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The Mingling of Fairy and Witch Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Scotland

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## THE MINGLING OF FAIRY AND WITCH BELIEFS IN SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY SCOTLAND.

*A Paper read before the Anthropological Section of the British  
Association, September, 1921.*

BY CANON J. A. MACCULLOCH, D.D.

FOLK-LORE is now a recognized field for scientific research, and though fairies may seem at first sight to be at the opposite pole from science, yet the origin and nature of a belief held so widely are not without interest to the student of the byways of human opinion. At all events the British Association has more than once taken note of them, and has not gone so far as the Russian Commissary of Education, who has announced that all mention of fairies, angels, or devils in fairy tales is to be supplanted by the words "scientists and technicians who have served humanity." Whether these partake the nature of angels or of devils, or incline more to that of fairies, I leave you to judge.

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Everyone who has studied the various sets of beings, more or less supernatural, in which humanity has believed, is aware that a large number of characteristics is common to all. They have their own personality and name, they are quite distinct from each other, yet many things attributed to one set are attributed to others. So much so that it would almost seem as if, from very far-distant times, a stock of incidents existed which could be assigned indifferently to various denizens of the world of fancy, just as certain stories are told, now of this, now of the other, outstanding personality. Most of the matters alleged regarding witches can be found in savage sorcery, and this shows that the roots of classical, mediaeval, and later witchcraft go deep into the soil of humanity. To savage spirits and demons of all kinds, Arabian Jinn, Greek Nereids, the spirit foxes of Japan and China, to ghosts, fairies, and dwarfs, can be applied now this, now that incident, or manner of acting, or characteristic.<sup>1</sup> We need not be surprised, then, when we find that many similar things are told both of fairies and witches. Their origin is widely different. Witchcraft is rooted in primitive magic and in the human *rapport* with spirits of a kind with which the average man has always thought the less he had to do the better. The fairy belief is formed of many strands—the belief in divinities, in nature spirits, in ghosts, and, as far as dwarfs are concerned, in dim memories of older races, probably of a pigmy kind; while dream-experiences, hallucinations, and human fancy and imagination have aided in creating it.<sup>2</sup>

Widely separate in origin and personality as fairies and witches may be, nevertheless the beliefs regarding both are often altogether or nearly the same, and are also often ascribed to other groups of beings. The supernatural

<sup>1</sup> See the art. "Fairy" by the writer in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, iv. 678 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

powers possessed by both are the same—invisibility and shape-shifting, as well as that of taking the substance of food-stuffs from their rightful owners—the *toradh*, as it is called in Gaelic, the essence of milk or corn or of an animal. Both steal children or exchange them for their own kind, and both are apt to extract the soul or heart of a man, leaving him with none or with a fairy or demon soul, or a heart made of straw. Both do serious injury to horses or cattle, riding them by night to exhaustion, twisting their manes or tails, or shooting at them with a deadly invisible arrow—the elf-bolt, the flint arrow-head of neolithic man, *ylfagescot* and *haegtessan-gescot*, the elf-shot and witch-shot of early Anglo-Saxon formulae. The times of their activity are the same, especially May-eve, Midsummer-eve, and Hallowe'en, as well as certain days of the week. Fairies travel through the air in an eddy of dust or a whirlwind. Witches do the same, no less than demons, ghosts, and other eldritch folk in all parts of the world. Fairies delight in dancing and feasting by night: these formed great part of the occult joys of the witch-Sabbat, and the dances of both are probably an imaginative exaggeration of actual orgiastic folk-dances. The intruder on fairy or witch revels was likely to fare badly. He must pipe for them until he could pipe no longer, or, drawn into the whirling dance, he capered till he fell exhausted, awaking next morning to find his nocturnal companions gone, and himself often witless. Greater dangers sometimes befell him. Yet if he accidentally or with presence of mind uttered a sacred name or formula, the revel and the feast vanished and left "not a wrack behind." The circles or rings in the meadow ascribed popularly to the fairies' round dances, were sometimes also supposed to be caused by the similar dances of witches and demons. Many other parallels might be cited, but as a final one we may point to the story, embodied by the Ettrick Shepherd in his *Witch of Fife*, and told both of witches and fairies in different

regions. Some one sees witches or fairies preparing for a distant night flight by getting astride of twigs, or ragwort stalks, and then by means of a formula—"Horse and haddock," or the like, transforming these into serviceable steeds. He imitates their actions and is speedily transported with them over land and sea to a far-off wine cellar where he joins their revels and, being overcome by his potations, is left behind, to be found next morning and arrested as a thief. The same story formula is thus applied to one set of beings or the other, but its first occurrence in a sort of promptuary for preachers compiled by Etienne de Bourbon in the thirteenth century, makes the revellers neither witches nor fairies, but the *bonae res*, the "Good Things," the supernatural or mortal followers of Diana, Herodias, or Abundia, according to a widespread mediaeval myth. The "Good Things" were perhaps nearer akin to fairies than sorceresses, though, as the witch superstition increased, they became more assimilated to witches.<sup>1</sup>

