replied.
' I had resolved me well
That if we two met—what pass'd when we met
Thou should'st not live to tell.

“ ‘ Together now we’ve broken bread,
And thus my hand is stay’d ;
But think thou not the score is quit,
Though vengeance be delay’d.’ ”

“ It chanced as friends they drank one day—
On the deck a Norman stood ;
‘ Lord Earl,’ he said, ‘ from thee I claim
The price of a brother’s blood.

“ ‘ When Kirkwall street was drench’d in gore,
And the King’s men slaughter’d lay ;
By thy command that brother died—
Wilt thou his man-bote pay ?’ ”

“ Loud laughed the Earl. ‘ What ho ! thou fool ;
Thou must oft have heard it said,
How Thorfinn scores of men hath slain,
But man-bote never paid.’ ”

“ ‘ All this, lord Earl, is nought to me ;
’Tis nought if our King sits by,
Nor cares to avenge those men of his
Led out like sheep to die.’ ”

“ Then Thorfinn looked again, and swore
‘ By the rood ! I know thee well ;—
Why, I gave thee thy life in Kirkwall town,
When all thy comrades fell.

“ My chance is hard—I have oft been blamed
Too many that I slew ;
And now this coil hath come about
Because I’ve slain too few.”

“ The king’s brow flushed with wrath—‘ Forsooth !
It seemeth to vex thee sore
That in thwarting my rights, and slaying my men,
Thou hast not done still more.’ ”

“ But now a fair breeze fills each sail,
 And pennons are floating free,
 As the long warships, with their dragon heads,
 Go cleaving the dark blue sea.

“ And aye to the west of the Norway fleet,
 Earl Thorfinn steers his bark ;
 Men saw her holding her course with them
 One night when the sky grew dark :

“ But when morning broke that bark was gone
 Far, far o'er the western foam,
 Where Orkney breasts the waves, and where
 Earl Thorfinn sits in Kirkwall fair,
 Sole lord of his island home.”

The history of the events touched upon here is to be found in the *Orkneyinga Saga*. Earl Thorfinn, who was the fourth son of Sigurd, died in 1064. He was only five winters old when he was made an Earl by Malcolm, King of Scots, his mother's father : and he held the title for seventy years. This fierce and warlike man not only slew his nephew, Earl Rognvald, the son of Brusi ; but he also put to death in cold blood those adherents of King Magnus who had sided with Rognvald. It is to that massacre the ballad alludes. After his death his deeds and bravery were celebrated in verse, which may be seen in the *Saga* above referred to. We give one of the closing stanzas as a specimen of the Scandinavian poetry of that wild period :—

“ Swarthy shall become the bright sun,
 In the black sea shall the earth sink,

Finished shall be Austri's labour,
And the wild sea hide the mountains,
Ere there be in those fair Islands
Born a chief to rule the people—
May our God both help and keep them !—
Greater than the lost Earl Thorfinn."

Such a glimpse into the beginning of the eleventh century reveals the condition of Scandinavia under the ruthless Jarls. The traveller from the south may now pass through all those places without having his sensibilities shocked by any cold-blooded massacre. The eternal sea whispers not of such scenes as her waves ripple at your feet ; and the rocky caverns only moan a requiem over all such melancholy incidents.

CHAPTER V

Could we but pierce the gloomy veil that lies
Between us, and that far off misty past,
We'd see a vision of Viking heroes rise,
Thor's bravest sons, while yet they were his last.

KIRKWALL is the corrupted form of the ancient name "Kirkjuvagr" (Kirkevaag), which signifies church bay. The name is derived from the fact that a church once stood upon the landlocked bay at the head of which the city stands. To the traveller approaching Kirkwall from the west the view of the town is both picturesque and antique. In the summer afternoon, when the declining sun is casting a halo of golden light around the city and streaking the rippling sea with its gleams, the prospect is sufficient to recall one's youthful recollections of fairy scenes in that golden age which seems to exist in boyhood's happy day.

The town, which is long, consists mainly of one principal street more than a mile in length, and in many places so narrow that foot passengers find the greatest difficulty in passing any vehicle that may chance to come along. The quaint aspect of the street, and the peculiar style of some of the oldest houses, remind

one that the town is ancient and associated with an historic past. One old house is pointed out as being the residence of James V. when he visited Orkney; and in another Sir Robert Strange, the famous engraver, is supposed to have been born. To the westward of the town lies what once was an extensive loch: it is now called the Peerie (small) Sea. It is connected with the harbour by an opening through an *ayre*, or narrow ridge of earth and stones, and is thus filled with salt water twice a day. The opening was originally made to drain the loch; but, like Lake Mareotis at Alexandria, it has become a salt marsh instead.

During summer the capital of Orkney is a luxurious spot. It can be made the headquarters of delightful boating expeditions. Besides the Cathedral, there are several places of historical and antiquarian interest. Close by the Cathedral are the remains of the Bishop's Palace, a very old building of which no one can tell the precise date. Haco, King of Denmark, resided in this Palace in the year 1263, immediately after the battle of Largs; and here he died. The portion of the building now standing was erected in 1540 by Bishop Reid. It consists of a circular tower, the inside of which is square.

Further east may be seen the ruins of the Earl's Palace. That was the residence of the tyrannical Earl Patrick Stewart. It "forms three sides of an oblong square and

has even in its ruins the air of an elegant yet massive structure, uniting, as was usual in these residences of feudal princes, the character of a palace and a castle. A great banqueting hall, communicating with several large rounds or projecting turret rooms, and having at either end an immense chimney, testifies to the ancient hospitality of the Earls of Orkney, and communicates almost in the modern fashion with a gallery or withdrawing room of considerable dimensions ; and having, like the hall, its projecting turrets. The lordly hall itself is lighted by a fine Gothic window of shafted stone at one end, and is entered by a spacious and elegant staircase of three flights. The exterior ornaments and proportions of the ancient building are also very handsome." The Palace was built during the sixteenth century, and has the architectural features of that period.

In former years another building of historic interest, the King's Castle, stood within the ancient town. It was built in the fourteenth century by Henry St. Clair, and was demolished in the eighteenth. The Privy Council resolved on October 26th, 1614, to demolish the structure, and permission was granted in 1742 by the Earl of Morton to the Town Council to use the stones in building the town-house and gaol. The following is inscribed on the front of the Castle Hotel :—

“Near this spot, facing Broad Street, stood, in the year 1865, the last remaining fragments of ruins of the Castle of Kirkwall, a royal fortress of great antiquity and originally of vast strength, but of which, from the ravages of war and time, nearly every vestige had long previously disappeared. Its remains, consisting of a wall 55 feet long by 11 feet thick, and of irregular height, were removed by permission of the Earl of Zetland, on application of the Trustees acting in execution of ‘The Kirkwall Harbour Act, 1859,’ in order to improve the access to the Harbour ; and this stone was erected to mark its site. MDCCCLXVI.”

Instead of being shut up in isolation, the capital of Orkney is now a favourite tourist resort : every summer many people find their way to these northern latitudes, where, upon the bosom of the sea or upon the grassy slopes of the Pomona hills, they spend many a delightful holiday. To those who desire health and amusement let us commend a voyage to the ancient battle-ground of the Norse Sea Kings.

Scapa bay, to the south-west of Kirkwall, is a pleasant spot and the scene of a very old long-forgotten custom. A large and ancient cup, which is said to have belonged to St. Magnus, King of Norway, was kept here. It was filled with liquor every time a Bishop landed, and presented to that dignitary ; if he drank it out, the people praised him greatly, and believed that during his time they would have good and fruitful seasons. The historian Buchanan relates this custom, and Mr. Wallace, writing in the seventeenth century, said it was still believed then and talked of as a truth. The cup, like many more relics, has disappeared long ago. A

custom similar to this appears to have been prevalent in Norway amongst merchants and mariners, who presented a cup of liquor to any stranger that came to pay them a visit.

The people of the Orcadian capital are noteworthy for an amount of reserve that is more than counterbalanced by their inquisitiveness. Like the Athenians of old they are eager to hear something new. In some of the local villages this desire to know where every stranger comes from is exhibited to an alarming extent. If you chance to enter a shop you are scarcely permitted to ask for the article you require, when you are met with the query, "Ye'll hae come far the day?" And this is not all. "Did ye come in the steamer?" "It was in one of the big boats, maybe?" and so on *ad infinitum*. If you have not relieved the great anxiety that seems to be felt for your welfare, you leave the shopman, or, more especially, the shopwoman, labouring under some heavy unexpressed sorrow. As you pass along the street almost every passer-by turns round and scrutinises your person, seemingly determined to know you again. Though they may possess this fault they are kindly, hospitable people, and like the other members of the human race. In church they are decorous and impressionable, and in most country places unite in the praise portion of the service with the whole heart and soul. Whatever may have been the case sixty years ago, when kelp was burned on almost every shore,

Orcadians now are a progressive and improving class, ready to advance with the times.

As the traveller proceeds upon the highroad from Kirkwall to Stromness he observes about half way a peculiar mound of a conical shape a little towards the right. Many similar mounds are to be found throughout the Orkney islands. Some of them are burial mounds ; others look-out stations ; all of great antiquity. Maes-Howe, however, is the most interesting. The tumulus, which is about 300 feet in circumference and 36 feet in height, is surrounded by a moat 40 feet wide and of depth varying from 4 to 8 feet. It is a great chambered barrow originally built upon the surface of the ground, and afterwards covered with layers of small stones and earth, procured, probably, from the surrounding trench. The central chamber is about 15 feet square and 13 feet high, and on three sides are small cells or *loculi* about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet square and 3 feet from the floor. These small cells are composed of large slabs ; and, shaped as if intended to close their mouths, there are three large stones lying upon the floor. The internal chamber, which is built of stone only, rises in a somewhat "bee-hive" shape. At each corner is a large stone buttress, for the purpose of strengthening the walls, about 16 feet high. The entrance, which is from the west side, is through a long low passage, 54 feet long, composed of large slabs of stone set on edge and

covered above by similar slabs. According to Mr. Farrer, "the low and narrow cells as well as the passage leading to the interior, fully justify the opinion that it was undoubtedly at one time a place of burial. The massive stones forming the floor and sidewalls of the passage, and also those used to support the buttresses, are similar in character to the neighbouring circle of stones at Stenness. The architecture, also, is most primitive; and it is evident that the whole work must have been one requiring much time and labour. The present form of the mound does not favour the idea that it was *originally* a platform, and used for the performance of religious rites, though this would not be inconsistent with the idea that it had been adapted to that purpose at some remote period, having been previously used as a place of interment." Upon the sides of the internal chamber are to be seen numbers of runes, supposed to be the work of some Crusaders. Some of them, however, seem to be of a much earlier date than the twelfth century. "The form of the letters of which the inscriptions are composed is that of the later class of Norse Runes, which," says Professor Munch, "are never older than A.D. 1100 at least." Many of the inscriptions are such as anyone seeking the shelter or concealment of the "broken howe" might scribble from mere idleness. One gives the Runic alphabet. A number of others are simple memoranda consisting of the name of a man and the state-

ment that he "hewed this," or "carved these runes." But one of the larger inscriptions gives the important information that "The Jorsala-farers broke open the Orkahaug in the lifetime of the 'blessed Earl.'" This inscription must, therefore, have been carved after the death of the "blessed Earl" Rognvald; or, as Dr. Anderson states in his introduction to the *Orkneyinga Saga*, subsequent to 1158.

It was a matter of common occurrence for the Norsemen to break open a howe in the expectation of finding treasure. With regard to the probable age of the mound spoken of, the contents of which may be said to be the most important antiquarian find in Britain, Principal Barclay gives the following translation of one of the inscriptions: "This sepulchral mound was raised for the sons of the deceased hero Lodbrock. They were wise, brave, and powerful. Scarcely have there ever been men such as they were in the north-west. Great funeral honours were paid to them." "If," says he, "the Lodbrock mentioned in this epitaph was the famous Ragnar Lodbrock, the original erection of the barrow cannot have been earlier than the latter part of the eighth century, or much later than the early part of the ninth; and it must in that case have been more than 300 years old when the chambers containing these inscriptions were formed by Ada, the wealthy." In the early history of Orkney, the sons of

this famous Lodbrock rank as very distinguished characters: one of them, Fridlief, was made ruler.

Amongst the thousand inscriptions which ornament the walls is the sketch of a winged dragon. The howe is shewn to tourists by a neighbouring farmer, who exhibits the interior by the aid of candle light. In the flickering glare of such an illumination the barrow has a very weird appearance, and it is rather a difficult process to make out the inscriptions so plentifully scratched upon the wall. Dr. James Ferguson in his *Rude Stone Monuments of all Countries* puts forward the suggestion that this mound may have been erected as a burial place for Earl Havard, slain at Stenness about A.D. 970. This seems to be improbable: not only from the fact that the structural character of the mound is Celtic; but because it was hardly possible that this circumstance would have been completely forgotten in the space of 200 years. Havard, the eldest of the five sons of Earl Thorfinn Hausakliuf, was slain at Stenness while engaged in battle with Einar his nephew. The "Saga" (*Flateyjarbok* vol. I. p. 225) says: "Havard was then at Staeinsnes in Hrossey. There it was they met, and there was a hard battle, and it was not long till the Earl fell. The place is now called Havard's *teigr*." Even to this day there is a place in the parish of Stenness which bears this name of Havard's *teigr*.

The word *teigr* means a person's share of the town land. It is very likely that this Earl was buried according to the then prevailing Scandinavian custom. His corpse having been burned with the usual ceremonies, the ashes would be placed in a stone urn and interred in a mound. Such a mound was discovered in 1853 by Mr. Farrer, M.P. The valley in which Maes-Howe is situated is one of the loveliest in the far north. The soil, which is fertile, slopes gently down to the margin of the loch that stretches westwards towards the sea. Upon a grassy islet in the midst of this sheet of water stands the famous circle of upright stones. Our next sketch will treat of these antiquarian reliques.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Here on the green marge of the wrinkled lake
Far-winding snake-like, north, south, east, and west,
From these grey stones thy Sabbath sermon take,
And in the lap of hoary memory rest !”

—J. S. BLACKIE.

THE most noteworthy antiquarian relic in the county of Orkney is undoubtedly “The Standing Stones,” which rear their pointed heads towards the sky like dumb sentinels of the rolling years. On a peninsula in the midst of the Loch of Stenness is the largest ring of the kind. It is called the “Circle of Brogar.” It consists of a circular platform surrounded by a trench, inside which were erected, at equal distances of about 17 feet, the famous “Standing Stones.” Many of them have fallen before “Time’s decaying finger,” and lie embedded in the soil. The number of those which have withstood all the influences of Nature is thirteen, still in an upright position. The diameter of the circle is about 340 feet. This wonderful circle, together with that other near to Maes-Howe, with its three remaining Stones, may well cause the intelligent traveller to enquire how and when these blocks were placed in such a position, in an age when mechanical arts were little known.

Their origin is wrapped in obscurity, and we can only surmise what may have been the intention of those who placed them there. They stand as connecting links between us and the far past, when half-savagedom reigned in the wilds now turned by civilization into fertile valleys. No doubt religious zeal prompted our savage forefathers to erect these masses as sacrificial spots, for the performance of their peculiar religious ceremonies, when Odin and Thor and Aser were powerful deities in the mythology of Scandinavia. In the plain of Stenness, in an age long gone by, flourished a Celtic race that reared these monuments, which have been the means of communicating to a modern age the peculiarities of the past. At the east and west ends of the larger circle are two green mounds, used probably in connexion with the pagan rites celebrated there. In one of these nine *Fibulæ* of silver were found, "round, but opening in one place like a horse-shoe." Many suppose that the sun was worshipped in the larger circle, and the moon in the smaller. One gentleman propounded the theory that these Stones may have some connection with the ancient Chaldees. This is what he told the present writer. "Have the ancient Chaldees, then, had disciples who reared Stonehenge in Salisbury Plain, Callernish in the Lewis, Stenness in Orkney, and others, similar but more obscure, in Wales and Argyllshire? Can it be that

burnt offerings may have been offered in these places to the gods of the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Egyptians. How different the scenes of the present day from the time when the bullock was brought up to the altar to be slaughtered by the priest of Jupiter, adorned with his proper garments and white fillets on his head, while the expectant crowd awaited the result in eager, and, shall we say, devout expectation to know the wished for auguries, whether in time of peace or war ! Cæsar says that the Druids immolated human beings prisoners of war. While gazing on the Megalithic group of Stenness, our thoughts are carried back to scenes described by poet and historian. Such was a nation's belief, and such the turning-point of a nation's history." We leave the reader to judge of its probability.

One of these standing pillars of stone seems to have had a romantic history. Through the upper part a round hole was cut, to which it is presumed the sacrificial victim was tied ; but in later times it was put to another use. Hither many a pair of love-sick swains resorted, and by joining hands through this magic ring plighted their troths for ever—a pledge of love which was to them as sacred as a marriage vow. The Scottish Society of Antiquarians gives the following explanation of the ceremony :—"When the parties had agreed to marry they repaired to the Temple of the Moon, where the woman, in presence of the man, fell down on her

knees and prayed to the god Woden (for such was the name of the god whom they addressed on this occasion) that he would enable her to perform all the promises and obligations she had made, and was to make, to the young man present ; after which they both went to the Temple of the Sun, where the man prayed in like manner before the woman. Then they went to the stone of Odin ; and, the man being on the one side and the woman on the other, they took hold of each other's right hand through the hole in it, and there swore to be constant and faithful to each other." Orcadians paid great respect to this stone of Odin, and when visiting it were in the habit of depositing some present in the shape of bread and cheese, or a rag. It was believed that, if a young child was passed through this hole, it would never shake with the palsy in old age. Very effectively, Sir Walter Scott introduces this same trysting stone in his novel "The Pirate," the scenes of which are laid in Orkney and Hialtland, or Shetland. It appears that, in certain cases, the validity of the marriage vow could be destroyed, by the simple process of the two persons interested resorting to the Church of Stenness and passing through it, the one going out by the north door and the other by the south. That is a sample of primitive marriage settlements among the old Orcadians.

In the neighbouring parish of Birsay there is one of these

Druidical stones, with a rather strange and tragic history attached to it. The legend runs that every Hogmanay night, as the clock strikes the hour of twelve, this stone begins to walk or move towards Birsay Loch. When the edge of the loch is reached it quietly dips its head into the rippling waters. Then, to remain firm and immovable until the next twelve months pass away, it as silently returns to its post. It was never considered safe for any one to remain out of doors at midnight, and watch its movements upon Hogmanay. Many stories are current of curious persons who dared to watch the stone's proceedings, and who the next morning were found lying corpses by its side. The latest story of the kind is that of a young gentleman from Glasgow, who formed the resolve to remain up all night, and find out for himself the truth or falsehood about this wonderful stone. One Hogmanay accompanied only by the cold silvery beams of the moon, the daring youth began his watch. As time wore on and the dread hour of midnight approached, he began to feel some little terror in his heart, and an eerie feeling crept slowly over his limbs. At midnight he discovered that, in his pacing to and fro, he had come between the stone and the loch; and as he looked towards the former he fancied that he saw it move. From that moment he lost all consciousness, and his friends found him in the grey dawn lying in a faint. By degrees he came to himself; but he could not

satisfy enquirers whether the stone had really moved and knocked him down on its way, or whether his imagination had conjured up the assault.

There is another tale, of a more tragic nature, related of this walking stone. One stormy December day a vessel was shipwrecked upon the shore of Birsay, and all hands save one were lost. The rescued sailor happened to find refuge in a cottage close by this stone ; and, hearing the story of its yearly march, he resolved to see for himself all that human eyes might be able to discover. In spite of all remonstrances, he sallied forth on the last night of the old year ; and, to make assurance doubly sure, he seated himself on the very pinnacle of the stone. There he awaited the events of the night. What these were no mortal man can tell ; for the first morning of the new year dawned upon the corpse of the gallant sailor lad, and local report has it that the walking stone rolled over him as it proceeded to the loch.

For the wandering botanist or the keen-eyed ornithologist there is no finer field, nor a more interesting district, than the parish of Hoy, with its mountain scenery and romantic valleys. Amongst all the islands of the northern sea, it rears its lofty peaks supreme, unsurpassed by any other in that wild region. Three large hills form a natural triangle ; and one, situated to the north east, rises to a height of 1600 feet, the monarch of the scene. Towards the Atlantic Ocean the

mountain slopes descend in some places perpendicularly to the sea, and present a wild and desolate appearance. When seen from the deck of a passing vessel the view is one approaching to the magnificent, and the romantic nature of the rock scenery is enhanced by one lone pillar of rock, named by mariners the "Old Man of Hoy," which bears a striking resemblance to a giant form. The Orcadian poet Malcolm, son of a late minister of Firth and Stenness, thus celebrates the lonely rock :—

"See Hoy's old man ; whose summit bare
 Pierces the dark blue fields of air !
 Based in the sea, his fearful form
 Grooms like the spirit of the storm ;
 An ocean Babel, rent and worn
 By time and tide—all wide and lorn ;
 A giant that had warred with Heaven,
 Whose ruined scalp seems thunder-riven—
 Whose form the misty spray doth shroud—
 Whose head the dark and hovering cloud ;
 Around his dread and lowring mass,
 In sailing swarms the sea fowl pass ;
 But when the night-cloud o'er the sea
 Hangs like a sable canopy,
 And when the flying storm doth scourge
 Around his base the rushing surge,
 Swift to his airy clefts they soar,
 And sleep amid the tempest's roar,
 Or with its howling round his peak,
 Mingle their drear and dreamy shriek !"

These rocks are much frequented by sea-birds, and when a

chance traveller appears amongst them the cries they utter are anything but melodious.

Not many years ago several eagles frequented the mountain fastnesses of Hoy, and Sir Walter Scott relates a story about them and the then minister of the parish, the Rev. Mr Hamilton, a relation of the present Under Secretary of State for Ireland. Mr. Hamilton was out walking one day with a friend ; and suddenly they heard a peculiar noise near at hand, but could see nothing. At last looking overhead, they observed a large black eagle soaring away with a young pig in its talons. The terrified animal gave vent to its injured feelings by the shrill squeaks, which had attracted the attention of the two pedestrians. At this time there still lived, in a neighbouring island, an old man who had, when a child, been carried away by a large eagle to its eyry, where he was afterwards found by his friends uninjured, and highly amused by the occupants of the eagle's nest.

Here, tradition has been busy. It has cast its mantle around the "Dwarfie Stone," which is said to have been the residence of a strange dwarf and his consort. The most plausible story, however, is that some hermit had made it his cell. It is a large stone about 32 feet in length by 16 feet in breadth, having the inside hollowed out into the form of three small apartments, in one of which is something very like a bed 5 feet 8 inches by 2 feet.

Inside this apartment or bunk are several names cut into the stone at different times. One runs "H. Ross, 1735," being the name of a gentleman, a native of Perthshire, who settled near Longhope some time last century, descendants of whom still reside there. Close beside it is another, "P. Folster, 1830"; and beneath. "H. Miller, 1846." It seems that even Hugh Miller was not above cutting his name within this famous stone. He mentions this fact in his *Cruise of the Betsy*, thus:—"The rain still pattered heavily overhead, and with my geological hammer I did, to beguile the time, what I very rarely do—added my name to the others, in characters which, if both they and the Dwarfie Stone get but fair play, will be distinctly legible two centuries hence." Upon the outside of the stone a military gentleman, Guilemus Mounsey has written his name in large capital letters, from right to left, with the date A.D. 1850. Some Persian poetry is inscribed underneath in the native characters. This gentleman, who was of a rather eccentric turn, slept a night or two within the Dwarfie Stone, and, with his Persian slippers and long flowing robe, astonished the inhabitants of Hoy, who imagined they again saw the long vanished Dwarf, returned to claim his own. This much visited stone lies at the foot of a picturesque amphitheatre of cliffs, known as the Dwarfie Hamars. It must have slipped, at some remote period, from the face of

the cliffs and lain ever since in its present position. Stretching away westwards is a pretty valley, which opens upon the Atlantic Ocean at Rackwick, one of the most primitive and interesting spots in the whole of Orkney.

The Dwarfie Stone has been immortalised by the magic pen of the "Wizard of the North," who tells of the superstitious feelings with which it was still regarded in the beginning of the present century. One of the most interesting scenes in the *Pirate* takes place around this stone. Norna was in the habit of frequenting this wild and lonely spot where she employed some of her incantations to raise the spirit of the vanished Tholld, the elfin dwarf. "It happened on a hot summer day, and just about the hour of noon," says Norna, "as I sat by the Dwarfie Stone, with my eyes fixed on the Ward-hill, whence the mysterious and ever-burning carbuncle shed its rays more brightly than usual, and repining in my heart at the restricted bounds of human knowledge, that at length I could not help exclaiming, in the words of an ancient Saga,

'Dwellers of the mountain, rise,
Trolld the powerful, Haims the wise !
Ye who taught weak woman's tongue
Words that sway the wise and strong,—
Ye who taught weak woman's hand
How to yield the magic wand,
And wake the gales on Foulah's steep
Or lull wild Sumburgh's waves to sleep !—

Still are ye yet?—Not yours the power
Ye knew in Odin's mightier hour.
What are ye now but empty names,
Powerful Trolld, sagacious Haims,
That lightly spoken, lightly heard,
Float on the air like thistle's beard?"

After the utterance of these words the bright summer day suddenly changed, the sky became overcast with thunder clouds, and the pelting rain fell heavily, inducing Norna to seek the welcome shelter of the Dwarfie Stone. While seated there her active mind began to conjecture concerning the origin of the place. "Had it been really the work of that powerful Trolld, to whom the poetry of the scalds referred it? Or was it the tomb of some Scandinavian chief, interred with his arms and his wealth, perhaps also with his immolated wife, that what he loved best in life might not in death be divided from him? Or was it the abode of penance, chosen by some devoted anchorite of later days? Or the idle work of some wandering mechanic, whom chance and whim, and leisure, had thrust upon such an undertaking?" Such were the conjectures that entered the head of Norna, and we need not add to the number.

In a note upon this same stone Sir Walter says, "the Orcadian traditions allege the work to be that of a dwarf, to whom they ascribe supernatural powers, and a malevolent disposition, the attributes of that race in Norse

mythology. Whoever inhabited this singular den certainly enjoyed

‘ Pillows cold, and sheets not warm,’

I observed, that commencing just opposite to the Dwarfie Stone and extending in a line to the sea-beach, there are a number of barrows, or cairns, which seem to connect the stone with a very large cairn where we landed. This curious monument may therefore have been intended as a temple of some kind to the Northern *Di Manes*, to which the cairns might direct worshippers.” Many an old world tale is told about this strange dwelling and its stranger inhabitants. All of them, however, are improbable, and are fast being forgotten.

CHAPTER VII.

Out from the stormy Firth his galley sped,
And anchor'd safe within this little bay,
Secure from storm and tide.

ON a bright summer morning when the waters of Scapa Flow were turned into billows by a southerly wind, we found ourselves skimming towards the pleasant little town of Stromness. The genial beams of the sun made everything gleam and glitter : the surface of the sea sparkled amidst its foam. As we approached our journey's end we beheld the antique town, jammed together, as it were, between the hills behind and the sea before. The name itself is derived from *Strom*, a stream, and *ness*, a promontory. When last century was in its infancy Stromness was only a fishing village of a few scattered huts ; but since then it rose rapidly to be what it now is—an important Orcadian town with over two thousand inhabitants. Formerly it rejoiced in the name of *Cairston*, and the anchorage outside the extensive harbour is called Cairston Roads.

In the hey-day of its glory Stromness was a busy spot : vessels from Davis' Straits, Hudson's Bay, the Baltic, and

from many other ports of the world lay in its harbour. It became a burgh of barony in 1817, with two bailies and nine councillors. The chief characteristic of the town is the fact that it consists mainly of one street, and that narrow and crooked. Indeed, this may be said to be one of the attractions of the place. Most of the houses on the south side jut out into the harbour with their crow-stepped gables. Here one of the finest views in Orkney may be obtained. The hills of Hoy rise abruptly behind the green little island of Graemsay and loom up against the sky in their solitary grandeur, while further away may be seen the sharp peaks of Sutherland. Southwards, the sea is studded with the islands of Cava, Pharay, and Flotta, which intercept the view in this direction. In the quiet of an autumn night, when the sky is red above the northern sea, one feels the presence of another world around him—the presence of a deep tranquility embosomed in a circle of rounded islets:—and, as the glare of the aurora borealis dies away, the dream of peace seems vanished too.

The local museum contains a fair collection of Orcadian fossils; and it was here that Hugh Miller derived much of his information with regard to his *Footprints of the Creator, or the Asterolepis of Stromness*. The *Asterolepis*, resembling a “petrified nail,” is one of the oldest vertebrate fossils, and abounds in great variety in Orkney. It forms

part of a large fish from 8 to 23 feet in length. Sir Walter Scott, the Wizard of the North, touched Stromness with his magic wand, and threw a halo of romance round the little town and neighbourhood; for here he laid many of the scenes of his famous novel *The Pirate*. Captain Cleveland was the son of a merchant here, and was called John Gow. Remains of his garden may still be seen upon the Cairston Shore.

Sir Walter is not the only "son of song" who came to fair Orcadia for inspiration. Lord Byron also adds his quota of charming romance, and gives another touch of genius to gild anew the ancient battle ground of the hardy Norseman. The "Torquil" of his poem "The Island," was a George Stewart, son of Mr. Stewart of Massetter, who inhabited what is known as the "White House" of Stromness. He was a midshipman on board the "Bounty," though he took no part in the notorious mutiny. He was taken prisoner; and was wrecked on the way to England in the "Pandora." Byron speaks of him as "Torquil, the nursling of the northern seas."—

“ And who is he ; the blue-eyed northern child
Of isles more known to man, but scarce less wild ;
The fair-haired offspring of the Hebrides,
Where roars the Pentland with its whirling seas ;
Rock'd in his cradle by the roaring wind,
The tempest-born in body and in mind,

His young eyes opening on the ocean foam,
Had from that moment deem'd the deep his home,
The giant comrade of his pensive moods,
The sharer of his craggy solitudes,
The only mentor of his youth, where'er
His bark was borne ; the sport of wave and air ;
A careless thing, who placed his choice in chance,
Nursed by the legends of his land's romance,
Eager to hope, but not less firm to bear,
Acquainted with all feelings save despair."