But besides this assigning of parallel attributes and actions to different orders of beings, there was a tendency also to mingle both the two groups. Clear evidence of this exists in sixteenth and seventeenth century Scotland. Elsewhere the evidence is only occasional, but it is probable that Scottish superstition was not alone in this assimilation of two quite different groups, fairies and witches, or three, if we include the devil and his demoniac train, with whom all witchcraft had officially been associated. The official, ecclesiastical orthodoxy of Europe had long regarded all

<sup>1</sup> T. Heywood, *Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels*, London, 1635, p. 257; P. Kennedy, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*, *ib.*, 1866, p. 166; R. Burns, notes to "Tam o' Shanter," *Life and Works* (ed. Chambers, 1896), iii. 222. These refer to witches. The companion of the fairy flight occurs, *e.g.* in J. Brand, *Observations on Popular Antiquities*, ed. W. C. Hazlitt, London, 1870, iii. 46; J. Jacobs, *Celtic Fairy Tales*, *ib.* 1895, p. 5 f.; Thackeray, *Irish Sketch Book*, ch. 16; Sir W. Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, London, 1839, p. 220 (from Aubrey, *Miscellanies*). *Anecdotes historiques, Légendes, et Apologues tirés du recueil inédit d'Etienne de Bourbon*, Paris, 1877, p. 88.

spirits as either angelic or demoniac. Fairies, elves, brownies, water-sprites, forest and woodland folk, were certainly not angels; therefore they must be demons. To the orthodox theologian the world was full of such demons; and it mattered not what the folk called them. In all the writings of the mediaeval period they are demons, pure and simple. Many of the ecclesiastical or semi-ecclesiastical authors of that age, Etienne de Bourbon, Caesarius of Heisterbach, Gervase of Tilbury, Giraldus Cambrensis, must have been folk-lorists without knowing it, for they sought far and wide for stories illustrating the doings of the demons. Their pages are full of these highly entertaining stories, and in many of these it is not difficult to recognize elfin beings masquerading as demons through no fault of their own. Fairy-land and its denizens had become a real part of Satan's kingdom of darkness. It was therefore inevitable that in course of time, and especially after the witchcraft prosecutions began in the fourteenth century, the folk themselves should more or less accept a view of their own creations which was imposed upon them by their spiritual pastors and masters. They did not accept it wholly, but in so far as they did, and in so far as the common aspects of the beliefs in fairies and witchcraft also aided, the common ban under which both were placed would inevitably tend to mix both together in their minds. The theological view of both matters was quite clear and straightforward, and both fairies and the mediaeval and post-Reformation witches were regarded as of Satan's train.

In a letter of 1787 Burns speaks of the numerous tales current in Scotland, and told him by an old woman in his childhood, "concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towns, dragons, and other trumpery," and describes the effect which these still had upon him in his later years as well as upon his poetry. Scotland has, in fact, always been a

peculiar haunt of such beings. "The Lord guide us," says Mistress Baby in Scott's *Pirate*, "what kind of a country of guisards and gyre-carlines is this!" Perhaps for this reason the mingling of fairy and witch beliefs was rendered more easy. At all events, the evidence from three sources is clear enough regarding it. These are: (1) certain poems of the Reformation period; (2) the copious evidence of several witch-trials; (3) King James VI.'s book on *Daemonologie* (1598).

(1) Even the greater Scots poets of the sixteenth century were content to lay aside the splendid singing robes required by the courtly tradition of poetry, and to condescend upon the matters of popular belief. Although treated by literary and learned men, these show clearly what poets like Dunbar, Lindsay, and Montgomery could make of the traditions of the folk, well known to them in their early years from the teachings of the credulous, kindly, if masterful Scottish nurse of the old school, like Burns's old woman. They treated this traditional lore in a burlesque fashion, it is true, as Burns himself did; but their witness to it is none the less valuable, and they show that fairies, fiends, and witches were in close communion. It will suffice to refer to one of these poems: *The Flyting of Montgomery and Polwart*, by Alexander Montgomery (1556-1610). With the coarse humour of the time Montgomery's aim is to show that Polwart was child of an elf and an ape: Polwart responds in equally ribald fashion. The poem opens with a description of the fairy ride or procession on Hallowe'en, but the constituents of this procession are significant.