Eric, king of Sweden, we are informed by Olaus Magnus, "was in his time held second to none in the magical art ; and he was so familiar with the evil spirits whom he worshipped that what way soever he turned his cap the wind would presently blow that way. For this he was called Windy-Cap." In the beginning of the present century Stromness possessed a rival to the Swedish king in the person of Bessie Miller, a famous wind agent. Sir Walter Scott tells us she "helped out her subsistence by selling favourable winds to mariners. He was a venturesome master of a vessel who left the roadstead of Stromness without paying his offering to propitiate Bessie Miller ; her fee was extremely moderate, being exactly sixpence, for which, as she explained herself, she boiled her kettle and gave the barque advantage of her prayers, for she disclaimed all unlawful arts. The wind thus petitioned for was sure, she said, to arrive, though sometimes the mariners had to wait some time for it. The woman's dwelling and appearance were not

unbecoming her pretensions ; her house, which was on the brow of the steep hill on which Stromness is founded, was only accessible by a series of dirty and precipitous lanes, and for exposure might have been the abode of Eolus himself, in whose commodities the inhabitant dealt. She herself was, as she told us, nearly one hundred years old, withered and dried up like a mummy. A clay coloured kerchief, folded round her head, corresponded in colour with her corpse-like complexion. Two light blue eyes that gleamed with a lustre like that of insanity, an utterance of astonishing rapidity, a nose and chin that almost met together, and a ghastly expression of cunning, gave her the effect of Hecaté. She remembered Gow the pirate, who had been a native of these islands in which he closed his career. Such was Bessie Miller, to whom the mariners paid a sort of tribute." She formed the prototype of "Norna of the Fitfulhead."

Not many years ago Bessie Miller had a worthy successor in the person of Mammie Scott, who also resided in the town of Stromness. Many wonderful tales are told of her power and influence over the weather. Her fame was as widely spread as that of Bessie. A captain called upon Mammie one day to solicit a fair wind. He was bound for Stornoway and received from the reputed witch a scarlet thread upon which were three knots. His instructions were that if sufficient wind did not arrive one of the knots was to be

untied, if that proved insufficient, another knot was to be untied; but he was on no account to unloose the third knot, else disaster would overtake his vessel. The mariner set out upon his voyage, and, the wind being light, untied the first knot. This brought a stronger breeze, but still not sufficient to satisfy him. The second knot was let down, and away the vessel sped across the waters round Cape Wrath. In a short time the entrance to Stornoway harbour was reached, when it came into the Captain's head to untie the third knot in order to see what might occur. He was too near the end of his voyage to suffer any damage now, and so he felt emboldened to make the experiment. No sooner was the last knot set free than a perfect hurricane set in from a contrary direction, which drove the vessel right back to Hoy Sound, from which he had set out, where he had ample time to repent of his folly.

On another occasion the skipper of a schooner happened to shoot some of Mammie's ducks, for which offence he was severely punished. His vessel was driven upon a shoal of rock, and was with much difficulty got off. He went and apologised to Mammie Scott, but it was a long time ere he pacified the old crone, who, having received some money, finally permitted him to get a fair wind, adding, however, that he must not shoot any more of her ducks.

An old sea captain informed the writer that, on one

occasion in his young days, he was relieved of the sum of 15s. by some one in Stromness. He went to Mammie and consulted her about his loss. She informed him that his money had been taken by a person closely connected with himself, and, if he made a great fuss about the matter, he would find the money returned that night, and concealed under his pillow. It happened as she had predicted : the cash was found amongst the straw beneath his bolster.

Another plan of Mammie's for bringing fair winds was that of cutting a pack of cards in different ways. But wind was not the only commodity in which she trafficked. She had the reputation of depriving people of their senses, in fact, of driving them mad. A certain man's wife was rendered insane through Mammie's influence, it was said, and the plan adopted by her husband to restore her to a sound mind was both original and remarkable. He tied a rope round the woman, and towed her behind his boat up and down the harbour. But it had no effect ; she bobbed about behind the boat like a cork, and remained as mad as ever. The remarkable thing is that she wasn't drowned. A young woman in one of the South Isles was also rendered insane, through the evil influence of the Stromness witch, and did not regain her reason until her sweetheart had propitiated Mammie. People considered it a just punishment when her own daughter went out of her mind and remained insane all her life.

One time Mammie had occasion to be in the island of Flotta, collecting rags, &c., and asked two of the Flotta men to put her over to Walls. The fishermen were on the point of setting out for the lobster fishing and so were rather unwilling to go so far out of their route ; but dreading Mammie's resentment, they consented to take her across the sound. When they reached the shore of Longhope a slight breeze was blowing from the southward. Mammie enjoined them to put a reef in their sails ; for they would lie down to Kirkhope that day, but to the northward of the island. And, sure enough, they were not far down the bay, when a severe storm came on, that compelled them to take the lee side of Flotta. Having arrived in safety at their homes, the father of one of the men asked them, how many lobsters they had got that day. "We'd only ane on the gun'ale o' the boat and it loupit in again," was the reply. They were glad enough to reach *terra firma* in safety, even minus lobsters.

One day Mammie wished to get across from Walls to Stromness and requested a Longhope man to put her over in his boat. The man was busy building a house, and, begged to be excused, as he had to go for wood ; but her ladyship would take no excuse, and told him that he would soon get plenty of wood not very far from his own door. That evening a vessel, loaded with timber, drifted upon the

rocks near the man's house and went to pieces. On his return from Stromness he was surprised to find Mammie's prediction fulfilled so speedily. At another time this dame arrived at a certain house in Caithness where she rested for a little. It appeared that she had taken offence at some Walls men who were crossing the Pentland Firth that day ; so she asked the mistress of the house for a tub of water and a porringer or *bummie*, as it is called in Orkney. She set the wooden bummie floating in the tub, and commenced stirring about the water with her finger. After a little the bummie capsized, and Mammie exclaimed, "Aye, there they go, but I'm sorry for the puir strange laddie that's wi' them." That evening the Walls man, his two sons, and the stranger they were ferrying across to Caithness, were drowned in the Firth by the capsizing of their boat !

A south country skipper, who chanced to be anchored in Cairston Roads, stole a duck belonging to Mammie. The depredation was done immediately before sailing. He had just got his vessel out of Hoy Sound, when Mammie Scott appeared upon the shore, waving a silk handkerchief at the departing ship. No sooner had she done this than the wind calmed, and the ship drifted back to the point of Ness, stern foremost, and went ashore. This was the more remarkable since the tide was going out ! The skipper, having paid

so dearly for his stolen duck, vowed that he would never again commit a like theft.

When Mammie Scott died, her house was infested with swarms of cats, which were, with the greatest difficulty, kept off her corpse. Between the day of her death and the funeral, a terrific gale swept along the Orkney coast. Even King Æolus appeared conscious of the loss of a faithful servant, and so played her funeral dirge upon his mighty horn.

Longhope could also boast of a "weather dame." This individual was called Betsy Barnett, and obtained a considerable reputation among the skippers, who frequented that harbour. No doubt it was a very profitable character to assume, and one that brought in considerable earnings to the reputed witch.

An old dame, originally from the Black Isle, near Inverness, won for herself the notorious character of an uncanny body in the town of Stromness, some thirty or forty years ago. She was reputed to possess superior wisdom—even that of "second sight." A farmer, near by, happened to be much concerned about his fat stock, and could not make out what was the matter with them. All his cattle were troubled with a stiffness in their legs, and a peculiar disease, that he was unable to understand. He resolved to consult the Highland woman. She informed him that some person had a grudge towards him, and had brought about this

disease amongst his cattle ; but there was one way of counter-acting the evil influence. He was to take the best beast he had got and burn it in a kiln with a roaring fire of peats.

This was done, and the whole neighbourhood was pervaded with the odour of burning flesh. His friends, when they learned the cause of the strange perfume, called him a fool for his pains, but the farmer heeded them not, so long as he observed a gradual improvement amongst his stock. This is one instance out of many.

In the early part of the eighteenth century Stromness appears to have come under the taxation of the neighbouring town of Kirkwall, and in the course of time began to resent such injustice. Such compulsion, as was adopted to force the little town that lay upon the western side of Pomona to contribute to the burdens of that on the east, caused the matter to be carried to the Supreme Court. There, in the year 1754, this judgment was issued : " That there was no sufficient right in the borough of Kirkwall to assess the village of Stromness ; but that the said village should be quit thereof, and free therefrom, in all time coming." Although appealed against, the judgment remained. Up to the present time there are still observed traces of this mutual jealousy. From the time the western metropolis of Orcadia flung off the yoke of the eastern capital, it began to

flourish and increase in trade. At the present time the valuation of the town exceeds six thousand pounds.

Three hundred years ago, as Ben's MS. informs us, the Cairston harbour afforded shelter for large numbers of vessels, particularly French and Spanish; and, even yet, many schooners and brigs put in for safety in stormy weather. Longhope, however, may be considered the more suitable harbour of the two for vessels passing through the Pentland Firth.

Amongst the wilds round Stromness, in years long gone by, deer seem to have been numerous; for, some time ago, many of their horns were dug up from beneath a stratum of peat, upon a bed of marl, close to the town. Similar finds have been made in the neighbouring parish of Harray.

Along the coast near Stromness, stand the Black Craigs, near which about half-a-century ago a shipwrecked seaman had a miraculous escape. It was in the spring of 1834 that the schooner *Star of Dundee* was caught, with other vessels, in the fury of a tremendous storm. The other vessels managed to reach in safety the neighbouring harbour; but the *Star of Dundee* was caught by the storm in the Sound of Hoy, and was unable to make for shelter. The storm raged on and slowly drove the ill-fated bark upon the rockbound coast, where, in the sight of hundreds

of spectators, the schooner went to pieces and all her crew to a watery grave. At least three days passed by, and no man reached that shore alive. On the fourth, however, an exhausted seaman reached the town, and told the tale of his marvellous escape. When the schooner went down this sailor was washed away and carried by the billows into the only cave which is upon that coast. Coming to his senses in such a strange abode, he felt the pangs of hunger, and began groping around for something to allay his appetite. A cask of herrings was all he found; but these satisfied his cravings for a time, till thirst more keen and dreadful ensued. Here again fortune seemed to smile upon him: and by the means of an empty oil-can he caught the dripping water from the rocks, and thus prolonged his existence from Wednesday till Sunday morning, when the storm abated, and when he managed to scramble from his providential shelter from destruction, the only one saved out of that unfortunate vessel.

In this neighbourhood is the famous fossil bed of the old red sandstone, from which Hugh Miller took his *Asterolepis*, and from which can still be dug large quantities of *ichthyolites*. "It furnishes," says Hugh Miller, "more fossil fish than every other geological system in England, Scotland, and Wales, from the coal measures to the chalk inclusive. It is, in short, 'the land of fish,' and could

supply with ichthyolites, by the ton and the shipload, the museums of the world."*

* "Caithness, the northernmost part of the mainland of Scotland, and Orkney are chiefly remarkable, geologically, for the great extension of certain members of the old red sandstone formations, which have been ably described by Mr. Hugh Miller, and which contain, you are aware, a host of fishes which characterise that formation, and which are perhaps nowhere found in such perfection, although in Russia the same species have been found. These are the fish named and classified so successfully by Agassiz, such as the *Asterolepis*, *Glyptolepis*, &c.,"—Principal J. D. Forbes, F.R.S. See *Life and Letters*, p. 196.

CHAPTER VIII.

The scene is changed—no trace is left behind—
No more the hardy Viking sweeps the seas,
No more his arrows whistle in the wind,
No more his warlike barque obeys the breeze—
The heat of war is past—'tis peace we find.

ON a cool summer day of the present year, we set out from the antique town of Stromness to walk as far as the village of Finstown. We had just landed from a sea voyage, and found ourselves wonderfully fresh for the eight miles or so we had to traverse. From the summit of the rising ground, over which a near-cut passes from the town to the Kirkwall Road, we beheld a beautiful panoramic view of the plain of Stenness, with its mystic circles of hoary Standing Stones. As they reared their pointed heads to the sky, in the midst of the surrounding loch, they reminded us of some far away period, when such monuments were not without an intelligible meaning to the passer-by; but to us they only suggested something vague and uncertain. The road was good though somewhat dusty.

We passed Maes-Howe without entering that wonderful mound; our time was limited, and we had explored the

place before. As we journeyed along the dusty highway and gazed at the surrounding hills, we almost fancied that we were passing through some sequestered portion of the highlands of Scotland. On nearing Finstown, which is about seven miles from the Orcadian capital, the monotony of the landscape was relieved by the mansion house of Binscarth, with its policies ornamented by clumps of trees, which are certainly very creditable to Orkney. Indeed, so much are they appreciated by the dwellers in Kirkwall's fair town, that this spot has received from them the name of "The Forest!" It is not a very large copse, and the trees are stunted.

Finstown, in the parish of Firth, is a picturesque and pleasant village that takes the fancy of the traveller at once. It lies, nestling at the foot of undulating hills, and looks out upon the bay of Firth, known in the old Norse days as *Aurridafjorðr* (salmon-trout Firth), as it gleams in the bright sunlight, studded with green holms and passing boats. We need not wonder that it is a favourite resort with Kirkwallians, who delight to spend a part of the summer here. The Manse was our destination, and we were pleased to find in it one of the most beautifully situated Manses in Orkney. Standing on an eminence, at the foot of an amphitheatre of hills, that slope gradually away to the south and west, leaving a smiling meadow between, the

Manse of Firth commands one of the sweetest and most romantic prospects, both of land and water, to be found in these northern shores. Northwards and eastwards the islands of Rousay, Gairsay, Stronsay, Eday, and Shapinsay stretch away into the dim horizon, presenting a picture of beauty that might be to many "a joy for ever."

The Rev. D. W. Yair, the parish minister, is well known as an accomplished florist and horticulturist, and possesses, in his garden, what we believe to be one of the most extensive and varied collections of flowers north of the Pentland Firth. His assortment of Alpine and herbaceous plants is unsurpassed, perhaps, in the north of Scotland. It is a very curious circumstance that both the manse and the glebe are in the form of a cross. This, although it is the result of pure accident, would make the parish an extremely desirable cure to many of the so-called advanced, but really retrograde school, commonly ycleped "ritualistic."

There are some good oyster-beds in the bay, and as much as £2000 has been drawn from them in one season. The disciple of Isaac Walton may capture a few sea-trout at Renebuster, Finstown, or Isbister. One of the green holms that stud the bay is called Damsay, said to be so called in memory of Saint Adamnan. It was upon this little island that the castle, which sheltered Swein after he had murdered Jarl Paul's "forecastleman" at Orphir, stood; and here, too

at Yule-tide Jarl Erlend was slain amid his drunken revelry. At one time, as Jo. Ben informs us, a chapel dedicated to the Virgin stood here, to which it was customary for many ladies to make a stated pilgrimage. No frogs, nor toads, nor earthly evils were to be found upon this islet, and all the women who dwelt upon it were barren. This may explain why Monteith says there was a nunnery upon the island.

The island of Gairsay, which lies out at no great distance, possesses several interesting historical and archaeological remains, that well merit examination. This is said to have been a favourite resort of the Vikings, who built a stronghold upon it. Swein is reputed to have erected a large drinking-hall, somewhat like the Icelandic *skalas*, built principally of wood. A rock, known to the sea-faring men as "the Hen of Gairsay," stands upon the eastern extremity of the island. Upon the narrow neck of land, which connects "the Hen" with the main-island, is a grass grown tumulus, which is probably the remains of a broch.

From Firth our course lay towards the pretty parish of Birsay in the north-west of Pomona. This time we chose the old shady road that runs below Binscarth House and through the copse already referred to. It is a lovely walk in a sultry summer day; quite a new experience in Orca-dian landscapes, which are at all times so devoid of shadow.

This old rustic path joins the Harray road, and is a favourite with all. About a mile from Finstown, upon the left hand side of the road, lies the scene of the battle of Summerdale.

It appears that Lord Henry St. Clair endeavoured, about the year 1529, to regain possession of the whole Orkney islands. He crossed over from Caithness for this purpose, accompanied by the Earl of Caithness and 500 men. The invaders were met at Summerdale by Sir James St Clair, the governor of Kirkwall, with a strong body of islanders. The Caithness men landed at Orphir, and in their march to Stenness encountered a witch, who walked before them unwinding two balls of thread, one red and the other white. When the red ball was wholly unwound, she informed Lord Caithness that the party which drew the "first blood" would conquer. Implicit belief seems to have been placed in the witch, as a short time after a boy, herding cattle, was observed by the Earl and immediately slain; but their joy was turned into horror when they observed later on that the boy was a native of Caithness. So if the witch were to be believed nothing awaited the invaders but defeat.

When the fight began the Orcadians assailed their opponents with showers of stones, which seemed to have been miraculously provided for the occasion; for the spot was at other times devoid of such missiles. Though the Caithness

men fought gallantly they were finally overcome, and as they retreated slowly to their vessels at Orphir one after another fell, until only one escaped to tell the story of the disaster. This man was the Earl, who took refuge in the farm-house of Oback. The mistress of the house seems to have betrayed him to his pursuers, who slew him the moment he was discovered. The body of the slain Earl was afterwards interred upon the field of battle, and a rude stone marked the spot. It is said that only one Orcadian fell, and he was slain by mistake by his own mother. He had donned the garments of one of the fallen Caithness men, and while returning home in the dusky evening was met by his mother, who, imagining him to be one of the enemy, struck him a blow with a stone in the foot of a stocking. In the year 1795 a number of dead bodies were dug up in a marsh through which the invading Caithness troops had retreated.

Further on we passed the lochs of Stenness and Harray, which lie embosomed amongst the surrounding hills. In the neighbourhood of so much dreary moorland these inland lochs possess a weird charm of their own, which strikes a stranger, especially when the setting sun sinks behind the towering hills of Hoy, casting the lengthening shadows of the Standing Stones, like things uncanny, across the rippling water. The lower loch, that of Stenness, communicates

with the sea, and is of irregular shape, being about four miles by two. It abounds in trout, coal fish (*Merlangus Carbonarius*), cod, skate, flounders, and sometimes herring. Many a good basket of trout has been obtained upon this loch, and many a breakfast table has borne witness to the excellency of such a dish. The loch of Harray, which is about four miles and a half by three quarters of a mile or more, is full of fine brown trout. Nets, lines, and otters were once in universal use on these lochs, but, of course, such gear is now illegal, though we could not say that the otter is at the present time unseen. Keen anglers may obtain here as good sport and as good takes as can be had anywhere in Scotland.

Moving onwards we pass Twatt, with its fine Free Church, and another mile or so brings us to the brow of the hill, round which a splendid view of Birsay is obtained. It is, indeed, a lovely view. The fertile parish of Birsay, the *Birgisherard* or hunting-ground of the ancient Jarls, with its long narrow loch, lay at our feet, and stretched away to the north-west, where the ruins of the once famous palace still rear their peaks into the sky, and look out forever towards the Brough.

The palace appears to have consisted of a range of strong-built buildings forming the sides of a quadrangle or open court, into which many an armed band had marched. The

external measurements are 172 ft. 2 in. N. and S., by 120 ft. 10 in. E. and W. The main entrance is in the middle of the south wall, while three of the angles consist of square projecting towers. It is supposed that this old palace was built by the St. Clairs. Jarl Thorfinn seems to have made this place his principal residence during his declining years. Earl Robert built the new portion, and over the gateway a stone bore this inscription: "*Dominus Robartus Stewartus Filius Jacobi Quinti Rex. Scotorum hoc opus instruxit.*" The Earl of Morton is credited with having carried the stone away before he sold the estates to the Dundas family. The motto, "*Sic fuit, est, et erit,*" was carved above the arms of Lord Robert inside the building. The walls are now fast falling into decay, and the courtyard is overgrown with nettles. *Sic transit gloria palatii!*

Christ church in Birsay was the first church erected in Orkney after the Norse inhabitants were converted to the Christian faith. It was probably built about the middle of the eleventh century by Jarl Thorfinn after his return from Rome, to which he went on a pilgrimage in the year 1050. Before the Cathedral Church of St Magnus was erected in Kirkwall, Christ's Kirk was the seat of the Bishopric, which was transferred to the Capital about 1137 during the tenure of William the Old. No trace, at least very little, of this old building remains. It is possible that a part of the present

Parish Church may have been built from the stones of the ancient edifice, in the same way in which the church at Orphir was built, partly from the Old Temple Church.

“The Brough” of Birsay probably formed part of the mainland at one time, but it is now disjoined and separated by a narrow sound, which is dry at low water. It is a holm containing about 40 acres. Upon this Brough a church, dedicated to St Peter, was built by St. Olaf. It is also said to have been dedicated to St. Colme or Columba. The foundations, which lie on the N.E. side, are still visible. The length of the building is 57 feet. The chapel consisted of a nave, 28 ft. 3 in. by 15 ft. 6 in., a chancel 10 ft. square, and an apse. There is only one doorway in the west end, with parallel jambs and devoid of any rebate for a door.

The same style of doorway can be seen in the chapels at Lybster in Caithness, at Weir, at Linton in Shapinsay, and at Uyea in Shetland. “It is known,” says Sir Henry Dryden, “that in many cottages in old time the door was an animal’s hide hung across the opening, and probably this may have been the case in these unrebated church entrances.” The foundations of the apse alone remain, at the chord of which the altar stood. The apse, which in later times was blocked off by a reredos, is horse-shoe shaped, and somewhat similar to the one at Orphir.* From *Peterkin’s Rentals*

* See *Ork. Saga*. Introduction by Dr. Anderson, p. xcix.

(No. III. p. 98) we find that the minister of Birsay, writing in 1927, says :—“There is likewise ane litill holm within the sea callit the Brughe of Birsay, quhilk is thocht be the elder sort to have belongit to the reid friaris, for there is the foundation of ane kirk and kirk-yard there as yet to be seen.” Dryden calculates that the church was erected about the year 1100 by Erlend, Thorfinn’s son, though we have seen that St. Olaf gets the credit of its erection. It lies in a sweet and picturesque spot washed by the surrounding sea, and would possibly recall to the friar mind that other isle where Columba first taught the principles of Christianity to an ignorant population. There always seemed to be in the eyes of the early monks a peculiar fitness in the erection of churches and chapels beside the murmur of the everlasting ocean. As they chanted their psalms and hymns beside the heaving waters, their minds would ponder on the great eternity towards which they were all hurrying, like mariners toward a sea, of which they had no charts and from which there was no return.

There are fine sandy links to the south of the palace, which would make a fair golf course, were there but people to play the game. Not far from Marwick Head, which rises precipitously from the sea, is the Knowe of Saverough. This mound was opened by Mr. Farrer in 1862, when a number of stone cists, containing several skulls, &c., were

discovered. Several skulls were boat-shaped and of a very low type, while others were of a much higher class. Dr. Thurnam, one of the authors of *Crania Britannica*, states that they were decidedly remains of a Celtic population. A clay jar, which was found here, is now in the Edinburgh Museum. A few bone implements were also found. A square-shaped bell of bronze and iron was found in a cist near the mound. A similar bell was found in the broch of Burrian, and measured $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height, by 2 inches in breadth, with a loop handle at the top. Dr. Anderson is of opinion that this bell had been buried, to preserve it from profanation by the pagan Vikings, sometime during the ninth century. This would lead us to suppose that a Celtic Church preceded the Norse one upon the Brough. The Brough of Okstro lies to the east of Saverough.

The present Parish Church has been twice restored, once during the incumbency of Dr. Traill, now of Aberdeen University, and in 1760. It cannot be said to be a comfortable edifice, being both low and stuffy. The church-yard, like the great majority of Orcadian church-yards, stands in much need of being better looked after. In the southern wall of the church there is a stone with the word "Bellus" engraved upon it. This stone has given rise to many most improbable theories. Some supposing it to be the name of of a king ; but the simple explanation seems to be that of

considering it to be a portion of some old tombstone, broken off in the middle of a name and fitted into the wall.

But we have lingered too long amidst the relics of Birsay, and must push on to other scenes. To the south of Rousay a pretty green islet lies, like an emerald in the sea. This delightful spot is Weir or Veira, the *Vigr* of the Norsemen. The principal object of attraction here is an ancient ruin known as "The Castle of Cubbarow," said to have been erected about seven hundred years ago. Now only a grassy mound remains to mark the site of Kolbein Hruga's fortalice. There are the remains, too, of an old ecclesiastical edifice, somewhat like the church on the Brough of Birsay. Sir Henry Dryden compares it to the church at Lybster, adding, "Probably Weir is of the 12th or 13th century, but the characteristics are not decisive enough to approximate more closely to its date." Very likely both buildings—that of Lybster and Weir—are of the same date, Lybster perhaps being fully the older. This church would also appear to have been dedicated to St. Peter, were we to judge from the following in Jo. Ben's MS.:—" *Weir, insula est parva, Petro Apostolo dicata.*" Bishop Bjarni Skald, son of Kolbein Hruga, is supposed to have built the church of Weir. His father built the castle to which we have referred, and it is very likely that the Bishop would have resided upon the island, only proceeding to Kirkwall when the duties of his

See demanded his presence. Bjarni Skald held the Bishopric from 1188 to 1223. "Cubbarrow" or "Cobbie Row" seems to be a corruption of Kolbein Hruga, the name of the Bishop's father.

Another ancient church, similar to the one on the Brough of Birsay but smaller, once stood on the Brough of Deerness, a parish lying in the east of Pomona. This Brough is an outlying rock about 100 ft. high, with a grassy top. The remains of the chapel lie in the centre, surrounded by a stone wall 60 ft. by 45 ft. At one time several small huts stood beside the chapel, built in a somewhat rectangular form. The people were in the habit of climbing up to the top of the Brough upon their hands and knees in order to visit the chapel, which was called the "Bairns of Brugh." Jo. Ben tells us that when they reached the top, "on their bended knees and with hands joined they offered their supplications with many incantations to the Bairns of Brugh, throwing stones and water behind their backs, and making the circuit of the chapel twice or thrice."

Most of these ancient churches were twin-towered, a characteristic of almost all Scandinavian churches built in the thirteenth century.* A fine example of an ancient one-towered church is still to be seen in the island of Egilshay,

* See "The Twin-Towered Churches of Denmark," by J. Kornerup, in the *Aarboger for Nordisk Oldkindighed* for 1869, p. 13.

which lies contiguous to Rousay. This old ecclesiastical building was erected long before the Norse invasion; but its origin is wrapt in obscurity. A tradition asserts that it was dedicated to St. Magnus, but this is likely an idle story. It is the oldest building of the kind now extant in Orkney. The probable reason why it has become associated with the name of St. Magnus is that Jarl Magnus was murdered in or near it about 1110 or 1115. Munch says, "the church of Egilsay is shewn by its construction to have been built before the Northmen arrived in Orkney, or, at all events, to belong to the more ancient Christian Celtic population; both its exterior and its interior shew so many resemblances to the old churches in Ireland of the seventh and eighth centuries, that we are compelled to suppose it to have been erected at that time by Irish priests or *papas*. As we find no remains of any similar churches on the islands, we must suppose it to have been the first of the few on the thinly inhabited isle-group. The island on which it stood might, therefore, very justly be called 'Church Isle.' But the Irish word *ecclais* (church), derived from the Latin *ecclesia*, might easily be mistaken by our forefathers for Egils, the genitive of the man's name Egil." Sir Henry Dryden assigns it to a date anterior to the twelfth century. It is impossible, however, to decide to which century it belongs. The chancel is arched over in the interior, and the walls

are about three feet thick. It is said that in later times, this was the spot where the "cutty stool" was placed, and no doubt it was found to be a most suitable locality for that piece of ecclesiastical furniture, seeing that there was no opening to admit the light. The tower is circular in form, about 48 feet high, built into crow-stepped gables of rough stone, and leans slightly to the westward. About 15 feet, it is said, were taken off at one time to prevent its falling. This building forms a very conspicuous object, being seen at a considerable distance. It stands now without a roof, at the mercy of wind and weather. Divine service was conducted within its walls until sixty years ago, when it seems to have been allowed to fall gradually into decay. There is a rumour to the effect that it is to be restored, but whether that be the case or not we cannot say. It is not creditable to the ecclesiastics of Orkney that such a fine old building should not be restored. One would have fancied that the age of Vandalism had passed away and an age of restoration taken its place; but the spirit which prompted the restoration of St. Giles in Edinburgh does not appear to have yet crossed the Pentland Firth.

Remains of an old chapel were discovered some years ago on the south side of the islet of Eynhallow (the *Eyin-Helga*, Holy Island of the Norse), which lies off the west shore of Rousay. It consisted of a nave 20 ft. 7 in. by 12 ft. inside,

having at the west end a round arch 4 ft. 3 in. wide, leading into a smaller building, which Sir H. Dryden considers to have been a sacristy. The regular chancel was at the east end. For a long time the building was used as a dwelling-house. The nave and chancel belonged, probably, to the eleventh or twelfth century, while a new chancel arch had been erected during the fourteenth century. We must, however, bid adieu to these old chapels, in the fond hope that what yet remains of them may be cherished and tended reverently by their present possessors. It would be more than a pity were they permitted to crumble further into decay. We believe with Peterkin "that he who destroys or defaces a monument of ancient time, whether it be a Scandinavian circle or a cloistered abbey,—a Grecian temple or a Christian church,—the hall of a feudal baron, or any other among the gifts of genius and science, in regions and in ages which are gone by, and which were adorned by such productions,—does a positive injury to society. A link in the chain of our associations is broken ; the landmarks between different generations of men are thrown down ; some of the materials, however slight, out of which the knowledge of mankind is formed, and their feelings moulded, are taken away ; facts for the illustration of history, of manners, and of religion, are lost ; and we are bereaved of the possible advantages which, perhaps, might have resulted from the future contemplation of such objects by the poet, the moralist, and the patriot."

CHAPTER IX.

“Woden falls—and Thor
 Is overturned ; the mace, in battle heaved
 (So might they dream) till victory was achieved,
 Drops, and the god himself is seen no more.
 Temple and altar sink, to hide their shame
 Amid oblivious weeds.”—WORDSWORTH.

SOUTH Ronaldshay is one of the largest of the southern isles in Orkney. It contains some of the most fertile soil to be found in the North Sea. The valley to the east is good for growing crops, and presents one of the most lovely views in the region. The gentle slope runs gradually down to the shore of the heaving ocean, which stretches eastwards to the dim horizon. In summer many of the fields are white with daisies, which grow so thickly that one at first sight imagines the ground to be covered with snow. The Church and Manse of St. Peter's nestle in the midst of verdant parks close beside the ever-changing sea. The scene is quiet and peaceful, fitted to lull the turbulent spirit of an ancient sea-king, or to soothe the fitful mind of a wandering poet.

Behind the long and narrow Church of St. Peter, in the centre of a large field, stands a large upright stone about

16 feet high—a silent monument of the hoary past. Tradition, at most times suggestive, is dumb concerning this lone sentinel of the vale. Whether it has been connected with some Druidical temple or some Norse battlefield we cannot say; but there it rears its rugged head towards the blue heaven, cold and grey, casting its changing shadow on the ground, and immovable on its earthen bed.

In the south part of the island at St. Mary's Church, or Lady Kirk, as it was formerly called, we saw a peculiar stone with a peculiar history. Its shape resembles a large snow shoe, and upon one side of it are the prints of two bare feet. It is about four feet long, 2 feet broad, and 8 inches thick. Legend connects it with St. Magnus,^r who used it as a ferry boat to sail across the Pentland Firth. By him it was laid up in Lady Kirk as a memorial of the miracle. This story is only one of the many monkish tales circulated in early time by the Roman Church, and greedily swallowed and believed by the ignorant people, who were always thirsting after the miraculous. The true explanation of the mystery is probably this: The stone was used as a standing-place for those delinquents who had to do penance, by standing upon it in the public view, while the people entered church. Be that as it may, the stone is undoubtedly connected with Popish times, and serves as a curious link between the present and the misty past.

In various parts of the island are to be seen numbers of *tumuli*, called by the old people *earny couligs*, the meaning of which seems to have been forgotten. The general features of the coast on the west side are wild and rugged. Steep cliffs, washed by a strong and heavy sea, afford suitable shelter to the many sea-birds that rend the air with their shrill and wailing cries. In the tenth century Thorfinn, an Orkney Jarl, a brave and warlike prince, resided in this island, and at his death was buried here. According to the Norse custom of that age, he was interred with the usual ceremonies of Odin, having a mound of earth raised over his remains. This mound, called Hangagerdium, is in all probability that known as the Howe of Hoxay, which commands an extensive view of the entrance to the Pentland Firth, and forms a good look-out station for vessels passing between the Atlantic and the North Sea. In Danish times this formed a very important watch-tower.

Tradition gives very confused accounts of this part of the island. Some consider the Howe of Hoxay to be the ruins of a Pict's house, while others regard it as the remains of a Danish castle, or the burial mound of Earl Thorfinn. It matters little now what it may have been: the sea ebbs and flows to-day the same as then; but those brave spirits who sailed across its tides are all forgotten and unknown. Among the many traditions floating about in the popular memory

there are not a few relating to ghosts and fairies, or drows —those peculiar but universal beings that seem to haunt every land. Of these some are interesting, while others are foolish ; but they can all be traced to the one fertile source —a lively imagination. It might reward some one to make a careful collection of such tales, which are so “auld-world-like” in the mouths of aged crones, and to give them forth to the readers of folk-lore. But we must pass over such mythical subjects and confine ourselves to sterner matters.

A most interesting matter is that relating to the introduction of the Christian faith into these far-off isles. We have little data to go upon with regard to the early religion of the Islands of the North Sea. The Scandinavian tribes must have brought their mythology along with them when they took up their residence in the Orkneys ; and it would doubtless colour the existing forms of worship. The town of Thurso, in Caithness, received its name from the Scandinavian Thor, while four days of our week are derived from Norse divinities. Thus Wednesday comes from Woden or Odin ; Thursday from Thor ; Friday from Freya ; and Tuesday, called in Orkney *Tyesday*, from Ty ; while Saturday is probably derived from an almost unknown Teutonic deity called Saetir. At a time when the druidical worship was common the gods of the Druids would be mingled and confused with those of Scandinavia. St. Columba informs us

that certain fountains were worshipped by the Northern Picts, on account of their healing virtues. Reference to some of these curative wells is made further on. At this time the religion of the country was little better than a kind of fetichism, when everybody believed in sorcery and in the existence of invisible beings capable of doing good and evil.

The primitive theology of Scandinavia, however, seems to have embraced the idea of one Supreme Being. "He liveth from all ages, He governeth all realms, and swayeth all things great and small. He hath formed heaven and earth, and the air, and all things thereunto belonging. And what is more, He hath made man, and given him a soul which shall live and never perish, though the body shall have mouldered away, or have been burnt to ashes. And all that are righteous shall dwell with Him in the place called Gimli or Vingolf; but the wicked shall go to Hell, and thence to Nifhel, which is below in the ninth world."* Few, however, were conscious of this higher doctrine, and the ignorant mass never troubled themselves with such distinctions. There were twelve gods and as many goddesses to whom the common herd offered their supplications. There was Woden the governor of all things; Thor with his mighty hammer, ready to preside over every warlike tribe; Baldur the good

* Prose Edda in Mallet's "Northern Antiquities."

and beautiful ; and Njord, the Scandinavian Neptune. The goddess Frigga was the wife of Woden, while Freya was like the Venus of the ancients. Freya "is very fond of love ditties, and all lovers would do well to invoke her."*

Besides the regular gods there were many other lesser beings, who peopled the great invisible world of the children of the wild North Seas. The northern intellect was prone to personify the powerful agencies of nature, and thus there were produced mountain giants, dwarfs, and elves, both good and evil. These dwelt in Jötunheim, and against them Thor waged ceaseless war. The dwarfs were, in the course of time, evolved out of maggots until they assumed the human shape. Their dwellings were in caverns and rocks, where they continued ever busy brewing mischief. By Scandinavians the ash-tree was revered as much as the oak was by the Druids. "It is under the ash Yggdrasill where the gods assemble every day in council. It is the greatest and best of all trees ; its branches spread over the whole world, and even above the heaven. Near the fountain, which is under this ash, stands a very beauteous dwelling, out of which go three maidens, named Urd, Vernandi, and Skuld—the Present, the Past, and the Future. These maidens fix the lifetime of all men, and are called Norns." †

* Prose Edda.

† Ib.

The rude worship of these sons of the bitter North was, in primitive times, celebrated beneath the canopy of heaven. Their altars stood in the open air ; but as time rolled on their worship developed until they possessed roofed temples, with a nave and shrine, corresponding to the chancel of a Christian church. The images of the gods were arranged in half circles, and their altars were oft-times stained with blood. Upon the altar the sacred fire burned incessantly, while the blood-bowl and the ring, on which oaths were sworn, lay close by. There were three religious festivals every year ; the first, held at the winter solstice, was called Jul, being the beginning of the Scandinavian year. This festival was held in honour of Frey, the Sun-God, in order that propitious seasons might be secured. The second, held in honour of the Earth, was fixed at the first quarter of the second moon of the year. The third and greatest of them all was celebrated in honour of Woden in early spring, and was calculated to propitiate the Battle-God, who would thus be favourable to them during their piratical expeditions. Such a creed produced a race of sea-robbers, who were the terror of all peaceful dwellers on land ; so the monks prayed, *A furore Normanorum, libera nos, Domine* (From the fury of the Norsemen, good Lord, deliver us). One thousand years came and went before the Christian faith had conquered these rude corsairs of the North Sea,

and they were forced to exclaim with Julian, "At last, O Galilean, thou hast conquered!"

Whitsunday was recently known in Scotland by the name of Beltane, from a Druidical festival; Christmas is still known as Yule, which is identical with Jul. As we go far back into the past the historical data are sometimes doubtful and obscure. No doubt some of those itinerant monks, who were sent forth by the Celtic Church from Ireland or Iona, found their way to the north of Scotland and the isles beyond at an early period. Tradition bears out such a supposition; and we find many ancient churches dedicated to St. Columba, St. Ninian, St. Brigid, and St. Tredwell. These islands must have come under Christian influences previous to the incursions of the Norse sea-kings, when the heathen rites of Odin for a time eclipsed the simplicity of the Christian ritual. Certain words by Wordsworth may be applied to those early harbingers of a brighter faith!

"They come, and onward travel without dread,
Chanting in barbarous ears a tuneful prayer—
Sung for themselves, and those whom they would free!
Rich conquest waits them:—the tempestuous sea
Of ignorance, that ran so rough and high,
And heeded not the voice of clashing swords,
These good men humble by a few bare words,
And calm with fear of God's divinity."

About the middle of the sixth century, a little coracle containing Cormac and his companions entered those

northern seas and landed the messengers of a new faith, and the heralds of a gospel of peace and love. From that day the light of Christianity began to burn amongst a rude uncultured people, and continued to enlighten many a darkened soul. The lamp of Christian truth shone steadily in these islands till the Norsemen came down upon them like a horde of robbers, and for a time trampled upon the fruits of those devout and earnest Monks. Dicuil, an Irish Monk, tells us of those who had visited the islands of the North Sea, and dwelt upon *Thule* itself, but who were forced to flee before the ruthless Vikings. Adamnan, the biographer of St. Columba, and many of the Icelandic historians bear testimony to the same facts. Usher tells us that Servanus or St. Serf, the disciple of Palladius, was sent by his master on a mission to the Orkney Islands.

During the sixth and seventh centuries the Orkneys seem to have come under the sway of the Dalriadic kings; but the record of that period is scant and unsatisfactory. Beside the bay of Osmundwall, the ancient Asmundarvagr in South Walls, the foundation of a very ancient church, dedicated to St. Columba, is still to be seen. Near this spot the most fertile portion of the land lies, a striking proof of its ancient tillage by the members of that early church. It was in this same bay that King Olaf Tryggvason of Norway came and seized Jarl Sigurd and his son while

they were aboard a single ship. Olaf was a zealous believer in the Christian faith, and resolved that Sigurd should also be baptized, which was made the condition of that Jarl's safety. After some parley, Sigurd agreed to the terms of his ransom and was baptized. As may be supposed, the Orcadian Jarl was merely a nominal convert to the new religion; for about twenty years after this event we find him carrying his black-raven banner, "woven with mighty spells," against the Christian king Brian. On a cold Christmas day upon the battlefield of Clontarf, near Dublin, the brave Jarl fell. Tradition tells how the twelve fatal sisters made his fate known in Caithness by weaving the woof of war, which the *Njal Saga* explains as

"The woof-y-woven
With entrails of men,
The warp hardweighted
With heads of the slain."

Up to the latter part of the eighteenth century the legends concerning this battle were credited as facts, and were told beside many an Orcadian hearth when the winter-night hung heavily upon the hands of the inmates. One of these legends tells how a Caithness man saw the twelve sisters (the *Valkyriar* or "choosers of the slain," in ancient mythology), weaving a web within a recess in the rocks. This web they tore into twelve pieces, one for each, with

which they galloped away on horseback. Six went north and the other six south. While engaged at the warp and the woof they were supposed to have sung this song :—

“ Now the storm begins to lower :
Haste the loom of hell prepare ;
 Iron sleet of arrowy shower
 Hurtles in the darken'd air—

“ Glittering lances are the loom,
 Where the dusky warp we strain ;
 Weaving many a soldier's doom—
 Orkney's woe, and Randver's bane.

“ See the grisly texture grow—
'Tis of human entrails made,
 And the weights that play below,
 Each a gasping warrior's head.

“ Shafts for shuttles, dipped in gore,
 Shoot the trembling cords along ;
 Sword that once a monarch bore
 Keep the tissue close and strong.

“ Mista, black, terrific maid !
 Singrida and Hilda, see !
 Join the wayward work to aid ;
'Tis the woof of victory.

“ Ere the ruddy sun be set,
 Pikes must shiver, javelins sing ;
 Blade with clattering buckler meet,
 Hauberk clash, and helmet ring.

“ *Weave the crimson web of war—*
 Let us go, and let us fly,
 Where our friends the conflict share,
 Where they triumph, where they die.

“ As the paths of fate we tread,
Wading through the ensanguined field,
Gondula and Gier spread
O'er the youthful king your shield.

“ We the reins of slaughter give—
Ours to kill and ours to spare ;
Spite of danger he shall live,
Weave the crimson web of war.

“ They when once the desert beach,
Plant within its bleak domain ;
Soon their ample sway shall stretch
O'er the plenty of the plain.

“ Low the dauntless Earl is laid,
Gored with many a gaping wound ;
Fate demands a nobler head,
Soon a king shall bite the ground.

“ Long his loss shall Erin weep—
Ne'er again his likeness see ;
Long her strains in sorrow steep,
Strains of immortality !

“ Horror covers all the heath,
Clouds of carnage blot the sun ;
Sisters, weave the web of death ;
Sisters, cease ! the work is done !

“ Hail the task ! and hail the hands !
Songs of joy and triumph sing ;
Joy to the victorious bands,
Triumph to the younger king !

“ Mortal ! thou that hear'st the tale,
Learn the lesson of our song ;
Scotland, through each winding vale,
Far and wide the notes prolong !

“ Sisters ! hence with spurs of speed ;
Each her thundering falchion wield ;
Each bestir her sable steed !
Hurry ! hurry ! to the field ! ”

CHAPTER X.

Only mounds are seen
To mark the spot where solemn rites were held ;
The heroes sleep,—their graves alone are green,
The silent mentors of a time so eld.

THE island of South Ronaldshay contained three chapels commemorative of St. Columba, at Grymness, Hoxay, and Loch of Burwick. St. Ninian was commemorated at Stoose in the same island. The other chapels were St. Andrew's at Windwick, Our Lady at Halcro, the Reuid at Sandwick, St. Tola at Widewall, and St. Margaret at St. Margaret's Hope. Sanday also possessed a chapel dedicated to St. Columba. Such dedications all point in the direction of the supposition that Christianity had obtained a footing here at a very early date, previous, indeed, to the arrival of the war galleys of Harald Haarfagri. From the many sculptured stones, which have been found, the same conclusion may be legitimately drawn. These bear inscriptions in what it called the Ogham character, which belongs to a very early period.

While rambling by the east shore of South Ronaldshay, near St. Peter's Church, we found a long oblong stone with

a cross sculptured upon it, lying amidst a heap of huge boulders. It is quite probable that this stone may have had an historical connection. The Rev. J. S. W. Irvine, the minister of the parish, thinks that it cannot be a relic of great antiquity, but may have been at one time a tombstone tablet, and if so, one of a not very elaborate description. It still lies there, an object of attention, but a dumb witness to all the past.

In the Church of St. Mary, in the south parish there, are several very ancient tombstones, with very curious inscriptions. One or two of those bear old Danish characters, and point to a period, some centuries ago, when Christianity and Christian art had cast a glow of cultured feeling over the rude dwellers in that barren isle. One noticeable feature of most of these islands is that all the churches are built quite close to the sea-shore. The object of this arrangement was to meet the convenience of those who came from neighbouring islands by sea. There is a peaceful air, and a look of everlastingness about these old churches, which strike the fancy of the traveller. They stand alone beside the ever-sounding sea, rearing their pinnacles towards the heavens, the symbols of a noble faith and the monitors of a world to come. The successors of those monks who first carried the Cross into these northern regions, have followed faithfully, as a rule, in the path of a humble and devoted

life. Among those who have not long since passed to their rest may be mentioned the late Rev. John Gerrard, minister of South Ronaldshay, a man who did more good in his own way than hundreds of more favoured pastors. His charity was that of a really benevolent man, whose left hand knew not what good the right had done. All his worldly means were devoted to the poor, and he died leaving nothing but good deeds behind. His memory is still cherished amongst a few, who have not forgotten his deeds of love. He resembled in many ways the late Mr. Turnbull, minister of Tingwall in Shetland, and was well known for his originality of wit and humour. A very curious certificate was granted by Mr. Gerrard to one of his parishioners, who had got into trouble by using malt without a licence. It ran as follows:—

MANSE OF SOUTH RONALDSHAY,
ORKNEY, 21st May, 1846.

*To the Honourable Her Majesty's Justices
of the Peace, Kirkwall.*

The bearer, D— S—, aged 66, has been my near neighbour these thirty-one years, quietly and soberly, an example to any farmer in my widespread parish. I am grieved that his fine feelings of generosity to his thirsty, kind neighbours, in the yearly day of joy in cutting his peats, tempted him to make a little malt. He bids me say for him that he is a poor man, and not fit to stand any operation. I join in his desire, and confidently hope that honourable judges will not cut off neither leg nor finger, and that he shall return to us sound in lithe and limb. So hopes and prays,

JOHN GERRARD, *Minister.*

Whether the honourable justices were duly impressed by this certificate or not we cannot say ; but “*Requiescant in pace !*” may well be said of all such men.

Education is well attended to in this island. In the parish there stands a fine academy, endowed by the late William Tomison, an old Hudson Bay trader. It is capable of accommodating six hundred scholars, who receive a first-class free education under the efficient mastership of Mr. Cruickshank. The village of St. Margaret's Hope, in the north of the island, is a quaint spot, with its irregularly built dwelling-houses, and basin-shaped harbour. When the tide is full the sea comes up to the foundations of many of the houses. Following the rule of all Orcadian towns, its one main street consists of a long, crooked, double row of buildings, so situated as to present at once all manner of architectural positions. The style, on the whole, is picturesque. Outside the little township, with its local bank and hotel, large and fertile fields wave and glisten in the summer sun. What once was mere common land is now converted into fruitful parks that slope gently to the sea. The spirit of industry and improvement seems at last to have seized upon the proprietors, and all the once heathy ground smiles now with clover or with grain. If there are no trees to cast their welcome shadows on the ground, there is plenty of oats and bere and sweet clovery grass.

It is often difficult to enter the harbour at low water. The writer remembers one occasion, when a local clergyman and himself sailed into it in a smart latine-rigged boat, and were unable to approach the pier for lack of water. There was no other way of getting out of the difficulty, than that of anchoring the boat and wading ashore. It becomes a rather awkward thing, when your boat runs aground, several yards from the beach, and an idle crowd of loafers witnesses your frantic effort to push your craft a little nearer land! The crowning point is reached when you are compelled to roll up and waddle to the pier, carrying your boots and stockings over your back! No doubt it is a very amusing spectacle; but not one tending to edification. As we look back upon those brief adventures, we feel some little satisfaction that all the perils of the sea are past.

The study of old tombstones is oft-times very interesting. The brief inscriptions recorded in some quiet corner of an old churchyard give many a glimpse of long ago; and in our rambles we noticed a few interesting monuments of such a kind. Many a curious stone has been touched too deeply by "Time's effacing finger," and the story of its being completely lost. Of many more we might say:—

"The lines by Friendship's finger traced,
Now touched by Time's are half effaced;
The few faint letters lingering still
Are all the dead man's chronicle."

A few specimens of Orcadian tombstones will suffice. The first is taken from a stone in the churchyard of St. Peter's, South Ronaldshay, and runs as follows :—

Heir lyes a very onest
 woman caled Caitrin
 Groat and spous to
 Donald Robson skipr
 deparitit the 4 of
 November 1648.
 Heir rests this corps
 Enclosed in clay
 As al must doeis
 At the last day.

Another, with the inscription running along the edge and across the middle of the stone, reads thus :—

Here lyes an honest man William Sutherland
 Mearchand in Sant Margrat Hop, spous
 to Caitrin Ritch, who departed this lyf
 the 8 of December 1660.

A shield is carved beneath the date, containing the initials of the two persons, W. S. and C. R., the one at the top and the other at the bottom. Beneath the W. S. are two stars and something like an old Rune letter, resembling the branch of a tree. Further down is the head of some animal like a roe-deer and a crescent moon. Then under the shield are the letters J. R. and B. R. with the skull and cross bones between. A curious tablet, finely carved, is built into the east wall of the church bearing the following inscription :—

In hope of a blessed and glorious Resurrection. Here lyes the corps of that Grave and Godly Matron Christian Hosack Spouse to Mr Richard Mein, Minister of the Gospel at South Ronaldshay and Buray. She departed this life in the Seventy year Of her age on Sabbath Morning being the first of March 1742. Conditur hic corpus Tenerum Celestia Petit Spiritus Victrix Potitur Gloria.
Memento Mori.

Old Orcadians appear to have been very pointed in narrating the circumstance of their being lawfully married. Upon a horizontal slab we made out another to the following effect :—

Here lays the body of
Thomas Tameson
Who was born in the
Year of our Lord 1742
And departed this life
September the first day
In the 42 year of his age
And was married to Cirstan
Tamson his lawful married
Wife. In September the 9
day 1784.

Within a few yards of the last, another quaint inscription, which met our gaze, is also worthy of being given as an illustration of the curious records of this city of the dead. It was also carved upon a horizontal slab of blue slate, and ran thus :—

Here lyes interred
 The body of Alexander
 Fubister, A man descend-
 ed of honest Parents
 And served his King
 with honour ; who di-
 ed the 28 day of Febru-
 ary 1788
 Aged 74 years.

Underneath this was a sand-glass, with a coffin on each side ; below the sand-glass was a skull, with a bell on each side, and below the skull the usual cross-bones. There were one or two more of a similar description, which may be passed over.

In the same churchyard we managed to decipher, after much difficulty, a more elaborate inscription and of an earlier date than the above. It ran thus :—

Sacred to the memory of Robert
 Robinson who departed this
 Life Jany. 22, 1728, aged 21.
 Here lyes a youthful hardy tar
 Life's troubled ocean past,
 Thro' storms and loud alarms of war
 He's anchor'd here at last.
 From dread of seas and adverse winds
 His sheltered bark's secure,
 For here serenest calms he finds
 Forever to endure.
 But once more he must rear his head
 With many of the fleet,
 His anchor weigh, his canvas spread
 His Admiral Christ to meet.

While standing one day within the churchyard of Stenness, we notice a slate slab with this inscription :—

Memento Mori.
Heir lies
the Remains of
Magnus Sinclair late
Sailor Stromness, Husband
to Ursula Clouston who
departed this life July
the 3rd day 1801
aged 47 years.
Afflictions sore
Long time I bore
Physicians was in vain.
The God thought fit
To call me hence
And ease me of my pain.

There is a striking similarity between this and another in the churchyard of Thurso. As both stones are of the same material, slate, we conclude that the Orkney stone was dressed and carved in Thurso, and thence transported to Stenness. Another proof of this is that the date on both is the same, viz., 1801. The Thurso inscription is in memory of an H. Anderson, and runs as follows :—

Afflictions sore ten weeks I bore,
The Doctor was in vain,
Till God did please
By death to ease
And took away my pain.

The same inscription is also found in a quiet country churchyard in the county of Essex, in the following form :—

Afflictions sore long time I bore ;
 Physicians all in vain,
 Till Christ did please to give me ease,
 And free me from my paine.

A few old tombstones are to be found in the sea-girt churchyard of Birsay. Upon one, which bears the date 1779, is the following couplet :—

To all you who do this see
 Learn to live as you'll wish to dee.

Another, dated 1770, bears this couplet—

Life how short,
 Eternity how long.

One stone, ornamented at the top with two carved faces and a sand-glass between, bears the following :—

Here are deposited the Remains
 Of Hugh Moar son of Hugh Moar,
 Tacksman of Boardhouse, he died
 October 6th 1805 aged 18 years.
 The life of man does quickly fade
 His thoughts are also frail and vain,
 His days are like a flying shade,
 Of whose short stay no sight remains ;
 Give joy or grief, give ease or pain,
 Take life and friends away,
 But let us find them all again
 In the eternal day.
 Life how short, how long eternity.

Passing from Birsay to Stromness we find one here and there of a quaint and curious description. Many of those

in the churchyard of Stromness are too much effaced to be legible ; but one, which we made out, runs thus :—

Heire lys interd the
Bodie of Isoball Ernest
Who was spous to James
Louttit and departed
This lif the 15 Apprile
1769 aged 47 years.
Its God that lifts
Our comforts Hay
Or sinks them in the Greve.
Hie gives Hie teaks
Blessed bie the Neam
Hie teaks bot what Hie gives.

Upon the tombstone of Robert Gray, shipmaster in Stromness, who died Nov. 25, 1735, the following verses are inscribed :—

Death steers his course to every point
Of this terrestrial globe,
And where he lands cuts quickly down
All living in this orb.
For I who underneath this stone
Ly sleeping in the grave,
While here on earth did stoutly scorn
Prud Neptune's raging wave.
Great swelling seas I overpast
When stormy winds did boast,
Yet death me seized when I was near
Unto my native coast.
Kind reader then be thou advised
Whither by land or sea,
To learn to live well then thou shalt
Prepared be to die.

In the churchyard of Flotta a few old stones are still to be

found, though many of them must have been destroyed during the erection of the last two churches. One, broken across the middle, was very lately rendered readable by having been embedded for some time in the earth. It bears the following words :—

Heir is the Buriall
Place of the Antient
Names of the Mouats
In 'Feerra. William
Mouat and Marjorie D.
Sutherland and his Gran-
Mother.

There is no date ; possibly it has been broken off or effaced by time. It must belong, however, to the end of the seventeenth, or the beginning of the eighteenth, century. These Mouats were a branch of the noble Mouats of Hoy, the Baronetcy of which family has been allowed to drop. Near this lies another stone, forming a link with the same family, with this inscription :—

This stone is placed here
In memory of John Suther-
land sometime Residen-
ter in the house of the Wh-
ome in Flotta. Who died 1788
Aged 74 years—And also
His Spouse Ann Moat aged
66 years—with Christa-
In Sutherland and their dau-
ghter aged 21 years. The
Descendants of which fa-
mily claim the sole right
Of this burrying ground.

The Sutherlands are the most numerous clan in this island, and formerly composed the greater portion of the original inhabitants. The Simpsons were of much later date, and came over to Flotta from Caithness some time last century. The progenitor of the Flotta Simpsons bore the name of William, and erected a tombstone in memory of four daughters who died young about one time. It runs thus :—

This stone is erected
By William Simpson in
The Bou as a testimony
Of affection for his 4
Loving daughters
Margrey, Margrat,
Hellen, Jean Simpson who
Died in the year 1808.

On the left side of this stone another stands, belonging to the same family, with a curious inscription in verse. It is worthy of being quoted here, and will be new to many. The stone is erected “as a mark of gratitude” to the memory of the wife of James Simpson.

Remember me as you pass by,
So as you are now, so once was I.
A heap of dust is all remains of me,
It is all I am and all the world shall be.

A more familiar form of this inscription, copied from the one on the tomb of the Black Prince, which is found in many country churchyards both in England and Scotland, runs as follows :—

Reader, behold, as you pass by ;
 As you are now, so once was I.
 As I am now, so must you be,
 Reader, prepare to follow me.

A churchyard in Northumberland possesses the following unique epitaph :—

Here lyes Jamie Trollop
 Whom these stones help to roll up,
 And when heaven took his soul up,
 His body filled this hole up.

As another sample of Orcadian poetry more than two hundred years ago, though not connected with the grave, we give the following inscription, which stood above the mantle-piece of the Old House of Holland, in Papa Westray, and which now forms the back of a lobby chair in the new house :—

Come, good folk, and make good cheer ;
 All cival people are welcome here,
 And only for a good man's sake,
 What God doth send ye shall not lack ;
 For good he was to me indeed,
 Forward then his name ye read.
 T. T. and M. C., 1632.

The initials stand for Thomas Traill and Marion Craigie. The old house was erected between 1628 and 1632.

One long slab, in the Cathedral Kirk of St. Magus, ornamented with skull and cross-bones, has this brief inscription :—

Heir Iyis an Godlie and vertous Isbel Calcri
Spous to Villiam Bannatyn of Garsay. 1612.

Another, ornamented similarly, has the inscription running along the edges, and reads thus:—

Heir Iyis Villiam Vrving ; Sone to Vmqll
Villiam Vrving of Sabay, Being schot. ovt. of.
Ye. Castel. In His Maiesties. Svs. Departit
Ye 20 of September 1614.

Beneath a skull and thigh bone are carved. This event, of September 1614, was when Robert Stewart was besieged by the Earl of Caithness and Bishop Law. A branch of this family of Irvings settled in Shapinsay two centuries ago, and it was from this island that the father of Washington Irving, the creator of such quaint characters as *Rip Van Winkle*, *Ichabod Crane*, etc., emigrated to America in the year 1768. The Irvings of Sabay were descended from the ancient family of the Irvings or Irvines of Drum, in Aberdeenshire.

This is only a mere indication of the style and tenor of some of the ancient Orcadian tombstones that came under our personal observation. There are, doubtless, many more as curious and instructive. Every churchyard possesses its full share of monumental stones, simple and ornamental; but many of these burying places have much need of being more carefully looked after and trimmed. Too many nettles are permitted to flourish unmolested, and not un-

frequently the bones of the dead are allowed to lie about unburied. The Rev. George Low, in his tour through Shetland in 1774, says he found no monumental inscriptions of any interest. They were all laudatory and possessed of no merit. He has only recorded one, which we give as a comparison between Orcadian and Zetlandic rhymes :—

None more devout to God can Thule boast,
Not one more just to man hath Thule lost ;
No father more benign and provident,
No gentler landlord e'er uplifted rent ;
No judge more forward to protect the poor,
No host to stranger kept an opener door.
No man more humble in a prosperous state
No more courageous under adverse fate ;
No kinder husband e'er espoused a bride,
Than he whose relicts here abide.

Mr. Low does not mention the name of the deceased person whose virtues are enumerated in these lines. Doubtless, he was a person of some standing and position.

CHAPTER XI.

The sea still ebbs and flows the same as then
The same stars peep from out the midnight sky,
But in those isles and bays are other men
Than those who lived and died in days gone by—
Those days that are so far beyond our ken.

AS we pass northwards amidst the islands of the Northern Sea we still meet with many interesting objects. About those northern bays and headlands remnants of the old Scandinavian period still linger lovingly. Upon the shore of Stronsay we find places bearing the names of Oddness and Torness, reminding the traveller of those ancient deities Odin and Thor, who were once held in reverence by the hardy sons of the wild seas. In its bay of Otterwick or Odinswick, *i.e.*, the bay of Odin, the Island of Sanday recalls similar memories. Pictish times are recalled by the remains of a Pict's house at Lambhead—the southern part of the Island of Stronsay. Near this spot are the remains of an ancient jetty, on which, we may suppose, many a war galley of the Vikings disembarked its crew.

At Quoyness, in Elsness, there is what appears to be a large *brough*—a mound which was opened in the summer of

1867 by Mr. Farrer, M.P. At the present time its diameter is about 63 feet, and its height $12\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Inside a building about 32 feet in diameter several cists were found. A passage about 12 feet long by 21 inches wide—of a nature similar to that at Maes-Howe—runs along from the south-east side of the mound. A number of decayed human skulls, which do not seem to have belonged to a very high type of man, were found here. In the course of the excavations many decayed bones were turned up. Four cists of a semi-circular shape were discovered within this *brough*—two of which contained skulls and a few human bones. The other two were empty. Three other cists of smaller dimensions and containing human remains were discovered. Some of the teeth found in them still preserved the enamel, and others bore evidenceto the fact that toothache must have made itself felt amongst that ancient people. In the midst of the rubbish a bone dagger, 7 inches long, a battle-axe of basalt, and a stone used for pounding corn, were found. One of the thigh bones measured $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, and was fairly well preserved. It is not yet precisely ascertained whether this mound was originally a burial place or not. Some of the excavated bones were forwarded by Mr. Farrer to Dr. Thurnam of Devizes; but that learned gentleman could only say they were of great antiquity—some male, some female, and some of children. Standing stones, Picts' houses,

and tumuli, are to be seen in almost every island of any size, and afford food for reflection to all who have a taste for such antiquarian relics.

Before quitting the once happy hunting ground of the Norse sea kings, we may look for a little at an ancient ruin in Westray known as Noltland Castle. It dates its construction from the year 1422, when Thomas de Tulloch, Bishop of Orkney, and Governor of the Earldom under Eric of Denmark, began to rear its massive and stately walls. The central building is shaped like an oblong parallelogram, and has other buildings attached to its angles. Remains of a courtyard are to be seen, with embrasures or *port holes* in the walls. The windows are large, beautifully moulded, and ornamented; and around them is the continuation of a string course of tablets, which make their appearance very effective. The basement is massive, while the upper storeys are more fanciful in design. This remarkable castle was stormed and seized by Sir William Sinclair of Warsetter in time of Bishop Edward Stewart, to whom the castle was restored. Adam Bothwell, Bishop of Orkney, was its last Episcopal possessor; and by him it was gifted over to his brother-in-law, Sir Gilbert Balfour, master of Queen Mary's household, and Sheriff of Orkney. After her escape from the castle of Loch Leven, Mary seems to have intended to take refuge in this northern fortress. Although its walls

were not to shield a noble Queen, they afforded shelter to the remnants of the defeated army of Montrose, and its owner Patrick Balfour paid for his hospitality by fine and exile.

“Like castles of higher celebrity,” says David Vedder, “Noltland had its Brownie, and a more painstaking and industrious drudge never wielded flail or sickle, spade or pitchfork. He would even construct and repair bridges, was a very Macadam at roadmaking, hauled up boats above highwater mark during storms, and procured instantaneous medical assistance to the lady of the castle ; in short, he was as superior to his cousin of Bodsbeck as a paradise pear to a rotten pippin ; but all would not do : the thoughtless laird went on from bad to worse, and after a little of wasteful extravagance, worthy of the lords of Castle Rackrent, his necessities drove him to seek a humble home, and soon a narrow one. For one short generation, Noltland struggled against time and decay, but it has now for a century been left to the undisputed possession of the Brownie, who, by way of keeping his hand in a little employment suited to his great age, celebrates the births and marriages of the Balfours by a kind of spectral illumination. This piece of superstition, noticed by Sleger, in his ‘*Theatrium Scotiæ*,’ is of Norwegian derivation, and I confess I am somewhat disappointed that the unshapely drudge should not have

illuminated his unearthly crust on the death of the member of this distinguished family also. The tomb-fires of the north are again and again alluded to in the Norse Sagas. William, Lord Sinclair, Prince of Orkney, and as many more titles as would weary the patience of a Spaniard, founded the superb chapel of Roslin, not only as a place of public worship, but as a sanctified receptacle for his remains and those of his descendants. This beautiful fiction was imported from Orkney along with its Prince, and the mighty Makkar of the north, has not been slow in seizing on the incident. The beauteous Rosabelle, the Rose of Roslin, perished in crossing the Forth ; and

‘O’er Roslin all that dreary night
A wondrous blaze was seen to gleam ;
’Twas broader than the watch-fires’s light,
And redder than the bright moon-beam.

Seemed all on fire that chapel proud,
Where Roslin’s chiefs uncoffined lie ;
Each baron for a sable shroud,
Sheathed in his iron panoply.

Seemed all on fire within ; around,
Deep sacristy and altars pale,
Shone every pillar, foliage bound,
And glimmered all the dead men’s mail.’

To supply the omission, however, on the death of a Balfour, their rocky hound, who has followed the fortunes of the family for centuries, might have uttered such unearthly

howlings from his cadaverous jaws as only Mrs. Radcliffe would have *imagined*, not *described*."

In his notes on Orkney and Zetland, published in 1822, Sheriff Peterkin includes a poem written, I believe, by the late poet Malcolm. In that poem Noltland Castle is thus referred to:—

On Noltland's solitary pile
 The last blush of the dying day
 Plays like a melancholy smile,
 And hectic glow on pale decay ;
 Such o'er consumption's cheek will stray,
 Ere the long night-shade round it lies,
 Life's last gleams, ere it wane away,
 Its setting sun and evening skies.

The moss of years is on the wall,
 And fitfully the night-winds start
 Thro' Bothwell's roofless ruined hall,
 Like sobs of sorrow from the heart :
 Upon each floor of cold damp sod
 The clustering weeds like hearse-plumes nod,—
 Thro' chambers desolate and green
 Hoots the grey owl at evening's close,—
 Meant for far other guests, I ween,—
 Where wave-worn beauty might repose,
 And find that bliss in love's caress
 Which hallows scenes of loveliness.

On this rugged coast, with its precipitous rocks, is a cave historically connected with the Jacobite movement in Scotland. After the disastrous rebellion of 1745, twelve gentlemen of Prince Charles Edward Stuart's army fled from their

pursuers and concealed themselves amid Orcadian wilds in this lonely cavern. Through a cold winter season these fugitives dwelt in this wild spot, from which they afterwards fled to Rapness. The strong attachment of Scottish hearts could not be broken even by the hardships of a fugitive life, and Scotia's noblest blood was shed like water for an unworthy cause. The fire of the ancient Vikings had not died out of Orcadian hearts, and many a hardy descendant of the Norsemen took arms for "bonnie Charlie."—

When Albyn's men of mountain blood
Rushed down, like their own torrent's flood,
To place the Stuart upon that throne
They warmly deem'd by right his own,
E'en in these isles each nobler heart
Burned in his cause to bear a part ;
But when the cloud of war rolled back,
And, like December's storm-smote rack,
Scourged darkly o'er its dreary sky,
In scattered ruin far did fly ;
When stretched revenge her gory hand,
Against the bravest of the land,
Then found they shelter in those caves,
Where sung to them the winds and waves :
In safety from the hand of power,
They passed away their darkening hour.

Not many years ago, the indefatigable hand of the seeker after antiquarian relics laid bare a Pict's house of considerable size in the little island of Papa-Westray. There is a large central apartment communicating with smaller ones at each end. Around these are a number of small cells, twelve

in all, of which two are double, connected by passages with the central apartment. The extreme width is very nearly 80 feet. Remains of similar Picts' houses or *broughs* are still to be seen in Rousay. In this island Jarl Sigurd resided ; and it was here, according to the *Orkneyinga Saga*, that Swein the Viking, son of Aslief, seized Jarl Paul Hakonson and carried him away to Athol about the year 1136. The scene of this exploit still bears the name of Sweinrow, and is situated near Westness House. Not long ago a sword was turned up by the plough here and believed to be a relic of that twelfth century exploit.

Here, as elsewhere, are many *broughs*, tumuli and Standing Stones, many of which lie in the valley of Sourin, which divides the island from west to east. In the autumn of 1880 *tumuli* on the farm of Corquoy were opened and the following account of them appeared in *Chambers' Journal* of January 1881 :—

“The spot where the explorations were made is a singularly beautiful and peaceful one. A wide amphitheatre of hills shuts out all view of the sea, save to the eastward, where a glimpse is visible, with Eagilshay, Eday,

And islands that together lie
As quietly as spots of sky
Among the evening clouds.

Were it not for the dull roar of the Atlantic, heard over the Northern hills, one would scarcely think the land was sea-girt. About half way up this valley may be seen a group of five grassy mounds close together, the largest about five feet high and fifty feet in circumference, the smallest only a little above the level. On being opened each mound

was found to contain a stone coffin or cist averaging two and a half feet in depth. These cavities are partially filled with a heap of fine black ashes mixed with calcined fragments of bone, all the surroundings being clearly fire-marked. The most interesting discovery, however, was that of an oval shaped urn or 'pot' in the cist of the large mound, heaped with ashes and bones, and resting mouth upwards. The urn measures—diameter of mouth nine and three quarters by eight inches, height seven and a quarter inches, diameter of base four and a half by three and three quarter inches, thickness averaging a quarter of an inch. The greatest care was necessary in extricating it as it was cracked in several places; but it was secured in fair preservation; and along with several bone specimens, is now placed in the Antiquarian Museum, Edinburgh. The ashes in all the cists were most carefully searched, in the hope of finding some articles not unusually in such interments; but in vain; nothing but ashes and bone fragments remained. It was indeed strangely difficult gazing at these insignificant relics, to connect them in any way with the touch of death; the lapse of centuries, no less than the purifying flame, had so completely robbed them of even the semblance of decay." Undoubtedly these remains belong to the period extending from the eight to the twelfth century. The material of these urns is steatite or soapstone, and such are of frequent occurrence in Norway, but seldom met with in Scotland, and only in localities formerly occupied by the Norseman. Of these we can only say in the words of Bryant,

Their share, in all the pomp that fills
The circuit of the summer hills,
Is, that their graves are green."

Here, too, may be noticed a huge slab of stone, not unlike those in the circle of Stenness, with a very wonderful history attached to it. In the days of miracles and other supernatural appearances there lived a mighty giant named Cubbirow beside the Fitty Hill of Westray. He seems to have had a feeling of enmity towards some unlucky individual and was determined to punish him severely. Although his

foe had fled to Rousay, a distance of about eight miles, the giant took up his position in Fitty Hill; and, seizing the huge slab, he hurled it at his enemy across the intervening Sound. A tremendous throw it must have been—over eight miles of sea! Of course, it is not wonderful that the marks of Cubbierow's fingers are to be seen upon that stone unto this day!

CHAPTER XII.

“ O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,
Far as the breeze can bear the billow's foam,
Survey our empire, and behold our home ! ”—BYRON.

MIDWAY between Orkney and Shetland in the wild tides of the North Sea lies Fair Isle.

“ A lonely isle
'Twixt Hetland and the Orkneys there looms forth,
Uprearing high to Heaven its bold, proud head,
The Fair Isle—to Shetland appertaining,
And of like origin, and by like race
Inhabited at first. A mere insect
It seemeth, from a thick swarm disjoin'd,
And here alone into the wave cast down.”

Its lofty promontories rise above the waves that sweep in furious glee around its precipitous shores, and serve the purpose of a distance indicator to the passing mariner. If the surrounding sea is wild and dangerous, so are the crags that guard this solitary islet from the storm. It is inaccessible on every side save one. That is the south-east side, where some little shelter is afforded for small vessels. One of these promontories rises in a conical form to a height of about 480 feet. In summer months this is a spot of favour-

ite resort for tourists, who give a peep at this little gem of the ocean, and then, elated at their daring, return to the Orcadian or Zetlandic capital. The hilly ground which overlooks the heavy ocean swell below affords abundant pasturage for sheep. It is now almost three hundred years since a Spanish Don was unexpectedly cast ashore upon this little isle. The year 1588 is memorable in the annals of English history as the one in which the Spanish Armada suffered grievous loss upon our rock-bound coasts; and it was in that year that the flag-ship of Don Gomez de Medina was wrecked upon the island. In his description of the Isles of Zetland, Sir Robert Sibbald gives an account of this incident. The Spanish ship, which had been driven so far north by the fury of the storm, split and went to pieces in a creek on the east side of the island; "but the Duke* with 200 men came to shore alive, and wintered here in great miserie." Such a number of additional mouths to fill soon told upon the larder of Fair Isle. Before the ravenous appetites of these Spanish warriors sheep, fishes, and fowls quickly disappeared. When these means of subsistence failed their Spanish teeth were whetted on horse flesh. The islanders began to fear for the consequences of this

* Since Sir Robert wrote it has been clearly shewn that it was Don Gomez de Medina, and not the Duke of Medina, who was wrecked here.

enormous feasting; and though well paid for all the strangers ate, their own lives required to be preserved. Many of them collected what food they still had and concealed it carefully out of the reach of their hungry guests. As weeks passed by prospects of a famine seemed certain, and many of them died of hunger. Reduced to such straits, the soldiers soon became so weak that some of the islanders could easily pitch them over the steep banks and thus end their misery. A boat was despatched, however, to Zetland to bring succour to the famished island. Andrew Umphrey of Bury brought the Spaniards over in his own vessel, and entertained them with better cheer. The Don remained at Quendale until his host's vessel was got ready. Here "(imagining the people did admire him), he made his interpreter ask Malcolm Sinclair of Quendale if ever he had seen such a man? To which Malcolm, in broad Scots (unintelligible to the interpreter), replied, 'Farcie, in that face, I have seen many prettier men hanging in the Burrowmoor!'" The Don and the survivors of his ill-fated expedition were conveyed to Dunkirk by his kind entertainer, whom he rewarded with three thousand merks.

Like many more of the North sea islanders the inhabitants of this "lovely isle of the sea" were for long inveterate smugglers. Sir Walter Scott* speaks of them as "sober,

* *Scott's Life*, Vol. III., p. 174.

good-humoured, and friendly, but *jimp* honest," meaning that they had not too rigid notions of *mine* and *thine*. There are over 200 people altogether, and, no doubt, are as worthy as their Zetlandic neighbours. The crofts are small, running from four or five to ten acres of arable land. A considerable quantity of fish is cured here yearly, principally coal fish. One hundred tons or so is said to be the annual amount.

Fair Isle has long been noted for its brilliantly variegated hosiery, the art of knitting which was derived from the Spaniards during their enforced residence upon the island. The women dye their own worsted and, we may add, demand their own prices.

Many a good ship has come to grief in the dark winter nights upon the dangerous skerries that jut out along the coast. In July 1877 the steamship *Duncan*, bound for Archangel, struck during a fog. An amusing incident is related about a missionary, who was on board suffering severely from sea-sickness. When he heard the ship strike he fancied that they had touched at some port, and demanded that he should be put ashore immediately. On the 6th of December of that same year the German vessel *Carl Constantine* struck upon Fugla stack (Fowl Stack, from *Fugl*, a fowl). The crew were saved, during a heavy sea, with the exception of the skipper, whose brains were dashed out while jumping ashore, and a common seaman.

During a fog on the 23d day of May 1868, the *Lessing*, of Bremen, with 465 emigrants on board, sailed into Claver Geo, near Sheep Craig. The passengers were rescued by Fair Isle boats, which rowed them through a tunnel, after which they were hauled up the face of the cliff by ropes.

Fair Isle is joined to the parish of Dunrossness, whose minister pays occasional visits for the purpose of celebrating the sacrament of baptism and marriages. Scott relates that on one occasion quite a number of children required to be baptized in the "slump." One precocious youth, on receiving water on his face, exclaimed to the minister, "Deil be in your fingers!" Mr. William Laurence is catechist in connection with the Church of Scotland, as well as registrar for the island.

Before bidding farewell to the North Sea we shall describe some of our fishing exploits, which were very enjoyable in those summer months. One evening we formed the resolution to go cod-fishing the following morning. We retired early to bed, that the morrow might find us fully prepared to make an early start. Relieved as it was with visions of monstrous fish being pulled aboard by our eager hands, the night passed quickly enough. The knocking of our landlord soon dispelled those bright anticipations; and, having thrown on our clothes, we partook of a hasty meal and set out for the beach. Our two fishing guides were there already

hauling down the boat to the water's edge and putting all the fishing gear into proper trim.

The sun was just emerging from his watery bed in the smooth North Sea, and the little islands in our vicinity loomed up before us in the cold grey dawn. The scene was beautiful and peaceful ; it tended rather to send us off into a sentimental mood than to fit us for our work of slaughtering innocent cod. But the word was given : the boat glided from the pier, and the fishermen bent willingly to the oars. In forty minutes we were out on the open sea, close to the eastern entrance of the Pentland Firth, and in a favourite spot to begin operations. Rigging ourselves out in oilskin suits, we prepared to shoot our lines and catch what fish we could. The line consisted of a semi-circular hoop of iron with a pretty heavy lead weight in the middle. From each end of the hoop a fathom's-length of line was suspended having a bright hook attached, and from the weight between ran the main line. The hooks were baited with limpets, or cockles, or other shell fish, and sometimes with pieces of fresh herring. Having shot over our lines from the side of the boat, we allowed them to touch the bottom ; then, pulling them up for a fathom and a half, we continued drawing the lines up and down until we felt a bite, when the line would be hauled up as quickly as possible. Whenever the glistening of a cod was seen through the water

we began to get excited, and pulled away with fresh energy until we got the fish to the surface, from which we hastily filliped him aboard. It sometimes happened that as we were on the point of landing our fish he would quietly drop off the hook and, with a waggish flop, disappear to the bottom

Such fishing was very pleasant. By changing our ground occasionally we managed, with two lines, to haul aboard about three score goodly-sized cod and a few ling before the sun had reached the zenith. By this time the pangs of hunger began to make themselves felt. A supply of oat cakes and fresh milk was produced, and our natural craving quieted. Another hour or two brought a few more fish ; but after that our luck changed. Considering that we had got enough for one day, we shipped our lines, hoisted our main and jib sails, and steered for the shore before a brisk breeze. The sea air and the healthy exercise had given us a good appetite, and when we landed ample justice was done to our substantial dinner.

In fine weather such excursions were our great delight, and brought their own peculiar rewards of fresh fish and fresh experience. There is a method of catching deep-sea cod other than that referred to. It is by means of an instrument called a "murderer"—not a very euphonious name!—consisting of a long bar of lead measuring about eighteen inches, with numerous hooks attached, and suspended at the

end of a long strong line. This instrument is towed at the stern of the fishing boat, and by its means many a large cod bids farewell to the Pentland Firth. It seems, however, that very many escape with torn gills and other misfortunes. Such a method of cod-fishing does not seem altogether fair, at least to the foolish fish. They expect something more substantial than cold lead and a baitless hook. But, I suppose, invention is justified of her children.

Saithe-fishing is perhaps more interesting. These large black fish are caught with rods and white fly-hooks, generally in great numbers. The most suitable time for them is shortly before the gloaming until dusk. One very favourite spot for these fish is the north-east point of the little island of Switha, half-way betwixt South Walls and South Ronaldshay. There, many a summer evening as the sun was gently sinking behind the hills of Hoy, and casting its slanting rays across the Sounds, some fifty boats would be seen busily engaged in fishing for the strong coal fish. As the dusk crept on, the air would become melodious with the songs and cries of the merry fishermen, and, like the sea, ripple with their hearty laughter. One small boat would many a time come ashore with over five score of these grey fish.

About midsummer of 1882 a most extraordinary take of these fish was obtained. For upwards of a week they

came down in shoals from the northern islands in pursuit of the small sand eels, and literally made the sea appear a moving mass in many places. At this time the usual method was abandoned, and the eager fishermen pulled the great majority of the fish aboard with clips—large hooks fixed on rods. As the multitude of grey fish swam hither and thither in pursuit of their favourite “sea-breed” the fishing-boats followed as fast, and renewed the wholesale slaughter. On shore the scene was as remarkable; for as each boat came in with its load the scaly denizens of the deep were piled in heaps upon the beach, until the wives and fishing girls carried them away. One week of such sport seemed sufficient to drive the most of this remarkable shoal further south, where they met a similar fate. For more than a quarter of a century the like had never been experienced. Part of the same multitude of saithe was surprised off the coast of Peterhead some weeks later, when some ingenious son of science blew them up with dynamite, and strewed the surface of the sea with their lifeless bodies! Such a method of destruction seems far more objectionable than the simple process of gaffing them from small boats.

During the spring season herring-fishing is carried on in a very peculiar manner. Four ordinary stocking wires are suspended horizontally upon a line at intervals of about

eighteen inches; at the end of each wire a small bright hook is attached with about six inches of small cord, and the end of the line is weighted by a piece of lead. No bait whatever is put upon the hooks, and the line is sunk to the bottom from the side of the boat and kept in constant motion up and down. The herring appear to be attracted by the bright hooks, for three or four at a time are usually hauled aboard. The time best suited for this kind of fishing is between sunset and dusk.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Peace to the husbandman, and a’ his tribe,
 Whase care fells a’ our wants frae year to year !
 Lang may his sock and cou’ter turn the glebe,
 And bauks o’ corn bend down wi’ loaded ear.”

ROBERT FERGUSSON.

MUCH of the land in Orkney is freehold, burdened with feu-duties to the Crown or to the Earl of Zetland. Formerly a large portion of the land was held under *udal* or *allodial* tenure.* Proprietors under this system were called Udallers, and they required no written right ; but it has since come to be held under charter and sasine like land in the other districts of Scotland † The Udaller was somewhat

* “Udal-land is such as the owners have in *All-hood*, acknowledging none but God alone for it. Latin writers call this *Alodium*, or *Alodum*. . . . the Orkneymen and Shetlanders *Authil*, Uthel or Udal. A compound of Tuetonick Ode, signifying property or possession, and of Ole or Ale,—which in the same language, signifies *ancient*. And thus by an Udal or Alend, an Odal or Alod, is meant an ancient inheritance patrimony or possession.”—Mackenzie’s “Grievances,” p. 103.

† There are few Udallers at the present day in Orkney, though in Shetland many small land holders possess their lands by this ancient and honourable tenure. It still exists, however, in Norway. The Norwegian proprietors (or *bonde*, as they are called) “hold their land on what is called udal tenure, and pay no duty, real or nominal, to feudal superiors. There appears, however, to be a species of entail connected with the udal tenure ; for, if the udalman alienate his land to a stranger, the next of kin has the right of redemption.” See “Behind the Scenes in Norway,” by W. L. McFarlan, p. 124 (Glasgow : 1884.)

like the English yeoman. "He was a peasant, for he tilled his own land and claimed no distinction among his free neighbours ; but he was also noble, for there was no hereditary order superior to his own. The king might wed the Odaller's daughter or match his own daughter to the Odal-born without disparagement, for he himself was but the Odal-born of a larger Odal. . . . The King might enforce the military services of the Jarl—the Odaller owed none to any of them. Nothing short of actual invasion entitled the Jarl to call them to arms by the Ward-fire, and with all their passion for the sport of war, many a right and immunity they won or redeemed, as the price of their consent to some foreign Viking-för."* A udal tenure was the exact antithesis of a feudal one, and passed, as we have said, without writing to the descendants of the Udallers.

"The full Odals-jord, or birthright of the udaller, embraced, with minor privileges, (1) a share of the lands within the *garth* or enclosure of the 'toun' or hamlet ; (2) a share in the scattald, or pasture outside the hill dykes of the 'toun,' proportionate to his share in the town lands ; and (3) a right of joint succession, along with his brothers and sisters, to the lands of his ancestor."* These possessors were known as

* Balfour's *Oppressions in the Islands of Orkney and Zetland*, Intro., p. 31.

Boondi, or Freeman ; while another class, called the unfree, was originally composed of the thralls of the Udallers. The Odals-jord resembled a Middle-Age guild or corporation, which bestowed certain privileges upon all within its pale. The farms, generally small, vary from six or eight acres to several hundreds : in the North Isles a few extend to over one thousand acres. Besides the arable lands, called pennylands, merklands, farthing-lands, and cowsworths, each farmer has the right to send so many cattle or sheep to the common hill, and to cut peats in the bogs or mosses adjoining the farm. Where there are small uninhabited islands in good pasturage the people on the next have the right to keep sheep there, of number according to the extent of their holdings. On such islets or holms several hundreds are often seen. They are allowed to run wild ; and are only interfered with when a farmer requires some fresh mutton, or when the shearing season comes round. On these occasions the sheep are all driven by dogs down to some low part of the shore, where they are confined, as in a natural pen, until the desired animals have been taken from the flock. Besides the right of peat moss, every farmer has also the right to a certain portion of the sea-ware which the tide casts up upon the beach. Where three or four farms adjoin a certain part of the coast line they generally collect the whole of the sea-weed in slump, and then divide it

according to the extent of their lands. During the last twenty years or so farming in Orkney has advanced with rapid strides ; so great, indeed, has been the progress that these islands can now compete with many far more favoured districts of Scotland.


The old Orcadian plough, so peculiar in itself, has now been consigned to the keeping of the antiquarian ; and its place has been taken by more modern implements. The old-fashioned instrument of agriculture was very generally used in 1814, the date of the Agricultural Report on Orkney, and it is still to be seen in use at Rackwick, in the parish of Hoy. It consisted of one stilt, devoid of either ground wrist or earth board ; and when in motion it required the weight of the ploughman upon one side to press it into the soil. Three or four oxen yoked abreast drew it along : it generally did no more than scratch the surface of the ground. With such a plough, it need not be wondered, farming in the far north was more primitive than profitable.

It is interesting to compare the following account of Orcadian farming two hundred years ago with that of the present day. "Their arable ground," writes Mr. Brand,†

* Sheriff Rampini's *Shetland and the Shetlanders*, p. 55.

† *A Brief Description of Orkney, &c.*, by Rev. John Brand—1700. p. 28.

“is better and more fertile, than at first to strangers appeareth, whence I heard some gentlemen declare, It was wonderful to think, how great the product of these isles is, considering the many barren mountains and much waste ground that are in them. They dung their land for the most part with seawe, which having gathered, they suffer to rot, either on the coasts, or by carrying it up to the land upon horses or on their backs, they lay it in heaps, till the time of labouring approach ; which is the reason why the skirts of the Isles are more ordinarily cultivated, and do more abound with corn, than places at a greater distance from the sea, where they have not such gooding at hand. Their ploughs are little and light, having only one stilt, and but little iron in them ; hence when at the end of the ridge, he who holds it lifts it up and carries it to the other side of the ridge, and if he please may carry it home on his shoulders : the reason they give of this is, that although some of their ground be strong, yet their beasts are weak and unable to go through with a plough of any considerable weight.”

David Vedder informs us, in his sketch of the “Laird of Yarpa,” that the old Orcadian plough was like “a large Roman  fallen to the ground, like Dagon before the Ark.” He also gives us an amusing picture of an old “pickie laird,” at the tail of such a plough. “What a delightful treat,” he says, “it would have been to some Lothian

Triptolemus to have seen him on a spring morning ploughing his fields, like another Cincinnatus, dressed in a sheep-black coat, waistcoat, and breeches, bedizened with large pewter buttons of his own casting ; long, lank, sandy hair issuing unformed, unshorn, from beneath his broad blue bonnet ; a long, bare, scraggy neck, bronzed with the suns of forty summers ; nose somewhat aquiline, with a brown aqueous substance pendant therefrom ; upper lip begrimed with beggar's snuff while his legs were enveloped in twisted straw, generally known by the name of 'strae-boots !'" The harrows were somewhat like the plough, being all wood, and did little else than comb the soil. On little plots it was a common sight to see women drag them along ; and even in the year of grace, 1883, the present writer has seen the same thing !

In those primitive days grain was winnowed, not by means of fanners, but upon the top of some "fairy-knowe," where the wind performed the necessary operation. At that time, too, the method of portage was peculiar : two creels, called "the clibber and mazy," upon the backs of ponies constituted all the means of carriage. These creels, which were often made of straw, were termed "cubbies" or "cazies." In them the people carried peats from the moss, or grain from the mill. Carts have now taken their place ; it is very rarely that the traveller sees the more primitive custom which reminds one of a half-civilized period before the

steamboat sounded its shrill whistle amidst the solitudes of rocky islets or in the dull haze of North Sea fog.

It was many a long year before the small Orcadian farmers could be persuaded to depart from the primitive methods and to adopt the more approved and modern style. They were "dour Conservatives," loath to quit the customs of their forefathers. The example of some gentleman farmers of a more practical and improving turn of mind soon brought an agreeable change; and at the present day the art and science of husbandry is practised with a skill that commends itself to every scientific agriculturist. A regular rotation of crops is in general practice; while turnips, potatoes, and artificial grasses are profitably grown. Some of the heaviest and most beautiful crops of oats and bere that I have ever seen are raised on many of these islands. The great productive manure employed is sea-weed, which forces up crops unsurpassed in any other part of the north of Scotland. The quality of the grain may not, perhaps, be in complete conformity with the quantity of the straw; but the harvest field of a small Orcadian farmer is much superior to that of many a farm in the county of Fife. When the holdings are small the land is cultivated with as much attention and care as many a large garden. That may explain the remarkable fertility of some of the soil. Land recently formed from hill or moss is not so good, and the crops raised are deficient in strength and quality.

On account of the humidity of the climate and the lack of continued snows and frosts, the rearing of cattle and sheep is more profitable than the cultivation of cereals. The cattle, which appear to be much larger than those in the northern counties of Caithness and Sutherlandshire, are a very satisfactory source of revenue to the owners. The breed of native sheep is the *ovis cauda brevi*, "the short-tailed sheep," of Iceland and Shetland. Sheep of this kind are allowed to run almost wild upon the hills and smaller islands. To all appearance they are not a very profitable investment; yet their wool is of a very fine texture, and much prized by the fair sex. Amongst others are to be seen flocks of Swedish merinos, South Downs, Cheviots and crosses.

The system known as the "run-rig," so prevalent in the West Highlands, also existed, until lately, in Orkney. Under this system the lands of the different tenants were mixed together in admirable confusion. In the harvest-time each farmer distinguishes his sheaves from those of his neighbours by the peculiar way in which he tied the band. "The process," says Mr. Gorrie,* "by which the run-rig lands were laid into severalty was called 'planking.' Each township, or group of small farms, in Orkney goes under the denomination of so many pennylands, farthing-lands, cows-

* *Summers and Winters in Orkney*, by Daniel Gorrie, 2d Ed., p. 303.

worths, settens, and marklands. These divisions—indicating no definite extent of ground, and differing even in conterminous townships—corresponded originally perhaps to the amount of land-tax paid at some remote period. In the process of planking, which threw the common field into severalty, separate sections of the arable and grass lands were assigned to the various holders in proportion to the number of pennylands, farthing-lands, cowsworths, and other denominations represented in their title-deeds. The average extent of each plank was about an acre, but the system of redistribution, thus commenced, was not satisfactorily completed until the different heritors, renouncing their portions of land that lay *sparsim* over entire disticts, and receiving equivalents elsewhere, succeeded at last in compacting their properties, and in rendering agricultural progress possible." After the "run-rig" system was abolished the advance in the agricultural prospects of Orkney was rapid. Larger farms became prevalent, better implements were introduced, muirland was reclaimed, and farming became more profitable than ever it had been before. An idea of the great progress made can be obtained from a glance at the Appendix, where a year's exports are given. The only representatives of the old Udallers are now to be found in the "hundred lairds of Harray," who cultivate the freeholds which remain in their possession. All rents are now paid in money, payment in

kind having fallen into disuse. In the smaller isles farming and fishing are carried on together, and between the two a comfortable living is obtained.

It may be interesting to observe in what light the farmers and crofters of Orkney regard their present position. This can be done by a glance at the evidence brought before the "Crofter's Commission" in the latter part of July 1883. One grievance, which, indeed, is common to the whole of Scotland, is the want of compensation for improvements to outgoing tenants. It is very hard that a man should be squatted upon a piece of moorland, and, after long years of hard labour which has rendered the soil much more valuable, be charged a high rent for what he has produced himself. The want of fixity of tenure is much felt in many of the islands, few leases being in force. One old Orcadian custom ought to be abolished at once, that of compelling small crofters or tenants to labour for the large farmers whenever required. This was very aptly described by Mr. Fraser-Macintosh as "forced labour." The wages received for such work are small. It is alleged on the other hand that unless for this custom it would be impossible to work the large farms; but if that is the case it would be much better to divide these large farms into smaller ones of about 40 acres or so, which would support a family respectably and comfortably. Leases never seem to have been demanded

by Orcadian tenants, and there is no doubt that if they really desired leases they would receive them at once from the Earl of Zetland and other proprietors.

When one comes to compare the farms and dwelling-houses in Orkney with those of the Western Hebrides and Shetland they see a marked contrast. The houses found here are quite different from the long black huts of the Lewis, being built of dry rubble, a kind of flagstone prevalent in the county. The fields are well cultivated, and very high prices have been received this season (1883) for cattle. Yearlings run from £7 to £10, while two-year-old beasts go from £10 to over £20. It appears that many of the small crofters are forced to manufacture kelp, and to cut peats for very inadequate pay. The profits derived from kelp should be shared in by those who do all the drudgery in the course of its manufacture; such an arrangement would only be fair to the crofter. The grievances in the Orkney Islands, however, are small, and may easily be remedied if the proprietors and tenants would take a rational view of matters.

At the present time Orcadians are better clad and housed than ever they have been. Instead of their feet being encased in "rivellings," the Orcadian ploughmen now wear leather boots and shoes. Ploughmen's wages have advanced considerably within the last thirty years. Where

a man in 1851 received from £3 10s. to £3 15s. in the half-year, he now receives from £8 to £10, with the same amount of meal, milk, and potatoes. It would be a good plan to transfer good ploughmen to vacant crofts, for they would be the most likely persons to improve the soil to the best advantage.

The class of small proprietors, at one time so numerous, unfortunately seems to be growing less ; but a few are still to be met with in most Orcadian parishes. The parish of Harray occupies the unique position of being mainly owned by small lairds, who farm their own land. The valuation of the parish amounts to £1279 10s., and there are 155 holdings, 5 being under £1, 53 between £4 and £5, 90 between £5 and £30, 7 over £30, and 1 at £50. The commonty has been divided amongst the heritors, and being chiefly moorland pasture, is of very poor quality. In Birsay there is a number of small lairds also. The Earl of Zetland owns £1200 of a total rental of £2621 12s. 7d. Seventy-six proprietors own the remainder. There are 309 holdings, of which 10 are between £30 and £100 in value, 2 over £100, and 297 under £30. An ordinary farm is valued at from £6 to £20, and contains from 12 to 40 acres. The small lairds of Harray and Birsay seem to be very contented and prosperous, and have nothing at all to complain of. At a former time the feu-duty paid to the

Earl of Zetland used to be in butter, malt, oatmeal and poultry ; but now they are all paid in money. Since steam communication was opened with the south, the prospects of Orcadians have become ever so much better ; the best markets are now open for their produce.*

The general style of farm-houses is much superior to what prevailed a few years ago. Proprietors seem to be desirous to improve the dwellings of their tenants : none deserves more praise than J. G. Moodie Heddle, Esq. of Melsetter, on whose estate large, commodious, and comfortable farm-houses have been and are still being erected. By opening up good roads, that gentleman has also much improved the parish of Walls. The ordinary cottages are built of stone and clay with a slight addition of lime. They are roofed

* It is interesting to know the state of the islands nearly three centuries ago, which can be seen from the following quotation from *The Abridgement or Summarie of the Scots Chronicles, &c.*, by John Monipennie, (Printed at Brittaines Burse, by John Budge, 1612) : p. 188. " Now follow the isles of Orknay, (of old called the realme of the Picts,) lying scattered, partly in the Deucalidon Sea, partly in the German Sea. The common people to this day are verie careful to keep the ancient frugality of their predecessors, and in that respect they continue in good health, for the most part, both in mind and body, so that few die of sicknesse, but all for age. They have barley and oats, whereof they make both bread and drinke. They have sufficient store of quicke goods, neate, sheepe, and goates, great plentie of milk, cheese and butter. They have innumerable sea-fowles, whereof (and of fish for the most part) they make their common food. There is no venemous beast in Orknay. There is no kind of tree except hadder. They have an old cup amongst them, called St. Magnus cup, the first

with thatch or grey slate, and are more comfortable than they look. Many of the doorways are less than five feet in height, and I have seen some where it was necessary to nearly double yourself before entering. A "but and a ben" constitute the usual apartments, with the addition, perhaps, of a closet between. In a few cases the fire-place still stands in the midst of the main apartment. After having penetrated the furthest corner of the room, the smoke finds its way out by a hole in the roof. To a stranger entering such a place the scene is not inviting: some minutes must elapse before the occupants can be seen through the haze of smoke. But in a few minutes the scene begins to disclose itself, and after all, you find it less disagreeable than at first sight you felt it to be.

man that brought the christian religion in that countrie. There are about thirty three islands in Orkney, whereof thirteen are inhabited, the remnant are reserved for nourishing of cattle. The greatest isle is Pomona; the firme land 30 miles of length, sufficiently inhabited. It hath twelve country parish churches, and one towne, called Kirkwall. In this towne there are two towers, builded not farre the one from the other; one of them appertains to the king, the other to the bishop. Betwixt these two towers stands one church, very magnifick: betwixt the church and the towers, on either side, are sundry goodly buildings, which the inhabitants name the king's towne and the bishop's towne. The whole island runs out in promontories or heads, the sea running in, and makes sure havens for ships, and harboures for boates. In six sundry places of this isle there are mines of good lead and tin, as it is to be found in any part of Britaine." To shew the advance in population &c., since then it is only necessary to mention that instead of twelve parish churches there are now over thirty.

As you enter the main door you turn to the left, because the cows and calves claim the sole right to take the other turning. The people and the animals live under the same roof. If your eyes have been at all sharp, and not pained by the prevalence of "peat-reek," you must have observed a young pig or two lying comfortably stretched before the fire, which is generally only two inches or so above the floor. The pig's youthful days are happy ones; for during that brief period of his existence, little dreaming of the sad fate that awaits him when he has grown into a fat greasy porker, he is allowed free scope to develop himself and to enjoy the comforts of life. Quietly resting as if an honoured guest, a solitary calf may be observed in one corner of the kitchen. Hens and other fowls roost in the rafters above, or benignly perch upon the end of a long log, one part of which is slowly consuming in the fire. Around the hearth are seated Tammack and Betsy, Jimmack and Maggie, chatting away the long winter night, while the old folks blink in the ingle nook. Such a scene is still common in many of the smaller isles; but the nineteenth-century culture and domestic science are gradually creeping round such cozy dwellings.

The peasantry who live in these humble cots are more contented and better-to-do than those of a similar class in the south of Scotland. The reader, however, must not

imagine that all the cottages of the humbler Orcadians are of such a type. Though they were once the rule, these are now becoming the exception ; and the rising generation are erecting homesteads as good and tasteful as any one may see. All classes are noted for their politeness and hospitality, and the general intelligence of the great majority of the fishermen strikes a Southerner at once. That is explained by the fact that many have been on whaling expeditions at Davis Straits, and have served as sailors on board trading vessels. The Dundee whaling fleet still takes a good contingent of Shetland men every year to the Arctic regions, and on the return voyage disembarks them in the Bay of Longhope.

A peculiarity, which strikes a Scotchman more than an Englishman, is that all funerals are attended by males and females alike. When a woman dies the bier is carried the first part of the way by females, who are afterwards relieved by the men. This custom, which is more common in England and Ireland than in Scotland, appears to be of great antiquity in Orkney.*

When a marriage is celebrated it is considered a very important event in the island ; and sometimes the rejoicings

* As the accuracy of these remarks has been questioned by a reviewer of the first edition I may add that they are written from personal knowledge. Such a custom, as here referred to, was seen by the writer in one of the South isles.

last for several days. The company, often large, assembles at the place of rendezvous ; and, the ceremony having been duly performed by the parish minister, the feasting and jollity begin in earnest. Immediately after the knot is tied the *cogue* is circulated. The *cogue* or "leem" is a large wooden bowl filled with liquor, a mixture generally of wine, ale, whisky, &c. Each guest tastes, and then, pledging at the same time the health of the happy pair, passes on the bowl to his neighbour. The dance then begins ; and when a few hours have been spent in that way "an adjournment is made" for supper. Then dancing is resumed. When any of the company tire they can either sleep in the house or go home to their own dwellings. They return the following day ; and the festivities are not allowed to flag until the second or third day, when the féast comes to an end. Such lengthy festivals are now getting out of fashion ; and I think that is well. "Time and tide wait for no man," far less for customs. Oblivion gapes and swallows all it can receive, and consigns everything to the bosom of a forgotten past. No wonder our great poet said that

" We are such stuff as dreams are made of,
And our little life is rounded with a sleep."

Lest we disturb the solitude of Lethe's dream, we will let that mighty past sleep on.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Yes ! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
 The simple pleasures of the lowly train ;
 To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
 One native charm, than all the gloss of art.”—GOLDSMITH.

IT is a matter of regret that so many of the good old customs of Scotland are gradually dying away, at least falling into disuse. Among the many may be numbered the harmless and innocent sports of Hallowe'en, which Burns has commemorated in immortal verse, as the time when

“ Merry, friendly, country folks,
 Together do convene,
 To burn their nits, and pou their stocks,
 And haud their Hallowe'en.”

In Orkney and Zetland the mysteries of Hallow Eve are still to a certain extent kept up.

A fellow tourist describes as follows the revels he witnessed in these islands :—“ On the evening of Hallowe'en some years ago, and about eight o'clock, the noise of footsteps was making towards the house where I lodged ; and in a brief interval a gentle rap at the kitchen door intimated that admittance was requested. The servant had been permitted to visit her friends on that evening, to 'haud her

hallowe'en ;' and my landlady, who, it appears, was a stranger in this immediate district, and who was employed at the time, sent her little boy to open the door. The youngster no sooner opened it than he gave a yell, and took to his heels, seeking the 'benmost bore,' where I was seated in company with a gentleman from Strathmore. 'What's the matter with you, my little fellow,' said I; 'who are you?' He could hardly give me an answer; but kept gaping and gasping, and roaring, 'They're a' white B—a, they're a' white; will they tak's—t'inkest doo?' I had scarcely time to thoroughly understand what he said, when in rushed my landlady, shrieking, in a half-stifled voice, that the kitchen was full of *fairies*; and had we not instantly assisted her to a seat, I believe she would have fainted and fallen, for her lips and nose were as bloodless and white as drifted snow, and her knees were trembling like a dock leaf.

'Fairies,' quoth the gentleman, 'by —— I'll have a shot at them;' and as he rushed upstairs for his fowling-piece, which I knew was loaded, I whispered to my landlady not to be afraid, as perhaps the fairies were come to pay me a visit. I felt I had committed an error, for my remark only tended to increase her terrors; and I said nothing to prevent the gentleman from seizing a loaded gun to clear the house of the supposed 'spirits of the hill.' Were the gentleman to present the gun, I inferred, the fairies would take

to flight, and the object of their mission would be destroyed. To prevent this, I proposed we should enter the kitchen unarmed, and speak kindly to the mountain strangers, who, for aught we knew, were come to visit us on business of importance. I was the first to enter; but I hastily retraced a few steps as soon as I saw the kitchen literally full of beings, whose appearance, being so unearthly, shook the gravity of my muscles, and forced the cold sweat to ooze out from every pore in my body. There they stood like as many statues, one of whom was far above the rest, and of gigantic dimensions. Eyes, mouths, or noses, they had none; nor the least trace of a countenance. They kept up an incessant grunt, grunt, grunt, or a noise partly resembling swine and turkey cocks. Their outer garments were as white as snow, and consisted of petticoats below, and shirts on the outside, with sleeves and collars. They were all *veiled*, and their head dresses or caps were about eighteen inches in height, and made of straw twisted and plaited. Each cap terminated in three or four cones of a crescent shape, all pointing backwards and downwards, with bunches of ribbons of every colour raying from the points of the cones. The spirits, for such they appeared to be, had long staves, with which they kept rapping on the floor. Between them and the door stood one as black as 'Horni;' but more resembling a human being than any of the others. His

head dress was a *South-wester*, and he had a *keshie* on his back. My landlady by this time had considerably recovered and the sight of the *keshie* tended greatly to allay our doubts, and we all ventured into the kitchen.

Immediately upon our entering the kitchen they formed themselves into pairs and commenced hobbling and dancing. When asked what they wanted the *keshie* was presented; and in it was a piece of mutton and other eatables. Their chieftain, or leader, muttered in a disguised and guttural tone of voice, that they would take anything we chose to give them. My landlady gave them some mutton and oat-cakes, with which they appeared highly elated, and returned thanks with bows and curtseys; but still kept up the incessant grunting. Before leaving the door, however, they inquired of me, in the same guttural tone of voice, if they should go to the Minister's. 'Certainly,' said I; 'be sure you go there, and give him a specimen of *your dancing*; for the minister is a very liberal gentleman, and will, I doubt not, fill your *keshie*.'"

Such is a description of what was common enough some thirty years ago in the Far North. When a band of *guizards* have had a fair night's work they generally assemble at some rendezvous, where all the good things are disposed of in a festive manner. The leader of the gang is known by the name of *Scuddler*, while the one with satanic appearance is

called Judas. Around some large kitchen fire the fairies of an hour before are transformed into ordinary mortals, busily engaged in such culinary arts as roasting fowls and fish, which, along with the oat-cakes, soon disappear from view. The "cups that cheer but not inebriate" are circulated round the merry group, with, perhaps, a taste of something stronger than tea.

When the feasting is over, and the "wee short 'oor ayont the twal" has come, another ceremony awaits its due performance. The customary dram-glass half-full of water, with a fresh egg, is entrusted to the care of a matron who is well known for her insight into the dim future. The reader of future events, upon whose *ipse dixit* all the hopes and fears of the merry guizards hang, seats herself in their midst and gently pours a little of the white of the raw egg into the glass, exclaiming, "An' whase forthun' o' thee lams, is this i' the glaiss? Thine, I daresay, Maigie." The Maggie mentioned is the oldest unmarried woman in the company. "Weel, trouth, lam," says the matron, "thou'll sthune be richt aneuch. Leuk'st thoo *there*, Maigie, at that saxear (six-oared boat) comean fae the haaf fu' tae the wayles (gun-wales) o' ling an' tosch. Na micht I trive, Maigie; but I see a braw new hoos nived wi' poanes (cut turf), an' nae less than twa marks o' laund." Such important information brings the Norse blood to the damsel's cheeks, and fills her eyes

with a glow of satisfaction. "Twa marks o' laund," thinks Maigie; "that wad keep twa coos, an' twa mares, an' twa rools (year-old ponies); aye, that wad *it!*"

In all the islands of Orkney there are still kilns attached to almost every barn. Though now disused, they remain as memorials of a past generation and relics of an abandoned custom. Formerly every Orkney farmer dried his grain in one of these kilns; but now they have been superseded by more modern inventions. On Hallow Eve it is a common custom for youthful maidens to possess themselves of a clew of worsted, and to mount the top of the nearest kiln, just as the gloamin' is beginning to merge into night. Unwinding the clew, the damsel lets it drop inside the kiln, exclaiming at the same time, "Wha hads on to my clew's end?" If the fates have been properly propitiated she receives the answer from her lover, who, stationed below, calls his name up the opening, and thus confirms the secret longing of her heart. It generally happens that lovers are pretty well informed as to when and where the operation is to be performed; so the fond wish does sometimes in the end evolve itself into reality. On one occasion a young lass sallied forth to her master's kiln to perform the necessary ceremony, and to discover who her husband was to be. Observing the move on the girl's part, a certain old dame resolved to give her a surprise, and hastened off to station herself at the foot of the

kiln. When the lass cried down, "Wha hads on to my clew's end?" she heard, in answer, "The Devil!" Being of a superstitious turn of mind, and thoroughly believing the reply to be genuine, the maiden took to her heels and hid herself within the house. No consideration would induce her to go outside the door on that Hallow Eve!

Customs such as these still linger amid the green islets of the Northern Sea. They seem loath to quit a scene renowned in story and in legend as a rendezvous of witches and trows, who stay within the green hills and sea-washed caverns, until the gloamin' of Hallow Eve invites them forth to hold their revels, and to weave another piece of the great web of fate. These remnants of a gigantic superstition have almost passed away, and Hallow Eve is now a time of jollity and of mirth, when young hearts warm towards each other as the story circles round the hearth, and as the nuts crackle in the bright peat fire. Long may our youth enjoy their Hallowe'en,

"When all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green;
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen!"

"Superstition," says Sir Walter Scott, "when not arrayed in her full horrors, but laying a gentle hand only on her suppliant's head, had charms which we fail not to regret, even in those stages of society from which her influence is

well-nigh banished by the light of reason and general education. At least, in more ignorant periods, her system of ideal terrors had something in them interesting to minds which had few means of excitement. This is more especially true of those lighter modifications of superstitious feelings and practices which mingle in the amusements of the ruder ages, and are, like the auguries of Hallowe'en in Scotland, considered partly as a matter of merriment, partly as sad and prophetic earnest. And with similar feelings, people of tolerable education have, in our times, sought the cell of a fortune-teller, upon a frolic, as it is termed, and yet not always in a disposition absolutely sceptical towards the responses they receive."

Several popular expressions lead us back to the same fairy realm of Valkyrie. At the present day some irate dame may be heard exclaiming "Trow tak' thee !" to her unmanageable children. To turn a boat against the sun or *widder-shins* at the beginning of a voyage is considered to be unfavourable. Fishermen studiously refrain from saying the word "Kirk" while setting out upon a fishing excursion; for if they do so they are certain to have ill-luck. If they must refer to the Kirk, it is by the name of the *Heulie*, meaning the holy place, or *büanhoos*, or *banehoos*. Ministers must not be spoken of either. They are mentioned as *Up-standers*, *hoydeen*, or *prestingolva*. A knife is called *skunie*,

or *tullie* ; the devil, *da Auld Chield*, *da Sorrow*, *da ill-health* (health), or *da black tief*. It was not lucky to see a cat crossing the path, nor even to mention it ; a cat was called *kirsor*, *fitting*, *vengla*, or *foodin*. It was a very unlucky thing to tread upon the tongs, which were known under the name of *divin*, or to be asked as to one's destination.

Marriages celebrated on a Thursday, and while the moon is growing—the waning moon being thought unpropitious—are regarded as very fortunate. Friday is said to be a bad day on which to celebrate a marriage. That contrasts strangely with what prevails in the South of Scotland, where Friday is looked upon as the most propitious day for such a celebration. Such inconsistencies may well shake anyone's belief in the efficacy of all similar observances. In a few outlying corners of remote islands one or two charms may be met with. These are generally to ensure safety at childbirth, and consist of pamphlets containing a copy of the letter sent by Abgarus, King of Edessa, to our Saviour, and the reply to the same, along with the letter of Lentulus to the Roman Senate concerning Christ. How such apocryphal documents came into circulation amidst the islands of the North Sea, and for such a purpose, is hard to determine. Probably some itinerant merchant or *yagger* introduced them among the gaieties of Kirkwall Fair, when that market was in its palmy days.

Many peculiar words, mostly of Norse derivation, are still to be heard in the every-day conversation of these Islanders. The names applied to the different parts of a boat, to implements of agriculture, and to fishing gear are all of this description. In Orkney the majority of topographical names are of Norse origin, while in other parts of Scotland they are Celtic. A few examples may be given here. An *Ayre* (Norsk *öre*) is a low sandy promontory, while *Ey* is an island. *Bö*, or *Bu*, is the name applied to the principal farm in a parish. *Cleat* is a rock or elevation: *Dale*, a valley; *Flaes*, a sunny spot; *Geo* (old Norsk *gja*), a narrow creek; *Gaert* (Norsk *garthr*), a large farm. This last word also exists in other parts of Scotland, as *Gerth* or *Garth*, used in the same sense. *Howe* (Norsk *hangr*), is a mound or elevation, e.g., *Maes-Howe*. *Holm* is a name applied to a small grassy island. *Kill* is a spring; *Noust*, a quay; *Oyce*, a water source (old Norsk *os*), related to the verb *ouse*, to throw out water, or bale a boat. *Roust* is a rough tide, or stormy sea; *skail*, a clashing noise, such as that caused by the sea breaking upon the beach, cognate with *skelder*, which means the same thing. The turn of the tide is called the *snaar*, while the swell of the sea is the *dy*. The *Swaar o' the dim* is midnight. *Toft* is an enclosure, and *voe* is a bay, the Norwegian fjord.

Some very sweet expressions are used in the nursing of

children, and it is a very interesting thing to hear a mother croon her little one to sleep. The writer was struck with this on more than one occasion, and especially with some of the peculiar words employed, a few of which are harmonised in the following song :—

AN ORCADIAN CRADLE SONG.

Ba, ba, lammie noo,
 Cuddle doon tae mammie ;
 Trowies* canna tak' thoo,
 Hushie ba, lammie.

Me bonnie peerie† bird,
 Sleepin' in me bosie ;
 We manna speak a word,
 Pirrin's‡ noo sae cosie.

Ba, ba, peerie t'ing,
 Sleep a bonnie nappie ;
 Thoo'll sleep, an' I'll sing,
 Makin' lassack§ happy.

Fedder's fishin' i' the sea,
 Catchin' cod wi' herrin',
 Bringin' hame his fish tae thee—
 Tae me sonsy bairn.

Ba, ba, lammie noo,
 Cuddle doon tae mammie ;
 Trowies canna tak' thoo,
 Hushie ba, lammie.

* Trows, the fairies of Orcadian superstition. † Peerie, small, *wee*.

‡ A name applied to a little girl, probably composed of *peerie* and *ane*—little one.

§ Diminutive of lass.

CHAPTER XV.

“ We’ll keep our customs—what is law itself,
But old established custom? What religion,
(I mean with one-half of the men that use it,)
Save the good use and wont that carries them
To worship how and where their fathers worshipp’d?
All things resolve in custom—we’ll keep ours.”

IN Orkney, as elsewhere, there still exists much of the superstitious feeling once so prevalent. It is quite a common practice amongst the Zetland fishermen, when out at the *haaf* or deep-sea fishing, to stick the blade of their knives into the mast to bring luck. Another plan is to spit into the mouth of the last-caught cod; and the consequence, they say, is that it will be followed by a fish equally large or larger. Sometimes it is rather amusing to hear an old grey-haired fisherman exclaim, while hauling for cod, “ Pu’ doon cod!” “ come on cod!” or interjections of similar import. Whether such invitations have any effect upon the dwellers in the briny deep is a matter of speculation. They are merely the decaying remnants of a bygone superstitious generation, and are fast following their forgotten comrades into the unfathomable realms of oblivion.

While Hallowe’en had its share of attention in bygone

days, Hogmanay was not forgotten. On that evening bands of minstrels were wont to pass from house to house and favour the dwellers with their melodies. One of these, still remembered, was the following song :—

- “ Peace be to this buirdly biggin’ !
 We’re a’ Queen Mary’s men,
 From the stethe* unto the riggin’,
 And that’s before our Lady.
- “ This is gude New Year’s even nicht—
 We’re a’ Queen Mary’s men ;
 An’ we’ve come to claim our richt,
 And that’s before our Lady.
- “ The morrow is gude New Year’s day—
 We’re a’ Queen Mary’s men ;
 An’ we’ve come here to sport and play,
 And that’s before our Lady.
- “ The hindmost house that we came from—
 We’re a’ Queen Mary’s men ;
 We gat oak-cake and sowen’s scone ;
 The three- lugged cog was standing fou :
 We hope to get the same from you,
 And that’s before our Lady.
- “ Gudewife, gae to your kebbock-creel,
 We’re a’ Queen Mary’s men,
 And see thee count the kebbocks weel,
 And that’s before our Lady.
- “ Gudewife, gae to your gealding-vat †
 We’re a’ Queen Mary’s men,
 An’ let us drink till our lugs crack,
 An’ fetch us ane an’ fetch us twa,
 An’ aye the merrier we’ll gang awa’,
 And that’s before our Lady.

* Stethe=foundation.

† Gealding-vat, fermenting vat.

- “ Gudewife, gae to your butter-ark—
We're a' Queen Mary's men ;
An' fetch us here ten bismar mark ;
See that ye grip weel in the dark,
And that's before our Lady.
- “ May a' your mares be weel to foal—
We're a' Queen Mary's men,
And every ane be a staig foal,
And that's before our Lady.
- “ May a' your kye be weel to calve—
We're a' Queen Mary's men ;
And every ane a queyoch calf,
And that's before our Lady.
- “ May a' your ewes be weel to lamb—
We're a' Queen Mary's men ;
And every ane a ewe and a ram,
And that's before our Lady.
- “ May a' your hens rin in a reel—
We're a Queen Mary's men ;
And every ane twal at her heel,
And that's before our Lady.
- “ Here we hae brocht our carrying-horse *
We're a' Queen Mary's men ;
An' mony a curse licht on his corse ;
He'll eat mair meat than we can get ;
He'll drink mair drink than we can swink,
And that's before our Lady.”

This peculiar rhyme takes its origin from the time when the Roman Church held sway. The Virgin is the “Our Lady” of the song. The friars of the Roman Church were,

* The Jester, or “Baldy.”

in all likelihood, the first who went the rounds like the mendicants or king's beadsmen of former days.

New Year's Day is observed as a general holiday, and all the youths of the different islands assemble at some common or level ground and spend the day engaged at the game of football. The inhabitants of the various islands which stud the North Sea appear all to enjoy this game. From the snows of Iceland to the milder clime of the Orkneys the ball is kicked into the air every New Year's Day. As illustrative of this, I quote a passage from Dr. Dasent's translation of the Saga of Gisli the Outlaw :—"Those brothers-in-law, Thorgrim and Gisli, were very often matched against each other, and men could not make up their minds which was the stronger, but most thought Gisli had the most strength. They were playing at the ball on the tarn called Sedge tarn. On it there was ever a crowd. It fell one day when there was a great gathering that Gisli bade them share the sides as evenly as they could for a game. 'That we will with all our hearts!' said Thorkel, 'but we also wish thee not to spare thy strength against Thorgrim, for the story runs that thou sparest him, but as for me, I love thee well enough to wish that thou shouldest get all the more honour if thou art the stronger?' Now they began the game, and Thorgrim could not hold his own. Gisli threw him and bore away the ball. Again Gisli wished to catch the ball, but Thorgrim

runs and holds him, and will not let him get near it. Then Gisli turned and threw Thorgrim such a fall on the slippery ice that he could scarce rise. The skin came off his knuckles, and the flesh off his knees, and the blood gushed from his nostrils. Thorgrim was very slow in rising. As he did so he looked to Vestein's house and chaunted :

' Right through his ribs
My spear point went crashing ;
Why should I worry ?
'Twas well worth this thrashing.'

Gisli caught the ball on the bound, and hurled it between Thorgrim's shoulders, so that he tumbled forward, and threw his heels up in the air, and Gisli chaunted :

' Bump on the back
My big ball went dashing :
Why should I worry ?
'Twas I gave the thrashing.'

Thorkel jumps up and says : ' Now we can see who is the strongest and best player. Let us break off the game !' and so they did."

Hardly a century ago the Highlands and Islands of Scotland were the notorious scenes of many a smuggling enterprise, and in the Northern Isles this contraband trade was well known. The Island of Stroma, lying off the shore of Caithness at the east entrance of the Pentland Firth seems to have had a very important share in such under-

takings; and the following story is connected with that island: A good many years ago the excise officers of Kirkwall were aware that an extensive trade in the manufacture of illicit liquor was being carried on by several of the inhabitants of this lonely island; and, do what they could, they found themselves utterly incapable of preventing or putting an end to the practice. The leader of the famous gang one day told the chief exciseman that he would give him and his men an opportunity of arresting him with smuggled goods in the following week: by that time he purposed disposing of a large cargo in the Town of Kirkwall. This information, so frankly given, was received in a rather credulous manner by the protector of Her Majesty's customs, who, notwithstanding, resolved to be on the look-out for such a lucky occurrence—if, indeed, it should take place. In the following week the bold smuggler kept his word, and landed a fine cargo at Scapa Bay. As he was carting his kegs along the road towards Kirkwall the representative of Her Majesty came upon him and seized the horse's head, announcing that the cargo was his in the Queen's name. The Stroma man, pretending to be much surprised, endeavoured to resist the assault of the custom-house officer and pulled vigorously in the opposite direction. Struggling in this manner, they proceeded slowly to the Orcadian capital. At every opening the smuggler tried to get his horse and cart off the main

road ; and, at last, his opposition became so strong that the officer despatched his assistant for more aid. This was what the Stroma fellow desired and as they proceeded along the road the other fisherman, who had been walking behind began quietly, as he trudged along, to abstract all the kegs one by one from the cart and to drop them as quietly into the deep ditch which ran so handily beside him. When the custom-house was reached the amazement of the officer may more easily be imagined than described. He now saw through the stratagem of the smuggler, and knew that by this time the other fellow had disposed of the illicit goods. Having no pretext by which he might detain the sharp-witted islander he was compelled to let him go, with the hint that he would not be so fortunate the next time. Despite his determination, the next incident was as unfortunate as the first.

Some months after the episode related above, the excise-man received intimation that the crew were approaching Scapa with another cargo of spirits. Hurrying down to the bay he observed the yawl moored at the jetty. To make certainty doubly sure, he seized a large boulder lying by, and, going up to the side of the boat, dashed the stone through the bottom, sinking the craft as a matter of course. "There," said he, "I have got them now. They won't get their kegs up in a hurry." With this sage reflection, he

departed in search of more assistance. When he arrived at the bay the second time with his men, he found the Stroma fishermen looking eagerly for their bark. After the action of the exciseman was explained to the skipper he burst out into a loud laugh and informed the zealous officer that, this time at least, his zeal had outrun his discretion ; for all the cargo had been landed before the yawl was moored, and while he was sinking their craft they were busily disposing of their goods. The baffled officer not only lost the "find" which he imagined was so certain, but he also had to make good the damage done to the boat. Experience, no doubt, taught the exciseman its usual lesson.

On another occasion a custom-house boat pursued one of the Stroma smuggling craft towards the Pentland Firth. As the pursued boat rounded Cantic Head it suddenly slipped into a large *geo*, which is there, and thus eluded the zealous excise officers, who sailed right on little dreaming of the stratagem. When the tide turned, the Stroma boat shot out from its temporary concealment and set sail for St. Margaret's Hope, where its cargo of smuggled liquor was soon disposed of. The unsuccessful pursuers returned late in the evening to learn with chagrin the clever way in which they had been out-manceuvred.

At another time a very exciting chase took place in the Pentland Firth towards the direction of Dunnet Head. An

excise boat was in pursuit of that of some smugglers. The chase was long and exciting. Each crew strained every nerve to get the victory, every sail was set, and every sheet was strained to its utmost. As the flying boats neared Dunnet Head the wind rose, and in a very short time the Firth had an exceedingly wild sea on, that tested the skill of the seamen to the utmost. The excise boat seemed to be unable to cope with the stormy Firth, and so gave up the chase. When this was observed by the smugglers one of their number lifted a keg to his mouth, and in a loud voice drank the baffled officer's good health.

When the Rev. George Low visited Stroma in 1774 all cultivation was performed by the spade, at which the people were very dexterous. At one end of the island near the sea there used to be a tomb containing the famous natural mummies; but, from being left exposed to the intrusion of sheep that trampled the skeletons to pieces, these soon disappeared. At one time a large number of people resorted thither to visit this vault. These natural mummies, says Mr. Low, were preserved in the same manner as beef and mutton "by skeuing, that is by placing the body in a situation where the air can get in to absorb the juices, but insects are excluded; so that in time the body becomes like a dried haddock." Some of these mummies also existed in Walls; but a certain superstitious old woman buried them

from the view of mortal eye. On the west of the island several small arrow-heads (*sagittae Lamiarum*) of flint have been found. Not long ago the belief that the possession of these weapons prevented any interference of the fairies or trows with their cattle was very prevalent among the islanders.

A good story is told of one of these islanders, who happened to foregather with an old acquaintance at Longhope. When they met the two cronies adjourned to the inn, and called for two glasses of whiskey. The Longhope man, well known for his lengthy supplications, was asked by the other to say grace. But as the Stroma* man fancied there was to be no end, at least for a considerable time, of the thanksgiving, he quietly drank off both glasses. When the other finished and found the liquor gone, he upbraided his companion for his conduct, especially while he was engaged in the devout exercise of prayer. "Very weel," says the Stroma fellow, "it's a' richt ; but ye manna forget that the Bible tells ye to 'Watch and pray.' Ye should hae been watchin." !

* It may be proper to mention that the real heroes of this incident were *both* Longhope men.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ Far as the eye could reach, no tree was seen,
Earth, clad in russet, scorned the lively green.”

THROUGHOUT the various mosses in these islands are still to be found many remains of trees. Every bog, almost, contains pieces of large-sized trunks embedded amongst the moss, and in many of them the wood is well preserved. At some early period Orkney must have been graced with its waving woods, no less than the other parts of Scandinavia. Then the surface of the country must have presented a much more remarkable appearance than it does now. The mystic Druid would then, perhaps, cut his mistletoe from the boughs of some stalwart oak, and perform his religious rites within the moon-shaped circle of Stenness, or upon the rock-bound coast of some favourite isle, where

“ Screams round the arch-druid’s brow the sea-mew—white
As Menai’s foam ; and towards the mystic ring
Where augurs stand, the future questioning,
Slowly the cormorant aims her heavy flight,
Portending ruin to each baleful rite,
That, in the lapse of ages hath crept o’er
Diluvian truths, and patriarchal lore.”

When these woods waved and rustled in the cold north wind the principal fuel was obtained from them. Since then the

climatic influences have been slowly changing ; wood began to get scarce, and another source of heat must be discovered. The credit of shewing the early inhabitants the way to utilize turf for such a purpose is attributed to Einar, one of the ancient Jarls, and son of Count Rognvald. This Jarl had been sent by his father across to Orkney and Shetland to put down a band of pirates who were devastating every place in their vicinity. After some severe contests, it appears that Einar was victorious and the pirates all slain. Having devoted some attention to the condition of the people amongst whom he had come, he noted the lack of sufficient fuel, and encouraged them to make use of the turf in the many mosses that abounded throughout the islands. From this circumstance he gained the appellation of Torf-Einar.

It is an eventful day in Spring when the peats for the coming year are cut. Early in the morning there is a mustering, not of the clans, but of the neighbours who are to assist the farmer with his work ; and after a hearty breakfast is partaken of the cavalcade sets off to the hill, or rather moss. For once, at least, the dreary moorland becomes an animated scene, gay with the coloured dresses of the women, and lively with the activity of all. From three to five men are told off for cutting the turf, which is done by means of a peculiar spade, about four feet

in length, called a *Toysker*. The blade shoots out at right angles to a smaller blade and is a foot in length, while a foot up the handle a wooden nob juts out at right angles to it and the larger blade. Upon this nob the cutter places his foot and so drives down the spade into the turf. The spade cuts the peats into their proper size, and when cut they are seized by a woman, who stands in front, and thrown to the side of the bank above. The surface, however, which is generally heather, requires to be cleared or *flayed* off, before the turf suitable for peats can be reached. The work goes on from morn till eve, relieved only by a rest about mid-day, when dinner and refreshments are brought to regale the busy labourers. Four or five men, with the same number of women to lift up the peats, can cut about one hundred load in a day—an amount which is, in most cases, sufficient for the wants of an ordinary homestead where nothing else is burned. In the moss there are two kinds of peat prevalent. One sort is very dark and almost black, and this is considered the best for domestic purposes. The other sort is brown and looks well, but does not burn so well as the other ; it is popularly known by the name of *yarpha*. There may be added a third kind, composed mainly of the upper turf, coarse and brown, which burns badly and gives an unnecessary amount of smoke. If possible it is to be avoided.

When the dusk sets in the wearied peat-cutters prepare to

return to the homestead under whose auspices they have been labouring for the day. Arriving there they find the feast prepared—in many ways resembling an Orcadian wedding feast—and they set themselves beside the hospitable board to discuss with vigour the many good things that lie so temptingly before them. Tea and toast, ham and eggs, bannocks of bere and oat cakes, pancakes and buns, soon disappear. After full justice has been done to the supper table, the floor is cleared and a strange transformation occurs. Who could have thought that these sprightly lads and lasses, who are now “tripping the light fantastic toe” so merrily, were the same as those we saw returning wearily from a hard day’s labour? But music hath charms, not only “to soothe the savage breast,” but also to give new life and vigour to the jaded limb, and to change a scene of toil into one of real enjoyment. No doubt the morrow will dawn upon some aching bodies, but that is never thought of in the midst of such innocent merriment. It is good that toil should be followed by some recreation, and our populations would be healthier and happier were there more mingling of work with play.

After a few weeks the peats are set on end so that they may dry more thoroughly, and arranged in small heaps. This operation is known as *raising* the peats, and is often repeated.

When dry they are built in larger heaps and then conveyed home. In former days this was done by means of ponies with a pair of straw panniers or *maysies*, attached to a kind of wooden saddle or *clibber*. Such a process was termed *leading* the peats, and a long string of ponies might have been seen jogging along, led by *peat* boys. But now it is different. After the peats are collected and carried in *cassies* to a suitable spot, they are carted home either by oxen or horses, and this is a much quicker plan than the old process. The time chosen for getting the fuel home is immediately before herring fishing begins, which is about the middle of July, when the majority of the men set off to the various stations to do their best at the herring harvest. Many a cold and stormy night they experience when far out at sea, but they must endure it all to "win the bairnies' breed"—

"For men must work and women must weep,
Though storms be sudden and waters deep,
And the harbour bar be moaning."

There is one bright, red-letter day in the annals of Orcadian agriculture that must not be passed over in silence. It is a day looked forward to by all young people with great pleasure, and when passed is long remembered. It is the *rooing* day, when the sheep are shorn. The name is derived from the old process that was formerly in force of tearing the wool out by the roots with the hand. In Shetland this

is still done and cannot be called anything else than a barbarous practice, which gives much pain to the poor suffering sheep. The only reason in support of it is that it makes the ensuing crop of wool of a very fine texture, and thus keeps up the high character which Shetland hosiery has obtained. In Orkney, however, we do not think this is now done, though the name *rooing* still preserves the ancient practice from being entirely forgotten. About the middle of the "leafy month of June," when the waving hay fields are shining in the sun, and the air is heavy with the breath of summer, the merry Orcadian shearers prepare for a day's enjoyment and toil. We must explain, however, that the majority of the sheep are kept on one of these small isles called *holms*, which generally extends across the mouth of every large bay. Two or three hundred are usually together on one of these islets, belonging, perhaps, to thirty or forty different persons. When the eventful day arrives two or three from every homestead that owns a portion of the flock prepare to set out with the others. It is more like a picnic party than anything else. Large baskets and boxes filled with all kinds of good things are carried down to the shore, where the men are busy launching the necessary boats. Young maids and girls troop along the road to the accustomed rendezvous dressed in their gayest costumes. Petticoats of blue, scarlet, and pink flutter in the morning

breeze, while their wrists are encased in snow-white cuffs, flowered and ironed; the ribbons of their large sun-bonnets wave behind their backs, and their happy voices ring out now and then in innocent laughter at some joke or other that has tickled the risible faculties of some of the group. The *noust* or quay presents an animated appearance with men and women getting the boats hauled down and loaded with provisions and other necessary articles. "Come thoo peerie boy an' shove off this boat." "Maigie, what's keepin' thee that thoo's sae lang in comin' doon?" "Oh! I buist bide an' tether-da coo." "Come, lassack, jump in-ower, or I'll gang awa' mesel, an' lat thee bide." With such and similar ejaculations the various boats are at last got under way, and in half an hour or so the whole party are landed upon the holm ready to begin the work of the day. And what a scene ensues! Dogs bark, men halloo, women "raise a terrible skrach; an' sic a wark, an' sic a murgis,* thoo never saw a' thee born days." Girls and boys run over the green knolls and drive the terrified sheep down to the shore, where they are surrounded in a sort of natural pen. The bleating of the lambs and the baaing of the sheep mingle with the din, and for a time it is nothing else than "confusion worse confounded." At last something like

* *Murgis*—a great ado, a continuous noise.

order is restored. The sheep requiring to be shorn are singled out, and the clack, clack of the shears is heard. Joke and jest go round, and everything seems "merry as a marriage bell."

About mid-day a stop is made, the baskets, hampers, etc., are brought forward, bottles of milk and something stronger are uncorked, and there ensues a feast—if not of reason at least—of good things. An observant eye may note here and there two objects moving slowly along the shore behind some overhanging rocks : a lad and lass that have detached themselves from the main group are now indulging in that universal pastime of love-making. There they wander beside the heaving sea, telling "the old, old story" of loving hearts that is yet ever new. May their future lot be as bright as this summer day !

As the shades of evening steal over the rippling waters, and as the sky assumes its burnished hue, which is usual in these latitudes at this time of year, the *rooing* party prepares to return to their island home, and once more the bustle of preparation disturbs the screeching sea birds as they circle overhead. The dip of oars is heard, sails are set, the bleating sheep are left behind—their fleeces lying snugly within the departing boats—and so ends this gala day in the Northern Sea. For most it has been a pleasant and enjoyable holiday coming in to break the monotony of a busy

season. The sea voyage, the change of scene, the picturesqueness of the place, the merry hearts, have all tended to sweeten the associations of such a day. It is a yearly festival—if we may so call it—that is unknown to inland agriculturists, but which is enjoyed to the full by the younger folks of many an Orcadian farm, who upon that day feel the luxury of unbounded liberty, when voice and limb find free exercise, and the glow of “purple youth” deepens on the sunburned cheek. At such a time

“ All the earth is gay ;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,”

and we feel that life has some sunny spots after all.

One evening after the rooing-day we determined to accompany two fishermen in their endeavour to net a few herring. It was a beautiful summer evening, though somewhat cold, and we sailed out to the fishing ground in one of the ordinary yawls. The sun was just setting in all its northern splendour behind the distant hills of Hoy, whose summits gleamed in the dying glory. But though the sun disappears from view his light lingers still behind, and tinges with a ruddy glow the midnight sky. As hour succeeds hour the horizon is still bright with the mellow beauty of the departing day that mingles with the coming morning. In these Orcadian sounds and bays it never seems to be night at

all during the summer months ; so clear is it that a newspaper can be read quite easily at one o'clock in the morning.

On such a night we lay out upon the ebbing waters, waiting till it was time to haul the nets which we had set. Stretched out in the bottom of the boat we could hear the harsh *craik* of the sleepless landrail as it echoed over the fields, and now and then the wild cry of some belated sea-bird. How still, how peaceful it all seemed ! The reflection of the vanished sun gleamed upon the waters like the beams of the moon, and the scattered clouds drifted dreamily along the sky. When an hour or more had passed we began to haul in the nets, but as fathom succeeded fathom and still no signs of the glistening fish, we felt it was an unsuccessful haul. It was as we anticipated ; there were no fish within the meshes, and so we set them once more. Another hour passed on ; the remaining lights that were still visible from many a cosy homestead gradually disappeared, and we were alone with the moaning sea. Again the nets are pulled aboard, and this time with better luck. Seven gleaming herring are ours ! Poor sport you will say for a cold night's work ; but these seven herring, used as a bait, will procure upon the morrow no less than three score of good sized cod.

Every night has not the same result. Sometimes many score of herrings are caught in these small bays for bait, and

occasionally two or three cran. It is not on so large a scale as the fishing that is done by the larger decked boats; they often procure sixty and a hundred cran in one night. These sold for a £1 per cran bring in a very good night's pay. Though the sea may be alive with fish, it is almost impossible to net many of them in a clear night; dull weather suits the fishermen a good deal better. We can look back to many a pleasant day and night spent upon the open sea, when our fishing-lines were in good trim and the boat well stocked with captured fish. How delightful the return to land after a good day's sport! How sweet the slumber after all the toil!

“ Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil ; the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar ;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.”

CHAPTER XVII.

“ But lost to me, for ever lost those joys,
 Which reason scatters, and which time destroys.
 No more the midnight fairy train I view,
 All in the merry moonlight tipling dew.
 Even the last lingering fiction of the brain,
 The churchyard ghost, is now at rest again.”

ALMOST every people has, sometime or other, believed in those tiny beings who float around “this visible diurnal sphere,” and mingle unseen with the affairs of men. Orkney possessed its full share of such beings. At one time it must have been teeming with trows or fairies, witches, elves, and mermaids; but these imaginative superstitions are fast giving way before the stern fight for gain, that so often dulls the lively imagination, and robs life of all its poetry. Beside many a gurgling burn, and upon many a green knoll, these creatures of another world held high revel, and the old Orcadian saw with awe their ghostly shapes flitting before him, as they set out upon their nightly mission to invade

“ The moon’s sphere,
 Or hang a pearl in every cowslip’s ear.”

The ingle-nook was formerly enlivened by the ready story-

teller thrilling his eager audience with his wonderful tales of these ethereal beings, who could be seen

“By mountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen.”

The ears of childhood were enchanted by such recitals, and the youth's imagination loved to picture all the scenes of which he had been told, and to reproduce them again and again. Every spot, which was the reputed haunt of these strange trows, became clothed with a sacred and deeper interest, and looked upon with unconscious reverence. But our dull customs laugh at such gentle beings, and “hard creeds have succeeded to the fairy lore.” Poor Puck, whom Shakespeare loved to picture, has been buried in the harebell, and all his race seem to have vanished from our shores. No more their airy forms steal through the moonlight after the curfew bell has tolled; we can only see dark shadows now. The fauns, and nymphs, and driads of Grecian and Roman poetry are dead, gone like the mighty poets who sang their praises!

Is it not a pity, too, that we should willingly let die those delightful stories that tell of the time when every tree had its Dryad, and every fountain its Nymph? The late Lord Lytton gives expression to that regret in his “Complaint of the Last Faun,” from which we cull the following:—

“ The moon on the Latmos mountain
 Her pining vigil keeps ;
 And ever the silver fountain
 In the Dorian valley weeps,
 But gone are Endymion’s dreams ;—
 And the crystal lymph
 Bewails the nymph
 Whose beauty sleeked the streams !

.

“ And the sun of the north is chill ;—
 And keen is the northern gale ;—
 Alas for the song on the Argive hill ;
 And the dance in the Cretan Vale !—
 The youth of the earth is o’er,
 And its breast is rife
 With the teeming life
 Of the golden tribes no more.”

But Lord Lytton is not the only poet who has regretted the departure of those “oldè dayès” when, as Chaucer sings,

“ All was this lond fulfilled of faërie ;
 The elf-queen with her jolie companie
 Danced full oft in many a grenè mede.”

Orcadia itself is not without a singer who tunes his reed to such a theme. The Rev. D. W. Yair, of Firth, is the author of the following verses, which he has kindly permitted us to publish here :—

LAMENT FOR THE DEPARTURE OF THE FAIRIES.

Alas, for the day
 When the fairies fled away
 From forest, grove, and fountain :
 When they ceased their lightsome play,
 ’Neath the moon’s gentle ray,
 Over meadow, moor, and mountain.

No more shall they be found,
Travel all the country round,
 Over hill, through dale, up river :
They are all underground,
And hidden from the sound
 Of our voices, should we call on them forever.

The ringing of the bells—
So ancient legend tells—
 On the Sabbath mornings drove them
Away from the fells,
The valleys, and the dells,
 And the forest leaves above them.

And the last of them, I ween,
That e'er on earth was seen,
 Before they departed under,
Was their fair and beauteous Queen,
All wrapt in golden sheen,
 Of her own loved flowers the plunder.

And wailing were her cries,
And her blue and dewy eyes
 Were wet with the tears she was weeping ;
Heart-breaking were her sighs
As she looked upon the skies
 And the ivies round the oak-roots creeping.

And remembered how no more
On the cool and grassy floor
 Of the earth she would ever wander ;
Nor sport upon the shore,
Nor hear the waters roar,
 Nor follow the brook's meander ;

Nor listen to the song
Of the nightingales among
 The trees of the forest singing ;
Nor lead her tiny throng
The lily lea along,
 Their throats with treble laughter ringing ;

Nor loiter in the shade
 Of the overarching glade,
 When the midnight "moon is beaming,"
 Nor head the cavalcade
 Of her horsemen in the raid,
 When the sleepy "world is dreaming ;"

Nor drink the morning dew,
 When't has fallen fresh and new
 Reclining 'neath the bracken with her lover ;
 But forever bid adieu
 To the earth, and to the blue
 And starry-spangled heavens above her.

No wonder that she cried,
 As she leant upon the side
 Of an oat-grass, with a bitter weeping ;
 No wonder that she sighed
 And would that she had died,
 Sorrow all her spirit steeping.

But no ; she must go
 With her retinue below :
 Opened was the hillside portal ;
 And, with steps sad and slow,
 Ere the east was in a glow,
 Descended the fair immortal.

Tradition still preserves many of the interesting tales of fairies, elves, and dwarfs or trolls. The Scandinavian and Orcadian peasantry have handed down from one generation to another the many tales which they themselves had learned at their mother's knee, and the diligent seeker after such romances will find himself amply rewarded by the rich collection of folklore he is sure to find.

The elves were distinguished as the white and the black,

or good elves, who dwelt in the air and in forests, and evil elves, who had their habitations underground, and were supposed to be the cause of all the sickness and misfortune that overtook any locality. Disease caused by such evil elves could only be cured by a charmer, or a *Kloka män*, who were once numerous enough in the northern isles. A portion of these elves were known as Hill-people or *Högfolk*, who resided in grassy knowes and within caves by the sea shore. They were considered to be a very melancholy race, much given to weeping and lamentation. This idea probably originated from the moaning sound made by the wind and waves in the *geos* and *gloups* where they were supposed to dwell, though Afzelius thinks it originated at the time of the introduction of Christianity into the north; being the lamentation of the first converts, who were thus expressing their sympathy with their forefathers, whose spirits were supposed to be doomed to wander about the lower regions, or sigh within these mounds until the great judgment day. Among the Norwegians these elves are known as *Huldrafolk*, and their music as *Huldraslaat*. It is said these creatures were very fond of cleanliness and tidy houses. A story is told of a smart servant girl of very cleanly habits, who always carried away any dirt or foul water to a considerable distance from the house where she resided. The elves took a kindly interest in her

welfare, and at one time invited her to a wedding. The girl admired the very orderly arrangement of everything round her, and received a present of a number of chips of wood, which she laughingly put into her pocket. On the arrival of the happy pair an incident occurred which changed the whole scene. A straw lay in the path of the bride and bridegroom. The latter got safely over the obstruction, but his consort was not so fortunate; for the poor bride was tripped up and fell upon her face. This was too much for the servant girl, who could not contain her suppressed laughter any longer, and when she gave vent to her merriment in a loud laugh the whole company vanished from her sight. On her return home she was perfectly amazed to discover the chips of wood had become chips of gold.*

The elves were great dancers, and delighted to "trip the light fantastic toe" upon the dewy grass early in the morning, as the eastern sky began to redden with the glow of returning day. Country people, when they saw the dewy grass in the woods and meadows in stripes, declared that an elf-dance had been performed there. Children born on Sunday were reputed to have the power of seeing elves and all similar beings. They were in the habit of sitting on

* See Afzelius's *Svenska Folk-Visor*, Vol. III. p. 159.

little stones of a circular form, called elf-mills or elf-quärnor, from which was often heard the sound of their voices, low and sweet. The following ballad illustrates the melancholy character of these creatures :—

SIR OLOF IN THE ELVE-DANCE.

Sir Olof he rode out at early day,
And so came unto an Elve-dance gay.
 The dance it goes well,
 So well in the grove.

The Elve-father reached out his white hand free,
“Come, come, Sir Olof, tread the dance with me.”
 The dance it goes well,
 So well in the grove.

“O nought I will, and nought I may,
To-morrow will be my wedding-day.”
 The dance it goes well,
 So well in the grove.

And the Elve-mother reached out her white hand free,
“Come, come, Sir Olof, tread the dance with me.”
 The dance it goes well,
 So well in the grove.

“O nought I will, and nought I may,
To-morrow will be my wedding-day.”
 The dance it goes well,
 So well in the grove.

And the Elve-sister reached out her white hand free,
“Come, come, Sir Olof, tread the dance with me.”
 The dance it goes well,
 So well in the grove.

“O nought I will, and nought I may,
To-morrow will be my wedding-day.”
The dance it goes well,
So well in the grove.

And the bride she spake with her bride-maids so,
“What may it mean that the bells thus go?”
The dance it goes well,
So well in the grove.

“’Tis the custom of this our isle,” they replied;
“Each young swain bringeth home his bride.”
The dance it goes well,
So well in the grove.

“And the truth from you to conceal I fear,
Sir Olf is dead, and lies on his bier.”
The dance it goes well,
So well in the grove.

And on the morrow, ere light was the day,
In Sir Olf’s house three corpses lay.
The dance it goes well,
So well in the grove.

It was Sir Olf, his young bride,
And eke his mother, of sorrow she died.
The dance it goes well,
So well in the grove.*

In Iceland the elves or dwarfs are known by the name of Alfa and Alfa-folk. Various theories are mooted by different authors to account for their origin. Some maintain that they were created by God like spirits, without the intervention of parents, while others say

* *Svenska Folk-Visor*, III. 158. See *Keightley's Fairy Mythology*, p. 82.

they sprung from Adam before the creation of Eve. This latter was probably a Theory of the Monks, and resembles the account given by the Rabbins of the origin of the Mazikeen. The Talmud asserts that these beings were the offspring of Adam, who after he had eaten the forbidden fruit, was excommunicated for one hundred and thirty years, in which time "he begat spirits, demons, and spectres of the night." But this, like much of the Talmud, is sheer nonsense.* The Icelandic elves were reputed to possess a form of government, of which many old wives seemed to have a good idea. "The new born infants of Christians," says the learned Finnus Johannaus (in his "Ecclesiastical History of Iceland" II. p. 368), "are, before baptism, believed to be exposed to great peril of being stolen by them, and their own, which they foresee likely to be feeble in mind, in body, in beauty, or other gifts, being substituted for them. These supposititious children of the semigods are called Umskiptingar : whence nurses and midwives were

* In Ireland we find that "the general idea of the origin of fairies is, that they are spirits or angels, who, when Satan rebelled against the Almighty, took neither the one side nor the other, but 'bided their time' to see which side was likely to prove victorious before joining it. It is believed that for their apathy and cowardice, they were cast down to the earth, to wander about till the day of judgment, and by their good or evil deeds to merit their reward, or their punishment accordingly."—Margaret Tyner in the *Antiquarian Magazine* for March, 1884, p. 144.

strictly enjoined to watch constantly, and to hold the infant firmly in their arms, till it had the benefit of baptism, lest they should furnish an opportunity for such a change. Hence it comes, that the vulgar use to call fools, deformed people, and those who act rudely and uncivilly, *Umskiptinga eins og hann sie ko minnaf Alfum*, i.e., changelings, and come of the Alfs." They dwelt in the rocks, hills and seas; and could become visible or invisible just as they pleased. If they desired to change their abode they always did so on new-year's night. Every new-year's eve the people of Iceland never shut the outer doors of their houses, but, leaving a light burning, set out a table with viands to refresh their invisible visitors, if perchance they would be pleased to take up their abode with them.*

Amongst Shetlanders the Trows are known as the *guid folk* or *guid neighbours*, and are believed to dwell in the little hillocks round their shores. A woman who died many

* "In the remote glens and mountains of Kerry, and along the wild romantic shores of the west, the belief of the peasantry in fairies and spirits is most intensely strong, and woven, as it were, into the threads of their every-day life. The fairy is still to the people a real, tangible person, to be feared, avoided, and propitiated. Living as I did for many years in county Sligo, I beheld nightly three potatoes and a cup of milk duly laid upon the dresser of the kitchen, in case of the nocturnal visitor or visitors, as the case might be, chancing to be hungry; the hearth also was, and still is, carefully brushed, for fairies dislike dirt, and revenge such an insult as an unswept hearth, by chastising severely the lazy servants, or by terrifying them with some frightful dream or apparition."—*Ibid.*, p. 140.

years ago in the island of Yell, at the advanced age of more than a hundred, said that on one occasion she met a number of fairy children playing with a little dog, just like other boys and girls, on the top of a hill. On another occasion this old woman happened to look out of bed, when she saw a little fairy boy with a white night cap on sitting beside the fire. She inquired who he was. "I am Trippa's son," was the reply. When the old woman heard this she immediately *sained*, *i.e.* blessed herself, and at that moment Trippa's son vanished.

The Trows seem to have been given to stealing. Instances are related of Trow women having been found milking cows, and when discovered to take to flight so precipitately as to leave behind them a curiously formed copper can.

Dr. Hibbert relates * in 1822 a story of a Shetlander, alive at the time, who had been carried to the hills by the Trows. He was surprised to see there one of his own cows, which was brought to supply materials for a banquet. When he managed to return home he was more astonished to find that at the very time he had seen his cow brought into the hill by the Trows others had seen her fall over a rock into the sea.

One or two centuries ago Orcadian folk-lore teemed with

* *Description of the Shetland Isles*, by Dr. Hibbert, 1822.

incidents relating to the great family of fairydom ; and it was a favourite pastime among the rising youths to dress themselves in the characters of many of the most renowned Tritons, Mermaids, and Trows, whose memory was still green in the ancient traditions and popular beliefs of the hardy dwellers in these northern seas. The old Zetlandic name for Tritons was *Shoupeltins*. Sir Walter Scott describes some of the scenes enacted in commemoration of these traditional inhabitants of the briny deep, and those who desire to know more about them may consult that writer's works, where they will find them

“ Fathoms deep beneath the wave,
Stringing beads of glistening pearl,
Singing the achievements brave
Of many an old Norwegian Earl.”

In those days the fishermen sometimes rehearsed the old Norwegian *Sagas*, while the Norse tongue itself was not quite forgotten. “ In the quiet moonlight bay, where the waves came rippling to the shore, upon a bed of smooth sand intermingled with shells, the mermaid was still seen to glide along the waters by moonlight, and, mingling her voice with the sighing breeze, was often heard to sing of subterranean wonders, or to chant prophecies of future events.” Sea-serpents, krakens and other equally marvellous creatures were believed to be constant inhabitants of the

“ever-sounding and mysterious sea,” that ebbed and flowed continually around their shores. As they shot their nets and lines in the grey dawn many a curious fogbank was taken for some sea-monster, and would afford food for speculation when they reached their friends on shore. There beside the winter fire the fisherman’s imagination would revel in the wondrous forms he fancied himself to have seen, and the young folk around him would listen with hushed breath as the tale drew to some climax. But these are now gone as the fogbanks before the sun.

At the close of the seventeenth century we hear much of the fairy dwellers of Orcadian *knowes* and streams. The Rev. John Brand* tells us that “evil spirits also called fairies are frequently seen in several of the isles, dancing and making merry, and sometimes seen in armour.” Only fifty years before this gentleman visited Orkney, every family had a *Brouny* or evil spirit. To this brownie it was customary to give a sacrifice for his service. When they went to churn, the spirit had first to be propitiated, and this was generally done by the person taking part of the contents of the churn and sprinkling it all over the house. So also when they were to brew, some of the wort was

* *A Brief Description of Orkney, Zetland, Pightland Firth, and Caithness*, by Rev. John Brand, 1700, p. 96.

taken for a sacrifice to the brownie and poured into a hollow stone, called the *Brownie's stone*. By doing this they were sure of a good churning and a good brewing; but if these precautions were neglected they would suffer in consequence. The butter would not make and the ale would not brew. Mr. Brand tells us of an old man who, in his youth, was in the habit of brewing without giving a sacrifice to the brownie. He always read his bible instead before commencing proceedings, and though the first two brewings were for no use, the third was very good. After the spirit was once terrified by the reading of the Bible there was no more trouble with the brewing. In reference to the gradual disappearance of these spirits, fairies, etc., the same gentleman makes the following quaint remarks:—
“The brownies, fairies, and other evil spirits that haunted and were familiar in our houses, were dismissed, and fled at the breaking up our Reformation (if we may except but a few places not yet well reformed from Popish Dregs) as the Heathen Oracles at the coming of our Lord, and the going forth of His disciples; so that our first noble Reformers might have returned and said to their Master, as the seventy once did: ‘*Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Thy name.*’ And this restraint put upon the Devil was far later in these northern places than with us, to whom the light of a preached Gospel did more early shine.

Yet now also do these northern isles enjoy the fruits of this restraint.”

Here is an old Norse ballad relating to the Trows of the Far North. The remarks between some of the stanzas are by Mr. Edmondston, son of the late Dr. Edmondston, of Unst, Shetland, from whom the words are derived:—

“ Der lived a king inta da aste,
Scowan urla grun ;
Der lived a lady in da wast,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

“ Dis king he has a huntin’ gaen,
Scowan urla grun ;
He’s left his lady Isabel alane,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

“ Oh ! I wis ye’d never gaen away,
Scowan urla grun ;
For at your hame is dol an’ wae,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

“ For da King o’ Fairie we his daert,
Scowan urla grun ;
Has pierced your lady to da hert,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.”

Some stanzas are forgotten, but the substance of them is that the lady is carried off by the fairies, and the disconsolate king sets out in search of her. One day, in his wandering quest, he sees a company passing along a hillside, and he recognises amongst them his lost lady. They proceed to

what seemed a great “ha’-house,” or castle, on the hillside, the king following:—

“ And aifter dem da king has gaen,
Scowan urla grun ;
But whan he cam it was a grey stane,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

“ Dan he took out his pipes to play,
Scowan urla grun ;
Bit sair his hert we dol an’ wae,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

At first he played da notes o’ noy,
Scowan urla grun ;
An’ dan he played da notes o’ joy,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

And dan he played do göd gabber reel,
Scowan urla grun ;
Dat meicht ha’ made a sick hert hale,
Whar goirten han grun orlac.

Some stanzas here are also forgotten, their purport being that a messenger, from behind the ‘grey stane’ now appears, and, in the name of the King of the Fairies, invites the king thus:—

“ Noo come ye in into wir ha’,
Scowan urla grun ;
And come ye in amang wis a’,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

Now he’s gaen in inta der ha’,
Scowan urla grun ;
An’ he’s gaen in among dem a’,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

Dan he took out his pipes ta play,
Scowan urla grun ;
But sair his hert we dol an' wae,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

An' first he played da notes o' noy,
Scowan urla grun ;
An' dan he played da' notes o' joy,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

A' dan he played da god gabber reel,
Scowan urla grun ;
Dat nicht ha' made a sic hert hale,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

Noo tell ta us what ye will hae,
Scowan urla grun ;
What sall we gie you for your play,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

What I will hae I will you tell,
Scowan urla grun ;
An' dat's me Lady Isabel,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

Yees tak' your lady and yees gaeng hame,
Scowan urla grun ;
An' yees be king ower a' your ain,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac.

He's taen his lady an' he's gaen hame,
Scowan urla grun ;
And noo he's king ower a' his ain,
Whar giorten han grun oarlac."

Probably there have been some stanzas between the first and second verses, as above. "Surely," says Mr. Edmondston, "there would be something to tell of the king's wooing and

bringing the lady from the 'wast' to his eastern home, but I am quite sure there was never any such verses in the ballad as sung by old Andrew Coutts, and I always used to wonder at it and speculate in my boyish mind on the connecting links which seemed wanting." It is not very easy to determine the precise meaning of the second and fourth line of each stanza. "Scowan ürla grün" may signify some of the King's titles; "ürla" being a corruption for "Jarl" (Earl). "Whar giorten han grün oarlac" may mean "Where the green grass grows." There are many old ballads of a similar nature still floating about in the popular mind, but many of the best and sweetest of them are fast being forgotten. Orcadians and Shetlanders sing, or rather croon, such plaintive ballads in a sweet and sympathetic manner, that reminds one often of the melancholy murmur and weird melody of their own north seas.

In many respects the Orcadian trows or drows resembled the Highland *daoine sith* in the malevolence of their disposition. Like their cousins, the gnomes of Germany, they are artificers in brass, iron, and the precious metals, and were supposed to carry on their work within the many green mounds that are to be seen, from which there would sometimes be heard the knocking of their hammers. A Norse warrior who possessed a sword made in such an armoury was considered invincible. "I tell thee now," says

Kol in the Gisli saga, "that this sword will bite whatever its blow falls on, be it iron or aught else; nor can its edge be deadened by spells, for it was forged by the dwarves, and its name is 'Graysteel.'" The land, however, was not the only abode of the creatures of darkness; the sea had its share as well. There were "great rolling creatures" called *sea-trows*, that tumbled about in the water, alarming the credulous fishermen. Whenever such creatures appeared they were immediately beaten off with oars and long staves. It was an unlucky moment when a fisherman cast his eyes on a sea-trow; panic and fear seized him, and his boat was instantly steered for the shore. These sea-trows would appear to have been the innocent porpoises, or *pellacks*, as they are called here. They are seen every summer tumbling about in the sounds and bays, and make a very pretty sight when the sunlight is sparkling on the waves.

There was another race of sea fairies, called Finnmen, of whom Mr. Wallace,* Minister of Kirkwall, wrote as follows in the latter part of the seventeenth century:—"Sometimes about this country are seen these men which are called Finnmen. In the year 1681 one was seen sometimes sailing, sometimes mooring up and down in his little boat at the

* *Description of the Islands of Orkney*, 1700.

south end of the Island of Eday. Most of the people of the isle flocked to see him, and when they adventured to put out a boat with men to see if they could apprehend him, he presently flew away most swiftly. And in the year 1684 another was seen from Westra, and for a while after they got few or no fishes, for they have this remark here, that these Finnmen drive away the fishes from the place to which they come. These Finnmen seem to be some of the people which dwell about the *Fretum Davis*, a full account of whom may be seen in the natural and moral history of the Antilles, chap. 18. One of their boats sent from Orkney to Edinburgh is to be seen in the Physician's Hall, with the oar and dart he makes use of for killing fish." It is, indeed, a curious circumstance, that the venturesome Esquimaux, as they approached the shores of Orkney while upon a fishing excursion, were always taken for a kind of fairy.

These credulous times are long, long gone by, and we can see no more the flitting sea-trow or the peculiar Finnman. Civilization has crept in upon all fairy strongholds and disenchanted the many fair scenes in which they were wont to hold their courts. As one sails past the rocky *geos* and gaping *gloups* his ears are no more charmed with the siren songs of the mermaid as she sings the wild waves to sleep, nor does his gaze light upon any of the wonderful monsters that were formerly believed to people the northern sea. The light

of science has shone upon every green mound and dispossessed it of its fairy inhabitants, while the cold business-like atmosphere of our nineteenth century has deprived these shores of everything but what makes for wealth. It is only here and there that we can hear the tales of former days rehearsed by some old fisherman, who still loves to relate the wonders of a generation long forgotten.

We now pass to another phase of by-gone superstition. Two centuries ago these islands were full of various charms, used on different occasions and for a variety of purposes. When anyone was troubled with excessive bleeding word was immediately sent to a person called a charmer, who repeated a certain formula with the result that the bleeding ceased. This mode of stopping the flow of blood was not only used for persons but also for oxen and sheep. People troubled with toothache could be cured in a similar way. A story is told of the use of this charm upon a person who lived in the island of Eday. Though the charmer lived at a good distance from the patient, yet the cure took effect at the very time the magic words were uttered. The afflicted party was partaking of supper at the time when a living worm fell suddenly out of his mouth! This story is said by the narrator to be true, and the man from whose mouth the worm fell was living then (1699). It was formerly a very common practice to sprinkle water, which was called *Fore-*

spoken water, over any animals that chanced to be sick, and if they were desirous of a prosperous fishing the same was done to their boats. The following is a charm used for the toothache :—

“ A finn came ow’r fra Noraway,
 Fir to pit toth-ache away—
 Oot o’ da flesh an’ oot o’ da bane ;
 Oot o’ da sinew an’ oot o’ da skane ;
 Oot o’ da skane an’ into da stane ;
 An’ dere may du remain !
 An’ dere may du remain !
 An’ dere may du remain !”

When a person received a sprain the *Wrestin Thread* was *cast*. Nine knots were tied upon a thread of black worsted, which was wound round the injured limb, the patient muttering meanwhile :—

“ The Lord rade
 And the foal slade ;
 He lighted,
 And he righted.
 Set joint to joint,
 Bone to bone,
 And sinew to sinew,
 Heal in the Holy Ghost’s name !”*

* See also Chambers’s *Fireside Stories*. The *wrestin thread* is, we believe, still employed in Orkney. From Grimm’s *Teutonic Mythology*, we learn that the old mythology gradually blended with Christianity. The Merseburg formula for healing a lamed horse in the heathen times survives at the present day in Norway ; “ Jesus ” being

Ringworm was charmed away by the following charm, which was said while holding some ashes between the finger and thumb, and slowly dropping them into the fire:—

“ Ringworm, ringworm red,
Never mayest thou either spread or speed,
But aye grow less and less,
And die away among the ase.”

On Hallow e'en a cross of tar was made upon their boats to bring luck. In fact there were charms for almost every ailment to which the human flesh is heir, and in each and all implicit confidence was placed. It was no wonder that Mr. Brand, when referring to these matters, remarked that such customs were “the sour dregs of Pagan and Popish superstition.”

Whoever visits the island of Papa-Westray will find a spot hallowed by the credulity of generations. Within St. Tredwel's Loch there once stood, upon a low rock, an ancient chapel, known as St. Tredwel's Chapel, and famous for imparting medicinal properties to the waters of the loch. In olden times the diseased and infirm people of the North Isles were wont to flock to this place and get themselves

the healer instead of the heathen god. The sprained foot of Balder's horse was healed by Wodan,

“ben zi bena (bone to bone)
lid zi giliden” (sinew to sinew).

In Norway Jesus placed

“been i been, kjod i kjod” (bone to bone, and sinew to sinew).

cured by washing in its waters. Many of them walked round the shores two or three times before entering the loch itself to perfect by so doing the expected cure. When a person was engaged in this perambulation nothing would induce him to utter a word; for if he spoke the waters of this holy loch would lave his diseased body in vain. After the necessary ablutions were performed they never departed without leaving behind them some piece of cloth or bread as a gift to the presiding genius of the place. In the beginning of the eighteenth century popular belief in this water was as strong as ever. In the island of Flotta, upon a jutting point called the Rhone, there is a small mineral well, to which medicinal properties are attributed. A bottle of water from this well, which is called "Wunster Well" from an old Episcopal clergyman who resided near by when the Episcopal Church was recognised in Scotland, was considered sufficient to cure certain diseases. The bearer of the bottle had not to speak, however, to any person on his way back, else the virtue would be gone.

These old chapels, and St. Tredwel's amongst the number, were at one time much frequented by people desirous of offering private prayer. More faith was put in prayer when offered within the walls of a chapel than when it was done in the privacy of the dwelling. Many a one when sick, or in some sudden danger at sea, would make a vow

to pray in one of these chapels should he ever get well or safe to land again. It was customary to make a small pile of stones—one for every vow—beside the chapel to which the person went ; and no one must go thither empty handed, but taking either bread or a piece of money, which was left as an offering. *Sed tempora mutantur!* The disciple of Æsculapius has come off victorious and all the hallowed charms and relics of a hundred years ago are now forgotten if not unknown.

We can hardly close this sketch without referring to another ancient custom once very common in these isles—the custom of fortune-telling or of *spæing* fortunes. When the Norse galley cleaved the rippling waters of Scapa Flow this custom was well known and much resorted to. Aged crones, called soothsaying women, were in the habit of holding their courts at every local festival, which was attended by all those who were desirous of knowing their future. The scene will be better understood from the following extract from the *Saga of Erick Randa** :—

“There lived in the same territory (Greenland) a woman named Thorbiorga, who was a prophetess, and called the little Vola, (or fatal sister), the only one of nine sisters who survived. Thorbiorga during the winter used to frequent the festivities of the season, invited by those who were desirous of learning their own fortune, and the

* See Bartholine's *De Causis Contemptae a Danis adhuc gentilibus Mortis*, bk. III., ch. 4.

future events which impended. Torquil being a man of consequence in the country, it fell to his lot to inquire how long the dearth was to endure with which the country was then afflicted; he therefore invited the prophetess to his house, having made liberal preparation, as was the custom, for receiving a guest of such consequence. The seat of the soothsayer was placed in an eminent situation, and covered with pillows filled with the softest eiderdown. In the evening she arrived, together with a person who had been sent to meet her, and shew her the way to Torquil's habitation. She was attired as follows: she had a sky-blue tunick, having the front ornamented with gems from the top to the bottom, and wore around her throat a necklace of glass beads. Her head-gear was of black lamb-skin, the lining being the fur of a white wild-cat. She leant on a staff, having a ball at the top. The staff was ornamented with brass, and the ball or globe with gems or pebbles. She wore a Hunlound (or Hungarian) girdle, attached to which was a large pouch, in which she kept her magical implements. Her shoes were of seal-skin, dressed with the hair outside, and secured by long and thick straps, fastened by brazen clasps. She wore gloves of the wild-cat's skin, with the fur inmost. As this venerable person entered the hall, all saluted her with due respect; but she only returned the compliments of such as were agreeable to her. Torquil conducted her with reverence to the seat prepared for her, and requested that she would purify the apartment and company assembled by casting her eyes over them. She was by no means sparing of her words. The table being at length covered, such viands were placed before Thorbiorga as suited her character as a soothsayer. These were a preparation of goat's milk, and a mess composed of the hearts of various animals; the prophetess made use of a brazen spoon and a pointless knife, the handle of which was composed of a whale's tooth, and ornamented with two rings of brass. The table being removed, Torquil addressed Thorbiorga, requesting her opinion of his house and guests, at the same time intimating the subjects on which he and the company were desirous to consult her.

“Thorbiorga replied, it was impossible for her to answer their enquiries until she had slept a night under his roof. The next morning, therefore, the magical apparatus necessary for her purpose was prepared, and she then enquired, as a necessary part of the ceremony, whether there was any female present who could sing a magical song called ‘*Vardlokur*.’ When no songstress such as she desired could be found, Gudrida, the daughter of Torquil replied, ‘I am no sorceress or

soothsayer; but my nurse, Haldisa, taught me, when in Iceland, a song called '*Vardlokur*.'—'Then thou knowest more than I was aware of,' said Torquil. 'But as I am a Christian,' continued Gudrida, 'I consider these rites as matters which it is unlawful to promote, and the song itself as unlawful.'—'Nevertheless,' answered the soothsayer, 'thou mayst help us in this matter without any harm to thy religion, since the task must remain with Torquil to provide everything necessary for the present purpose.' Torquil also earnestly entreated Gudrida, till she consented to grant his request. The females then surrounded Thorbiorga, who took her place on a sort of elevated stage; Gudrida then sung the magic song, with a voice so sweet and tuneful, as to excel anything that had been heard by any present. The soothsayer, delighted with the melody, returned thanks to the singer, and then said, 'Much I have now learned of dearth and disease approaching the country, and many things are now clear to me which before were hidden as well from me as others. Our present dearth of substance shall not long endure for the present, and plenty will in the spring succeed to scarcity. The contagious disease also, with which the country has been for some time afflicted, will in a short time take its departure. To thee, Gudrida, I can, in recompense for thy assistance on this occasion, announce a fortune of higher import than any one could have conjectured. You shall be married to a man of name here in Greenland; but you shall not long enjoy that union, for your fate recalls you to Iceland, where you shall become the mother of a numerous and honourable family, which shall be enlightened by a luminous ray of good fortune. 'So, my daughter, wishing thee health, I bid thee farewell.' The prophetess, having afterwards given answers to all queries which were put to her, either by Torquil or his guests, departed to show her skill at another festival, to which she had been invited for that purpose. But all which she presaged, either concerning the public or individuals, came truly to pass."

A scene like the above was of common occurrence in the misty past of Orcadian life and manners; but it is now gone for ever. The voluspa, or sibyl, who presided over such scenes, was generally chosen from her knowledge of the Norse sagas and rhymes, which were greatly used on these

occasions. The poems of the Scalds are full of allusions to persons seeking to know their destinies from the mouth of some sorceress or prophetess, who was always ready to utter her Delphic sayings. Time, however, has long ago uttered and performed his relentless decree, and is even now repeating the words into our ears,

“All your ancient customs,
And long descended usages, I'll change.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ More strange than true. I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.”

—*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

IN the previous sketch we have taken a general view of Orcadian superstitions, especially of those relating to fairies or trows. In this we propose to give a few tales, illustrative of what has gone before. They are but a few samples of a large number of similar stories that are floating about in the popular mind.

It is still a common thing for a parent to say to his children when they misbehave, “Trow tak' thee.” This has arisen from the belief that the trows were formerly in the habit of taking away children and substituting one of their own kind instead. There is a story told of a man who resided at Yesnaby bearing upon this subject. It appears that he had twins in his family, one of whom fell sick, and became very seriously ill. An old woman, reputed for her wisdom, was passing by one day and came into the house to see the sick child. She looked for some time very intently at the sick boy as he lay in bed, and then, turning to the father, informed him that this was not his child at all. By

means of the "second sight," which she possessed, she was enabled to discern that much. She told the anxious parent that the child was a fairy changeling, or a *croupin*, as it is called. In order to satisfy the parents that such was really the case the old women gave them certain directions, which they were to carry faithfully out. At a certain hour the following night, the croupin would be in great distress, but they were not to give him anything he asked for, and they must keep something burning all night in the fire. Unless they would do this the spell would be broken. The man did as directed. At a certain hour a series of the most terrible squeals ever heard issued from the bed, and the child was heard to ask for a drink of water. His cries, however, were unheeded. But being continued, the father's courage failed him, and, unable to resist the child's demand, he gave him a drink. By so doing he broke the spell, and his supposed son still lay sick. He appealed again to the old woman. When she arrived upon the scene, she inquired if the croupin had not asked for something during the night. "Yes," replied the father, "he asked for a drink of water, and I could not refuse him." "And you gave it him, hence the spell was broken." The same directions were given him for the next night, and the father promised to carry them out. Again the same demand for water was made, accompanied with the most agonizing shrieks, and although the man re-

sisted for some time, he finally gave in, and supplied his son with the desired refreshment. On the third trial he resisted more strenuously, and gave no heed to the repeated appeals, so firm was his belief in the old woman. After the same shrieking sounds had issued from the bed, and when no heed was paid to them, the croupin rose out of the bed, rolled on to the floor, and with a piercing cry disappeared up the chimney in a *blue-low* or flame. This same "blue-low" is referred to by Ossian, and such a belief seems to have been quite common among the Celts and Scandinavians alike.

A story is told of a fairy changeling in Unst, Shetland. One day while the *guidman* of a certain house was away at the haaf-fishing, the old woman left in charge took advantage of the mother and child, whom she was attending, being asleep, and stepped across to a neighbour's house to have a little gossip over "the cup that cheers but not inebriates." The topics discussed appear to have been of a very interesting nature, for the gloamin'—or *hümeen*,* as it is called in Shetland—had stolen across the sea ere the woman returned to her charge. As she approached the door of the cottage a little man clad *in grey* was seen crossing the kail-yard behind the house. Entering the house with some

* *Hüm*—dusk ; *en* is the plural termination.

misgivings she found a dead crouping or changeling and a mad wraith in place of the mother and child. The presence of the grey man was now accounted for, and, foolish woman! she forgot to cross two straws as she passed the threshold; for by doing so all would have been well. She immediately flew out of the house, exclaiming at the top of her voice, "Da Trow! da Trow!" and alarming all the neighbours. When these had assembled in the afflicted house they could do nothing to change the state of matters. For another day the insane mother raved about her dead child, which she would permit no one to remove, and at last passed quietly away. The poor half-demented husband was sorely grieved upon his return, and, though informed by a few "wise-acres" that they were "none of his," sadly gave them a decent Christian burial. The old nurse, who had proved so unfaithful to her charge, was favoured with a kind of "lynch law" for permitting the death of the infant, which had "crazed da poor midder an' hastened her end."

One day two ladies were travelling across Pomona, and being wearied with their journey they entered a wayside cottage and asked for some refreshment. The mistress of the cottage proceeded at once to infuse a cup of tea for the weary travellers. While seated at table, partaking of the refreshing cup, they were suddenly startled by hearing several strange and unearthly grunts proceeding from the box bed

that stood in the room. Their terror was increased when a repulsive-looking specimen of humanity put out his head and gazed at them with his blinking eyes. "O don't be frightened," said the dame, "he'll do thee no harm." Addressing the monster she ordered him to be quiet else she would immediately apply the whip to him. This threat had the desired effect ; for the curious creature retreated into the bed and remained perfectly still. While the ladies finished their repast the poor woman related, with weeping eyes, the story of her sorrow. One harvest morning she had left the cottage to gather some cabbage leaves from the garden, with which she was to prepare some broth for the busy harvesters. Before going out into the garden she placed her child, a fine chubby boy, in the cradle, where he would be safe until her return ; but what was her astonishment on re-entering to find instead of the child a hideous object. She required no second look to convince her of the difference ; there lay the *croupin*, and her own sweet child was nowhere to be found. During the mother's absence the trows had made a descent upon the humble dwelling and substituted the little monster for her son. The reader need not wonder now why the expression, "Trow, tak' thee," is sometimes heard in these islands still. The power of fairies, in the way of stealing children, may not

now be recognised, but the old belief has left its traces behind.*

While the Rev. Mr. Yule was incumbent of Kirkwall Cathedral, he was in the habit of rebuking any person who did not behave well during service. On one occasion he publicly rebuked a girl for smiling during the sermon. Being afterwards interrogated by the minister as to her peculiar behaviour the girl replied that if he had seen what she had he would have laughed too. "What did you see, then?" asked Mr. Yule. "I saw auld Cluttie up in the rafters, sitting across a beam, writing down the names of everybody that was asleep during the sermon. His paper was very small and being soon filled up he tore a piece from the tail of his shirt; but even that proved too small. So he endeavoured to stretch it out a little more by pulling it with his hands and teeth; but his strength was too much for the rag so that it tore and his head came *dunt* against the rafters above, and in his anxiety he let the whole drop down. That's the cause of my laughter." "Wonderful vision! wonderful vision!" said the divine.

In one of the mountainous regions of Scandinavia, not

* In the west of Ireland it is customary, when the mother has to be absent from the house a little, to place the tongs across the cradle to prevent the forcible abduction of the sleeping child. It is supposed that fairies dislike tongs on account of their being of iron, just as they have a dread of horse shoes.

far from the sound of the wild North Sea, a brave hunter named Carl resided with his sister Bertha. Their home was a beautiful rustic cottage, built with Norwegian pine, and situated at the top of a picturesque valley. A mountain stream gurgled past the door as it hastened on its way to the deep blue sea that was visible through a rocky ravine in the mountain side. The tall pine trees nodded upon the slopes, while beautiful flowers blossomed upon the streamlet's banks. No brother and sister lived more happily than did Carl and Bertha. Through winter cold and summer heat they passed the flying hours either roaming through the woods and mountains or in some pleasant amusement within doors. Carl set out now and then on his hunting excursions, on which occasions he was generally very successful. Their cottage home was ornamented with trophies of the chase, and the floors were covered with warm furs. One day as the hunter was making his way across a grassy valley he was suddenly startled by an apparition of female beauty. Never had he beheld a maiden so fair as this, and, as was natural in the circumstances, he immediately fell in love with the beautiful maid. How she had come there he could not ascertain, but he asked the fair maiden to accompany him home to his sister. Together they arrived at the mountain cot, and Bertha and the strange maiden soon became the best of friends. Carl fell deeper

and deeper in love with the child of the mountains and presented her with a most lovely and precious ring in token of his passion. One morning the lately-found beauty, whose name was Leida, disappeared, and was nowhere to be found. Long and eagerly did Carl search forest shade and mountain solitude, but in vain. The object of his love was gone, seemingly for ever. When he was returning home one evening after a wearied search he observed a pretty white wild-cat sitting upon a branch of a tree. Desiring to become possessed of so fine a fur, he lifted his cross-bow to his shoulder and fired. The cat dropped down dead upon the ground, and he hastened forward to secure his prize. Upon the left fore paw glittered the very ring he had presented to his lady-love Leida. No one can picture the grief of the ardent hunter for his murdered love. He saw now that, through the influence of some malignant fairy, his betrothed had been transformed into a white cat, and he was made the means of her death. Before that same moon had waxed and waned Carl died of a broken heart, and was buried beside the mountain stream.

The following pretty legend is told by Mrs. Saxby in the *Leisure Hour* for March, 1880 :—“ There was a girl, whose mother had been taken by the Trows at the girl’s birth, who grew up to be a lovely creature, with golden hair. Such hair had never been seen in Unst : so long, soft, shining.

It fell in golden waves about her, and such an unusual mode of wearing it created much wonder. No maiden—not even a child—ever permitted her hair to fall as it pleased except this girl, and folks did say that whenever she tried to bind it to her head the bright locks refused to obey her fingers, and slowly untwined themselves until they became natural ringlets again. The girl was a sweet singer—and singing is a fairy-gift—and she would wander about, liling merrily to herself, while neighbours wondered and young men lost their hearts. It was believed that the girl was under the special care of Trows, for everything seemed to be smooth before her, and her golden hair was called ‘the blessing o’ them that loves her.’ But it happened that a witch began to covet the maiden’s lovely locks, and one day, when the girl lay down among some hay and fell asleep, the witch cut off all her beautiful hair. The poor young thing returned to her home shorn of her glory, and after that she pined away. All the song had died from her lips, all the smile had gone from her young face. But when she lay dead, in her teens, folk said that the golden hair began to grow again, and had grown to its former length and beauty ere the coffin-lid was closed upon her. The witch did not triumph, for the Trows, who had loved and watched over the motherless girl, took possession of the malignant old hag and punished her as she deserved. She

was compelled to wander about their haunts, and to live in the most strange manner. She was haunted day and night by evil creatures. Whenever she tried to sleep the Trows would come and make such queer noises that she could not rest. She continued in that state till extreme old age, when she was spirited away altogether."

Another legend of "the white sea-bird" is related by the same lady :—"A boat started one summer morning from the Broch of Colviedell, intending to remain at the haaf-fishing for two days. But the men had scarcely launched their boat, had scarcely shipped their mast, when a white gull came hovering overhead, and as soon as the boat was fairly under way alighted on the rigging. Folding its wings, it fixed its dark eyes upon the boat with an almost human intelligence in its expression, and as the boat sailed on the bird sat motionless overhead. Night came down, but still the bird remained watching the men at their work. About midnight a sudden squall came on, which grew into a storm that lasted two nights and a day. The boat dared not attempt reaching the shore for the tideways across her path. The only safety was in remaining out at sea, and during all that time the little boat lay tossing among the billows, with the white bird sitting upon the mast. When the storm abated the boat sought her haven, and not until the boat stranded on the beach did the bird take wing. As soon as they

landed, one of the men said, 'Give the bird the best cut of our ling, for she never left us in our trouble, and likely she has been our preservation, for yesterday, when we were in the heart of the storm, I saw an old woman sitting on the water a little way from the boat, and *she appeared not good*. But of course she had no power to come nearer us while the bird stayed by us. No doubt *she* was a witch, and the bird was a good spirit.'"

There seemed also to have been a belief that fairies assumed the human form, and dwelt amongst men like ordinary people, only now and then returning to their natural shape. On a bright summer day in the month of June the mistress of an Orcadian homestead observed some peculiar object beside her cow. She called her husband and son to come out and see what this was. When they approached the plot of ground where their cow was *tethered*, they beheld to their great astonishment, a large hare busy milking the cow. But whenever the animal observed them it immediately galloped away across the grass. The two men gave pursuit, and calling to their dog they hunted the hare for a few miles, when, suddenly, they observed it enter the open door of a mountain cot. Having come up, breathless with the chase, they also entered, and found an old woman lying upon the hearth before the peat-fire, panting for breath. All her garments were covered with mud, and the perspiration

was pouring from her face. The two men did not stay to see more, but ran out of the cottage in fear, and spread the report throughout the neighbourhood that old Mabel of the braehead was a witch, a fairie, or a warlock. In these days every person was superstitious, and the story required no second telling to be believed. Every hamlet was up in arms against the supposed witch, and ere another day passed Mabel was seized and carried to the Gallowhall of Kirkwall. Upon that dread spot the pile was kindled, old Mabel was tied to the stake, and burned to death. Her ashes were afterwards collected and scattered to the four winds of heaven. Since then there has not been seen or heard of any of the fairy crew. Seemingly horrified at the cruel fate of Mabel, they for ever bade farewell to the shores of the islands of the cold North Sea.

When some of the older inhabitants desire any of their children to go somewhere on a dark night they may be heard to coax them with the remark that "A' the trows are drooned noo, they wanna fleg thee ony mair." This idea was generally very prevalent throughout the Orkney isles, and the disappearance of Orcadian fairies is thus satisfactorily accounted for. Once upon a time, many, many years before anyone now living in Orkney was born, the trows became dissatisfied with their residence upon the mainland or Pomona. They resolved, therefore, to quit the Pomona hills and

knowes and take up their dwelling beside the Dwarfie Stone among the hills of Hoy. The transmigration was to be accomplished one evening at midnight, when the moon would be full, and everything suitable for the journey. At last the eventful night arrived, and the fairy train proceeded to set out upon their way. They bade farewell to the grassy hillocks upon which they had danced so often, and to the rocky caverns within which they were wont to conduct their nightly revels, and all hied towards the trysting place, which was the Black Craig of Stromness. As the fantastic shapes of the northern trows approached the spot of rendezvous, they kept murmuring in chorus a song something like the following :—

“From the woods and the glossy green,
With the wild thyme strewn ;
From the rivers whose crisped sheen
Is kissed by the trembling moon ;—
While the dwarf looks out from his mountain cave,
And the erl-king from his lair,
And the water-nymph from her moaning wave,—
We skirr the limber air.” *

Arriving at the spot from which they were to cross the intervening sea, the trows began the necessary preparations. They took a number of *simmons*, or straw bands used in thatching houses, and, tying them together, made a long

* Lord Lytton.

rope of sufficient length to stretch across the sound. One end was made fast upon the top of the Black Craig, and one of their number was delegated to watch that it did not slip. The other end was seized by a long-legged trow called "Hempie, the Ferry-louper," who made an enormous leap and alighted upon the opposite shore. There he made his end fast and prepared to receive his fellow-trows as they crossed over upon the straw rope. After a great deal of bustle and confusion, all the trows got upon the rope and began crossing over; while about midway the trow left in charge on the Stromness side let go his hold and the whole company of trows fell into the sea, dragging Hempie along with them in their descent. The sea, being rather rough at the time, overwhelmed them all so that everyone was drowned. When the cause of this dire mishap saw what occurred, he determined not to survive his friends; so, taking a flying leap, he jumped right into the angry waves that were dashing furiously upon the rocks below, and perished amid the foam. At this moment a black cloud passed across the face of the moon, and the raging sea became suddenly still. The form of the Dwarf of Hoy was seen for a few minutes upon a rock overlooking the scene of the catastrophe, and having recited the following verses he suddenly disappeared:—

“ The Trows are gone, forever gone,
Far from Orcadia’s shore ;
Beneath the tide went every one ;
I’ll see their forms no more.

“ The moon is dark, the stars all weep,
The sea is hushed and still ;
Forever now these fairies sleep,
By grassy knoll and hill.

“ Within the caves beneath the sea
They dance and sport again ;
On Orkney hills no more they’ll be ;
They live beneath the main.

“ Farewell, ye sp’rits that cheered my gloom,
Farewell, a long farewell !
I, too, must pass into the tomb,
No more the tale I’ll tell.”

Such was the fate of the last of the trows. In a former time the people of these islands believed that it was possible for a man or a woman to be turned into a *selchie* or seal. This, of course, was always done, by means of the evil spirits, called trows, and the following story may be told in illustration of this belief:—

At one time, too far back to remember, a woman suddenly disappeared from Yesnaby or Skail. After a long and arduous search for her by all her friends, no traces of the missing person could be found, and at last it was thought that she must have fallen somewhere into the sea and been carried away by the tide. Her brother, a short time after-

wards, went to sea, and sailed several very successful voyages. A good many years after his sister's mysterious disappearance he was driven by a storm into some unknown haven, in a country he had never seen or heard of before. When they got landed, he proceeded with his crew to the nearest habitation to ascertain on what coast they had come. On entering the only cottage that appeared to be visible he soon recognised his sister, who seemed to be the mistress of the house. The brother asked her how she had come there, but he received no satisfactory reply. She would give no explanation of the mystery, and evaded every question that he put. She made many enquiries about the people of Yesnaby, and about her own friends, seemingly taking an interest in their welfare. After these enquiries were made she seemed to hesitate, and to glance anxiously out of the window towards the shore. She then told her brother and his companions that they would see a selchie come in, but they were to pay no attention to him. She had scarcely uttered the words when a fine-looking seal came crawling in through the door, and, after looking around him, made for the ben-end of the house. He had not been very long ben when a finely-dressed gentleman issued from the apartment, and, taking a chair, seated himself beside the fire. The stranger proceeded to ask many questions at the sailors, especially at the skipper, of whom he inquired

for the people of Yesnaby, Skail, and neighbourhood. After the usual congratulatory conversation, he said, "You've had a severe storm, but with my assistance you may be able to get safe home again." He then gave them advice. He directed that they should remain until the moon waned, and then he would give them a ball to throw overboard when they were at a certain distance from the land. "But you must be very careful," said he, "in every particular, else you will be driven back again." He also informed them that they would have a fair wind. The fair wind came as he had said, and at the proper time they set sail. When they thought they were at the exact place the ball was thrown overboard; but they had not proceeded more than two lengths of the ship when the wind changed and became a perfect hurricane. After experiencing some heavy sea they were driven back to the creek from which they had set out, and where their selchie-friend had counselled them. Thinking they could not do better than return to his house, they at once proceeded thither, and met their well-dressed friend at the door. "Well," said he, "fortune has not favoured you." "No," said the sailors, "what would be the reason?" "Ah!" said he, "you had not arrived at the proper place; you threw over the ball too soon, and you did not pay sufficient attention to the marks I gave you. Indeed, I was not far away from you at the time and

noticed all you did. You must be more exact next time." For the second time the vessel set out upon its voyage and proceeded well for some time. When they thought the exact spot was reached the ball was again thrown overboard, but with the same result. The wind turned contrary and the sea became once more rough. The wind continued blowing as boisterously as on the former occasion, and again they found themselves driven into the same creek. A third attempt was made, and this one was attended with more favourable results. The magic ball was thrown out at the proper time and in the proper place, and the Orcadian seamen were favoured with a fair wind and a prosperous voyage. When, at last, they arrived amongst their kith and kin they astonished them with the details of their remarkable journey. The skipper's sister, however, was never seen again at Yesnaby, and she may be alive at this day in that strange country with her selchie husband.

At Breckness there are some rocks much frequented by seals or selchies, as they are called in Orkney; and one Christmas morning a Breckness man observed a selchie asleep on one of the rocks. He procured his gun, and, creeping up to get a good aim, shot the animal dead. The selchie was brought into the house, skinned, and part of it boiled for oil. A short time after this incident the man's cow died in the byre from some unaccountable cause.

There was no trace of any disease or complaint, and the beast appeared to be in her usual healthy condition. The only cause that could be assigned was that the loss of the cow was a punishment by the sea-trows for the death of the selchie. Next Christmas morning the same man was in the neighbourhood of the rock where he had shot the cause of his misfortune in the previous year, and there he beheld another selchie lying in the same position asleep. This time, however he would not shoot, but retreated immediately to the house, lest some unseen power might compel him to shoot this one also, and so bring more misfortunes upon himself; so great was his belief that the seal had caused the death of his cow.

On another occasion, long long ago, a Breckness man was rambling along the sea shore in the middle of summer. Far away to the westward the Atlantic Ocean heaved and swelled, and the crying sea-birds soared above his head. The murmuring sea, as it ebbed away from the rocks beneath him, glistened in the summer sun, and the distant hills of Hoy loomed up, like grim sentinels, above the scene. The day was warm and the scene inviting, as the young Breckness man threw himself down upon the grassy shore and gazed far out into the horizon, indulging in those dreamy moods that are common to youthful days. As he lay drinking in the beauties of his surroundings, he espied

a mermaid bathing in the sea at a short distance from the spot where he was. She had the most beautiful face he had ever looked upon, and beautiful golden hair that flowed down her milk-white back. Never had this Orcadian gazed upon such a vision of loveliness. Never had he seen a face and form so fair. Beside her lay upon a rock the *slough* or skin worn by such dwellers in the deep, and the youth knew that if he once gained possession of this slough or caul the mermaid would be unable to return to the water. He made up his mind to endeavour to get possession of the desired object. Creeping down as cautiously as possible, while the mermaid was intently engaged in combing her hair, he managed to get hold of the slough, which he immediately concealed in his bosom. At that moment his presence was observed, and the female turned rapidly round to seize her slough ; but, alas ! it was gone. The tears stole down her cheeks from her pensive eyes as she looked towards the cause of her distress. With pleading words she asked the youth for her property that she might return to the friendly waves, but he would not give it up. He wished her to come home with him and be his bride, and after a little persuasion the mermaid accompanied her capturer home. There the pair were married and lived a happy life together for a number of years. Six children was the product of the marriage—three males and three females—who were

renowned for their remarkable beauty throughout all the Orcadian isles. When they grew up she entreated them to ask their father where he had hid her slough. After much coaxing the favourite daughter succeeded in extracting the much longed for information, and, elated at her success, she immediately hastened to tell her mother. Very soon afterwards the mother disappeared. Many a time the sorrowing father watched the spot where he had, so many years before, found his mermaid bride; but all in vain. He never saw her golden hair streaming on the tide. The sea-birds cried and circled round his head as of yore, but no mermaid came to that rock to comb her flowing hair in the warm sunshine. At last one day he concealed himself beside a large pile of rocks and began his eager watch. This time he was not disappointed. He observed her coming up out of the water towards the beach and begin to comb her children's heads. But whenever the husband appeared she vanished beneath the waves, not forgetting to take her slough along with her. Many a time she came to that spot to meet her children and to comb their locks, but she never again left the magic caul within her husband's reach. Tradition says that sometimes the sweetest music is heard near the spot where the mermaid was first found. It is said to be the mother of the children singing a Norse sea-song to lull her little ones asleep, the

echoes of which song can never die, but keep sounding on amid the *voes* and caverns of the rocky deep.*

One bright summer day many, many years ago a boat's crew of Shetlanders landed upon a "stack and skerry" far out in the North Sea, with the intention of capturing some of the selchies that were known to frequent that spot. Upon landing they found a considerable number, many of which were speedily clubbed and deprived of their skins on the spot. The carcasses were left upon the rocks, and the men prepared to set out upon their return journey. At that moment a tremendous swell arose upon the sea that compelled them to make for their boat at once. They all embarked in safety except one man who was left behind. The swell was so great that his companions found it impossible to render him any assistance, and so they were reluctantly compelled to leave the poor fellow to his fate. The night was dark and stormy, the waves beat heavily upon the rocks on which the deserted Shetlander stood, and he imagined that he must soon perish amid the breakers that threatened every now and then to sweep him from his foothold. As he looked around him he observed a number of the selchies that had escaped swimming up to the skerry. Upon landing they took off their seal skins, and appeared

* A similar story is related by Dr. Hibbert of a Shetlander in Unst.

in the character of sea-trows. They immediately set to work to endeavour to restore to life their stunned and skinless friends. After a time their efforts met with success, and they also assumed their sub-marine appearance as sea-trows. But they lamented the loss of their seal skins, which prevented their return to their deep sea homes in the broad Atlantic. Special lamentation was made for one of their number, called Ollavitinus, the son of Gioga, who, thus deprived, must spend forever the remainder of his days in the upper world, removed from all his kith and kin. At last Gioga perceived the shivering form of the abandoned fisherman, who was gazing despairingly across the wild sea waves. She went up to the poor fellow and proposed to carry him back to his friends at Papa-Stour if he would promise to procure for her the skin of her son. This the Shetlander readily did, and, mounting on the back of Gioga, who had now assumed the form of a selchie, he was soon conveyed to the land, which he thought he would never see again. When the overjoyed fishermen landed, he set off at once to Skeo, at Hamna Voe, got possession of the desired skin, and restored it to the anxious mother, who was thus enabled to lead back her son to the watery caves of ocean.

Among the old ballads still sung by fair Orcadians is one that tells the story of a grey selchie whose dwelling was in

Sule* Skerry. It is only known by some of the older folks, and is sung by them in a charming manner. It was after some searching that we managed at last to get possession of the following words, which compose the ballad. It will be new to most readers, and even to the great majority of Orcadians:—

THE GREY SELCHIE OF SULE SKERRIE.

In Norway lands there lived a maid,
 “Hush, ba, loo lillie,” this maid began;
 “I know not where my baby’s father is,
 Whether by land or sea does he travel in.”

It happened on a certain day,
 When this fair lady fell fast asleep,
 That in cam’ a good grey selchie,
 And set him doon at her bed feet,

Saying, “Awak’, awak’, my pretty maid,
 For oh! how sound as thou dost sleep!
 An’ I’ll tell thee where thy baby’s father is;
 He’s sittin’ close at thy bed feet.”

“I pray, come tell to me thy name,
 Oh! tell me where does thy dwelling be?”
 “My name it is good Hein Mailer,
 An’ I earn my livin’ oot o’ the sea.

“I am a man upon the land;
 I am a selchie in the sea;
 An’ whin I’m far frae every strand,
 My dwellin’ is in Sule Skerrie.”

* Icelandic *sula*, solan-goose.

“ Alas ! alas ! this woeful fate !

 This weary fate that’s been laid for me !
 That a man should come frae the Wast o’ Hoy,
 To the Norway lands to have a bairn wi’ me.”

“ My dear, I’ll wed thee with a ring,
 With a ring, my dear, I’ll wed wi’ thee.”

“ Thoo may go wed thee weddens wi’ whom thoo wilt ;
 For I’m sure thoo’ll never wed none wi’ me.”

“ Thoo will nurse my little wee son
 For seven long years upo’ thy knee,
 An’ at the end o’ seven long years
 I’ll come back an’ pay the norish (nursing) fee.”

She’s nursed her little wee son
 For seven long years upo’ her knee,
 An’ at the end o’ seven long years
 He cam’ back wi’ gold and white monie.

She says, “ My dear, I’ll wed thee wi’ a ring,
 With a ring my dear, I’ll wed wi’ thee.”

“ Thoo may go wed these weddens wi’ whom thoo will ;
 For I’m sure thoo’ll never wed none wi’ me.

“ But I’ll put a gold chain around his neck,
 An’ a gey good gold chain it’ll be,
 That if ever he comes to the Norway lands,
 Thoo may hae a gey good guess on hi’.

“ An’ thoo will get a gunner good,
 An’ a gey good gunner it will be,
 An’ he’ll gae oot on a May mornin’
 An’ shoot the son an’ the grey selchie.”

Oh ! she has got a gunner good,
 An’ a gey good gunner it was he,
 An’ he gaed out on a May mornin’,
 An’ he shot the son and the grey selchie.

When the gunner returned from his expedition and shewed the Norway woman the gold chain, which he had found round the neck of the young seal, the poor woman realising that her son had perished, gives expression to her sorrow in the last stanza :—

“ Alas ! alas ! this woeful fate !
 This weary fate that's been laid for me ! ”
 An' ance or twice she sobbed and sighed,
 An' her tender heart did brak in three.

Now it is almost impossible to recover much of the richest and most fascinating of the myth tales and “ here-meed rhymes ” that have so often, in days gone by, charmed the family circle and social group. A few gems might possibly be recovered, but these, we are afraid, would be “ few and far between. ” The oral and ballad lore of Orkney is fast drifting into oblivion.

We can scarcely leave the traditionary lore that has arisen in reference to the seal without giving another tale, which is told in the native dialect by Mr. W. T. Dennison in his “ Orcadian Sketchbook. ” It will give the stranger to Orcadian speech some idea of the peculiarities of that northern tongue, which “ is formed from two languages, both flowing from one source, yet diverging widely and for long ages, and then meeting and amalgamating in a rude unwritten dialect of the remote islands of Orkney. ” The Norse

element, that once formed a large portion of common Orcadian speech, is gradually fading away, and only survives in a few expressions, some of which are given in the following tale, entitled :—

THE SELKIE THAT DEUD NO' FORGET.

Ae time langsyne, Mansie Meur was pickan' lempeds i' the ebb, on the wast side o' Hacksness i' Sanday, whin he wus stunned tae hear some wey amang the rocks a unco' ceurious sound. Sometimes hid was like a bothy i' terrable pain, makin' meen; an' dan hid wad mak' a lood soond like the root o' a deean' coo. An' dan again de soond wad dee awa' tae a laich an' maist peetifu' meen, as gin hid been a bothy ootmucht* i' a bought o' the wark. The soond wus sae awfu' peetifu', hid meed Mansie think lang tae hear hid. Mansie could see naethin' for a peerie† while, bit a muckle selkie closs in at the rocks, rakin' his heed abeun de skreuff‡ o' the water, an' leukan' wi' baith his een i'tae a geo a peerie bit awa'. An' Mansie noticed that the selkie wus no faer'd, niver dookid, an' niver teuk his e'e aff o' that geo. Mansie geed ower a muckle rock 'at lay atween him an' that geo; an' there, i' a cunyo§ o' the geo, he saw a mither selkie lyan' in a' the trouble o' her callowin'-pains. An' hid was

* Out of breath.

† Little.

‡ Surface.

§ Crevice.

her that meed a' the sair meen an' lood yowlin'; an' the faither selkie lay i' the sea watchin' his marrow i' her trouble. Mansie stood an' watched her teu, an' said it was peetifu' tae see what the peur dumb animal suffered. An' there he steud, a bit aff, till sheu callowed twa bonnie selkie calves, that wur nee seuner on the rock or dey gripped for de pap. Mansie t'ought tae himsel' the calf hides wad mak' a bonnie waistco't tae him; and he ran tae whar dey wur a' t'ree lyan'. The peur mither selkie rowed hersel' ower the face o' de rock i'tae the sea; bit her twa birds hed no' wit tae flee. Sae Mansie gripped dem baith. An' dan hid wus sae wonderfu' tae see the atfares* o' the mither selkie. She teuk sic' t'ought for her young. She rowed aboot an' aboot i' the sea, an' baeted hersel' wi' her megs, † like a t'ing distracted. An' dan sheu wad climmer ap wi' her fore megs on de face o' de rock, an' glower'd i' Mansie's face, wi' a luck sae terrably peetifu', hid wad hae melted a he'rt o' steen tae seen her. The father selkie was ga'n the sam' wey, only he wad no' come sae near Mansie. Mansie turned tae gang awa' wi' the twa selkie birds i' his erms,—dey wur sookin' at his co't as gin dey been at the mither's breest,—whin he heard the selkie mither gae a groan sae dismal an' how, an' sae human like, that hid geed

* Behaviour.

† Paws, or semi-fins of the seal.

stra'cht tae his he'rt, an' fairly overcam' him. He lucked about, an' saw the mither selkie lyan' on her side, wi' her heed on the rock ; an' he saw—as seur as ever he saw a t'ing on earth—the tears feeman'* frae baith her e'en. Tae see nater wirkin' sae sair i' the peur dumb crater, he could nae bide hid mair. Sae he looted doon an' passed baith the peerie selkies on the rock. The mither took them i' her megs, an' clespid dem tae her bosom, as gin sheu been a bothy wi' a bairn. An' sheu luckid i' Mansie's face ;—Oh ! sic a blithe luck the selkie gae him. Sheu deud Mansie geud tae see her. For dat day the selkie deud ivery t'ing but spaek.

Mansie was dan a young man ; an' a while efter dat he merried. An' a lang while efter he merried, whin his bairns wur groun-ap folk, he geed tae bide on the wast side o' Eday. Ae bonnie e'enin', Mansie geed tae fish sillo's aff o' a oot-lyan' rock. He was a oot-flow rock, that ye could only gang tae dry-shod wi' low water. The fish wad no' tak' ava' for a peerie while ; bit whin he begood tae flou, sheu set on an' teuk brawly, sae that Mansie steud an' hauled whill he filled his sea-cubbie.† The fish teuk sae bonnie, that i' his feurness ‡ tae fish he forgot the gate he had tae gang. An' whin he cam' tae gang heem, he wus

* Streaming.

† Bait-basket.

‡ Rashness.

sairly stunned tae see the trink atween him an' the land fairly flou'd ower, an' the sea sae deep he wad taen him abeun da heed. Mansie cried an' better cried; bit he wus far fae ony hoose, and nee bothy heard his cries. The water raise an' raise, cam' up abeun his knees, abeun his hanches, ap tae his oxters; an' miny a sair sich gae he, as de water cam' aye hicher an' nearer to his chin. He cried while he wus trapplehers', an' he could cry nee mair. An' dan he gae ap a' hup' o' life, an' saw naething afore him bit dismal daeth. An' dan, as de sea wus comin' roond his hass,* an' comin' noos an' dans i' peerie lippers † tae his mooth, jeust as he f'and the sea beginnin' tae lift him fae the rock, summin' gripped him bae the neck o' the co't an' whipped him aff o' his feet. He kent no' what hid wus, or whar he wus, till he f'and his feet at the boddam, whar he could wad ashore i' safety. An' whin de craeter 'at hed haud o' him passed him, he wadded tae the dry land. He luckid whar he cam' fae, an' saw a muckle selkie swiman' tae the rock, whar sheu dookid, teuk ap his cubbie o' fish, an' swam wi'd tae the land. He wadded oot an' teuk the cubbie fu' o' fish oot o' her mooth; an' he said wi' a' his he'rt, "Geud bliss the selkie that deus no' forget." An' she luckid tae him, as gin, if sheu could

* Neck.

† Ripples.

hae spoken, sheu wad hae said, "Ae geud turn meets anither." Sheu wus the same selkie that he saw callowan' on Hacksness, forty years afore. He said he wad hae kent her mitherly luck amang a thoosan'. Bit sheu was groun a arknæ.* Sae that wus the selkie that deud no' forget. I wiss' a' bothy may mind on what's geud, as weel as that selkie.

"In the superstitious belief of the North," says Mr. Dennison in a foot-note, "the seal held a far higher place than any other of the lower animals, had a mysterious connection with the human race, and had the power of assuming the human form and faculties. Indeed, though he may not acknowledge it, every true descendant of the Norsemen looks upon the seal as a kind of second cousin in disgrace. And why not? If Darwinism be right, the seal is far more likely to have been the remote ancestor of a man than the monkey; if we take into account length of head and shortness of tail. Anyhow our tale should be true, because I have far more vouchers for its veracity than I ever heard for the authenticity of Androclus and the Lion. At all events the tale itself is a gem of beauty."

When a person was drowned in Sweden the people said, *Nökken tog ham bort*, i.e., the Nökke (or water spirit), took

* A very old Seal.

him away. The following story is quite common in Sweden :—“Two boys were one time playing by a river that ran by their father’s house. The Neck (in Danish Nökke) rose and sat on the surface of the water, and played on his harp ; but one of the children said to him, ‘What is the use Neck, of your sitting there playing? You will never be saved.’ The Neck then began to weep bitterly, flung away his harp, and sank down to the bottom. The children went home and told the whole story to their father, who was the parish priest. He said they were wrong to say so to the Neck, and desired them to go immediately back to the river and console him with the promise of salvation. They did so ; and when they came down to the river the Neck was sitting on the water, weeping and lamenting. They then said to him, ‘Neck do not grieve so ; our father says that your Redeemer liveth also.’ The Neck then took his harp and played most sweetly until after the sun was gone down.”*

Reginald Scot, in his “Discoverie of Witchcraft” (1665), tells us of a very important Brownie, named Luridan, who inhabited the Orkneys. He attended several families as a kind of general servant, sweeping their rooms and washing their dishes, and putting on their fires long before any of

* See Afzelius. Sago-häfdar, II. 156.

them were up. Luridan asserted that he was the *genius Astral* of Pomona, and had resided in the days of Solomon and David at Jerusalem. At that time he was known amongst the Jews as Belelah. Leaving Palestine he took up his abode in Wales, where he inspired the Welsh bards, being known by the name of Wrthin or Wadd; "and now," said he, "I have removed hither, and alas! my continuance is but short, for in seventy years I must resign my place to Balkin, lord of the Northern Mountains!" This Balkin seems to have been shaped like a satyr and to have had a large family numbering about twelve thousand. These composed the northern fairies, who inhabited Orkney and the North of Scotland. It is said that their speech was ancient Irish, so they must have belonged to the Keltic race. These spirits are said to have been always at war with the fiery spirits, who were believed to keep the mountain of Heckla in trim. Luridan was a great opponent to these fiery spirits, as we are informed by the Book of Vanagastus, the Norwegian.

Before bringing this sketch to a close it may not be uninteresting to compare a belief which prevails among the North American Indians with those of Scandinavia. The particulars were derived from an Orcadian who spent many years in the service of the Hudson Bay company. Among these Indians the supreme evil Spirit is known

by the name of Whittigo or Windigo, and is the source of most of the misfortunes that befall the aborigines of the American continent. A poor savage was out hunting with his wife or squaw one day, and as they were travelling through a large pine forest they sat down beneath one of the huge trees to await the time of night when the light of the rising moon would pierce the thick foliage above their heads. As they lay there amid the silence of the mighty forest the savage was suddenly startled by a great noise behind him. It seemed like the sound of thunder accompanied with the crackling of branches and the falling of trees. On looking round he noticed a huge monster of enormous size, tall and fierce looking, crushing down everything that came in his way. Arriving at a certain spot he halted and prepared to light a fire in the usual Indian fashion. He took two dry sticks, one of which was pointed and the other having a groove running from end to end. Rubbing the two together, he appeared to be in great fury and disappointment. In a few seconds a blue flame arose from the sticks with which he kindled a great fire. Dragging his bag from behind him he drew out a large pot and emptied the contents of his bag—rabbits and other animals of the chase into the cauldron. In an instant they were ready cooked. He snatched them up and ate them greedily, but, apparently, was not satisfied, though his feast would have been sufficient

for a dozen savages. Taking a bit of thread out of his side pouch he tied it round a rabbit's head, and holding it between his two fingers he twirled the head of the rabbit round about. He still seemed to be very dissatisfied with his repast, crying out in the Indian tongue, "Where are the people? O, where are the people?" The savage, thinking that he might disappear himself soon in the huge pot, raised his tomahawk and, with the quickness and precision of an Indian hunter, split the head of the great evil spirit. At this instant Windigo—for this was no other than he—disappeared in a blue-light. Since that time several young Windigos have got abroad, and cases have been known of savages shooting their squaws while pregnant, urged on with the fiendish idea that they might bring forth little Windigos, who might roam through the forests and disturb the hunting grounds of the far North-West.

This concluding sketch has grown upon us to a considerable extent, and it is with great reluctance that we quit so fertile a field as that of Orcadian Folk-lore. Some other time perhaps, it may fall to our lot to wander more afield in the same direction, and should our gleanings prove to be of an interesting and amusing description the reading public may be permitted to read and taste for themselves.

We must now bid adieu to those scenes of many a historic incident, "where restless seas

“ Howl round the storm-swept Orcades,—
Where erst St. Clair bore princely sway
O'er isle and islet, strait and bay ;—
And there, in many a stormy vale,
The Scald had told his wondrous tale ;
And many a Runic column high
Had witnessed grim idolatry.”

The object of these imperfect sketches has been to create some little interest in places in our native land, places which are even in this nineteenth century scarcely known at all. It is much to be desired that people who are inclined for travel should devote some portion of their time in becoming acquainted with historic scenes which lie so near home. A trip to the islands of the North Sea would afford its own reward in the shape of better health and a more accurate knowledge of the geographical features of our own dear island. The antiquarian, the geologist, the botanist, the historian, the painter, and the pleasure seeker may all obtain amid those wild seas fitting objects for their study and amusement. The very atmosphere seems pregnant with tales of by-gone days when heroes roved upon those waters, and wandering Scalds sung of Scandinavian lore and the mighty deeds of brave and chivalrous men. The grey stone monuments still whisper silently of an ancient religion now forgotten and of the happy Valhalla where those Norse heroes sleep.

“ And here, as fancy’s flight doth stray
Thro’ time’s far twilight tracts away,
Methinks the northern lights that fly
Like sheeted spectres o’er our sky,
Might seem the spirits of the brave,
Whose bodies moulder by the wave,
Holding their dance above the shore
Which knows, alas ! their names no more.”

APPENDIX I.

The following article appeared in the columns of the *Scotsman* of the 11th May, 1883, and is inserted here to give an idea of the rapid increase that has taken place of late years in Orcadian exports :—

A YEAR'S EXPORTS FROM ORKNEY.

A hundred years ago the value of exports from Orkney in a single year amounted to only £23,000, and by the end of the century it had risen to about £40,000. So great has been the subsequent expansion of trade, particularly during the last thirty years, that the annual amount is now almost if not quite £300,000, to which the item of eggs alone contributes nearly as much as the total for the year 1800. And it may be noted that the nature of the exports has entirely changed. Kelp, linen, and linen yarn, calf and rabbit skins, and plaited straw were the principal articles of export in the early years of the country : now, live stock is by far the most important. The growth of this trade in live stock will be seen by examining some figures relating to various years within the last half-century. In 1833 the number of animals sent out of the country was only 1280, representing a money value of £5478. Fifteen years later, largely owing to the introduction of steam communication with the south, the number had risen to 2500, worth £12,625. This increase is all the more remarkable in that it took place in a period of great depression all over the country. From this time

the trade continued to expand. In 1861 the exported numbered 9241, worth £68,844; in 1866, 12,260, worth £80,200; and last year reached the respectable totals of 17,279 and £157,183. Cattle bulks most largely in these figures. In 1848 the number exported was 1580, valued at £7700. By 1866 the number had increased to 7340, and, as the average price of cattle had doubled in the meantime, their money value was £73,400.

One of the most remarkable features in the trade of Orkney is the enormous growth in the export of eggs within the last fifty years, which will be seen by a glance at the following table:—

1833,	...	...	...	100,000 doz. at 6d	...	...	...	£2500
1861,	...	...	...	500,000 doz. at 6d	...	...	...	12,500
1866,	...	...	...	715,000 doz. at 7d	...	...	...	20,854
1880,	...	...	...	983,220 doz. at 8d	...	...	...	32,774
1881,	...	...	...	998,480 doz. at 8d	...	...	...	33,282
1882,	...	...	...	1,119,860 doz. at 8d	...	...	...	37,328

There was thus an increase of £4046 on this item last year. Seeing that England imports from the Continent eggs to the annual value of several millions, there is a wide field open to Orcadian farmers and crofters, and, indeed, to farmers everywhere.

Of the quantity of grain exported during 1882 we have been unable to obtain so complete returns as of the other subjects, and the statistics given below are certainly, though perhaps not much, under the mark. The quantity exported in 1866 amounted to 35,730 quarters with 3522 bolls of meal, valued together at £38,911; and our figures for last year place the quantity at 14,871 quarters with 864 bolls of meal, valued at £14,258, prices having been lower in the latter year. Making every allowance for the incompleteness of our statistics, there has undoubtedly been a very large falling off during these seventeen years. To what is this reduction due? Keeping in mind the greater use of wheaten bread it can hardly be attributed to the increased consumption by a larger population. And it is not due to any decrease in production, for the acreage under corn crops has been steadily rising year by year, though perhaps not at the same rate as grass and pasture lands. It is probable, however, that a much larger quantity than formerly is used on the farms in connection with the raising of stock.

Gathering together all our figures for the past year we get the following result:—

Bulls, 64 at £28,	£1792	0	0
Cattle, 7543 at £18,	135,774	0	0
Horses, 163 at £24,	3912	0	0
Sheep, 5324 at 38s.,	10,115	12	0
Lambs, 3536 at 24s,	4243	4	0
Swine, 649 at £3,	1947	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£157,783	16	0
	<hr/>		
Dead Pigs, 3850 at £3,	£11,550	0	0
	<hr/>		
Eggs, 1,119,860 doz. at 8d.,	£37,328	13	4
	<hr/>		
Oats, 13,319 qrs. at 18s.,	£11,987	2	0
Barley, 952 qrs. at 20s 6d.,	975	16	0
Bere, 600 qrs. at 19s 5d,	582	10	0
Meal, 864 bolls at 16s 6d,	712	16	0
	<hr/>		
Total,	£14,253	4	0
	<hr/>		
Grand Total,	£220,920	13	4

These figures look small, no doubt, if compared with similar statistics for some other counties in Scotland ; but in comparison with the trade of Orkney itself in the past, or even with that of other counties now, if due allowance be made for differing circumstances, they are figures which, taken altogether, must be viewed with satisfaction.

II.

CLOSE OF THE ORKNEY HERRING FISHING.

The herring fishing in Orkney has this year been in several respects the most remarkable on record. Over 200 boats

have been engaged at the various stations, and the small boats so customary some years ago in Orkney are now conspicuous by their absence—large decked and finely-equipped boats taking their place. An encouraging feature of this change is the fact that many of the Orkney boats are now holding their own in competition with south country boats. Last year the fish were got at a great offing, the boats sometimes going 40 and 60 miles to sea, but this year some of the heaviest shots have been taken inshore. A trial was made for the first time of the early fishing on the west side of the islands—two curers having started stations in Westray—but the venture only proved partially successful, and as the herring set in earlier than usual to the east coast, the boats removed to Stronsay. At this latter station the fishing has been most remarkably successful, the average for 90 boats being 200 crans. During one week the boats were so heavily laden that curers were unable to overtake the work, and heaps of fish, some hundreds of yards in length, had to be piled on the grass fields and roused in salt. While the fishing, however, was thus successful as regards the take, many were losers by the heavy shots, several boats being cleaned of their entire drift of nets. So packed were the fish in the nets that they sank; and, as the fishing was not only heavy but general, the boats could get no assistance from neighbours, as is often secured in similar difficulty. The result of this success is that a very considerable addition may be expected to the fishing fleet in Orkney next year, and already it is stated that some new stations will be started in the island of Sanday, which should be in a position to compete favourably with Stronsay. Mr. Chalmers, Kirkwall, has removed his station from Stronsay to Tankerness. Several of the south country and Campbeltown boats completed their complements before the close of the engaged time, and as the weather was broken, prepared to return home, otherwise the total might have been increased. The average catch in Orkney has never exceeded 100 crans until this year, when it has reached the respectable average of 180 crans. Nearly the same total was caught in 1853, when 36,143 crans were landed by 367 boats, but this only gave an average of 98 crans. In 1875, 300 boats fished in the islands, but the following five years the number gradually decreased until in 1880 there was only 170. Since then, however, the boats have steadily though slowly increased in number and size, until this year there are 205. On several occasions the average in Orkney has been a miserable one, notably in the following years:—

Year.						Crans.
1864,	.	.	.	.	.	18
1865,	.	.	.	.	.	29
1867,	.	.	.	.	.	45
1868,	.	.	.	.	.	32
1871,	.	.	.	.	.	41
1875,	,	.	.	.	,	41
1876,	.	.	.	.	.	18½
1877,	,	.	.	.	,	45¾
1879,	.	.	.	.	.	46

The statistics for the past five years, however, have been more encouraging, viz:—

Year.						Crans.
1880,	.	.	.	.	.	95
1881,	.	.	.	.	.	80
1882,	.	.	.	.	.	81⅓
1883,	.	.	.	.	.	180

The following table gives the complete statistics for the past 31 years:—

Years.	Boats.	Average.	Total.
1853	367	98	36,143
1854	371	50¾	18,876
1855	362	76	27,512
1856	377	31¼	11,800
1857	380	35½	13,481
1858	370	37¼	13,822
1859	330	34¾	11,490
1860	347	33	11,890
1861	335	28¾	9,600
1862	274	43	11,755
1863	220	97	21,390
1864	238	18	4,325
1865	230	29	6,730
1866	222	50	11,600
1867	234	45	10,490
1868	232	32	7,425

Years.	Boats.	Average.	Total.
1869	275	71 $\frac{1}{4}$	19,590
1870	260	65 $\frac{3}{4}$	17,100
1871	260	40 $\frac{3}{4}$	10,600
1872	264	78 $\frac{1}{2}$	20,707
1873	283	71 $\frac{1}{2}$	20,238
1874	290	70	20,284
1875	317	41	12,916
1876	260	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	4,843
1877	215	45 $\frac{3}{4}$	9,772
1878	192	76 $\frac{2}{3}$	14,722
1879	183	46	8,418
1880	170	95	16,142
1881	180	80	14,418
1882	197	81 $\frac{1}{3}$	16,018
1883	205	180	36,903

As regards the last week there is little to report, as there was no attempt at fishing. Monday and Tuesday nights were stormy. On Wednesday most of the boats were beached opposite their winter berths, and during the other days of the week nearly all of them were drawn up and secured for the season. The stranger boats all left during the week, most of them having exceeded their complements—200 crans. The average for the 205 boats is 180 crans, against 81 $\frac{1}{2}$ crans for 197 boats last year.

One very favourable record is that the year has been entirely free of any drowning accident in connection with the industry. As already stated, there was a considerable loss of netting, but no damage to boats of any consequence.

The quality of the fish has, as a rule, been somewhat mixed, a large proportion of the catch being matties.—*Orkney Herald*, September 12th, 1883.

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- P. 59, l. 12, *for* Tholld *read* Troldd.
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