"In the hinder-end of harvest, on All Hallows even,  
 When our Good Neighbours doe ryd, gif I read right,  
 Some buckled on a buneward [ragwort], and some on a  
     been,  
 Ay trottand in trupes from the twilight;  
 Some sadleand a she-ape, all graithed in green,

Some hobland on ane hempstalk, hovrand [ascending]  
to the height ;  
The King of Pharie and his court, with the Elfe Queen,  
With many elfish Incubus was rydand that night."

There followed these "the Weird Sisters"—the three Fates or the three Fairies who attend on a birth, the prophetic weird women who became the witches of *Macbeth*. Then came "Nicneven with her nymphs, in number nine" skilled in charms—"venerable virgins, whom the world calls witches," riding on swine, on dogs, or on monks.<sup>1</sup> Fairies, the Weird Sisters, and Nicneven and her train are thus conjoined in the great Halloween riding, which combines the fairy ride and the witches' jaunt.

Nic-neven is the well-known Gyre-carline regarded at once as a fairy-queen and a Hecate or mother-witch, well known to the peasantry and to literature, and of whom Sir David Lindsay, as he relates in the prologue to his *Dream*, told stories to his little pupil James V. "when that I saw thee sory." Elfin beings followed in her train, and though witch-like in all her aspects, she is constantly associated with the fairy world.<sup>2</sup>

(2) We turn now to the records of the witch trials. The Inquisition never reached Scotland, and it is to the credit of the pre-Reformation clergy that trials for sorcery were few in number, when these were matters of everyday experience in Europe; and, moreover, the witch Sabbath and its horrors was never in question before the beginning of the sixteenth century. Regular trials for witchcraft came in with the Reformation and the predominance of

<sup>1</sup> A. Montgomery, *Poems*, ed. J. Cranstoun (Scottish Text Society), Edinburgh, 1887, pp. 69 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For Nic-Neven and the Gyre-Carline see Leyden's Introduction to *The Complaynt of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1801, ii. 318; D. Laing, *Select Remains of the Ancient Popular Poetry of Scotland*, London, 1885, p. 272; Scott, *Minstrelsy*, p. 199; Heron, in Pinkerton's *Voyages*, ii. 227; R. H. Cromek, *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, London, 1810, p. 293.



Calvin's gloomy creed, and James VI., who, in spite of his scholarship and vast learning, was as superstitious as a savage and as cruel, took a sinister interest in these matters. The first act against witchcraft was passed in 1563: thenceforward trials of witches became common. These witches might be mere "spae-wives" or healers; or they might be participants in the more Satanic aspects of the craft and the witch Sabbat. Let us remember this distinction in referring to some of the trials.

The earliest recorded trial in which the mingling of witch and fairy, as well as the ghost world, occurs is that of Bessie Dunlop of Dalry, Ayrshire, in 1576. She was a healer, and alleged that her skill came from the ghost of Thome Reid, slain at Pinkie in 1547. He was the intermediary between her and the fairy-queen, who also visited her with others of the fairy-folk. The queen was far from regal—a stout carline who begged for a drink. Thomas alternately besought Bessie to go with the "gude wychtis" and dissuaded her, and he also gave her messages to relatives and friends still living—I commend this to our modern scientific necromancers. He was invisible to all but herself. For these communings with the ghost and fairy world—not however with Satan—Bessie was convicted and burned, probably on the Castle Hill of Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup>

Alisoun Pearson, a young woman, was tried in 1588 for "haunting and communing with the gude neighbours and the queen of Elfland," as well as with a ghostly familiar, William Sympson. She had been carried off by the fairies, and had seen their revels, and because she had revealed these, she was struck by them, the blow leaving an insensible spot on her body, like the well-known witch mark. The ghost usually appeared immediately before the fairies' coming, and he told her how he had been carried off by them, his relatives supposing him to be dead. From

<sup>1</sup> R. Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials in Scotland* (Bannatyne Club), Edinburgh, 1833, i. 49 ff.

the fairies, who would frequently transport her to a distance and cause her to ride with them, and from the ghostly William, she had learned all her powers of healing, for exercising which she also was burned. Her fame as a healer had been far spread, and even Patrick Adamson, Archbishop of St. Andrews, was said to have consulted her. This was made the matter of a satirical poem, prompted if not written by the credulous and bigoted James Melville, who also refers to the affair in his *Diary*. The poem describes Alisoun's riding through Breadalbane with the elf-queen and her company, along with men supposed to be dead, among others Buccleuch and Maitland of Lethington, both of Queen Mary's party, and obnoxious to the reformers. They had died violent deaths, and people who so died were commonly believed to be carried off by the fairies, a semblance of their bodies being left behind.<sup>1</sup>

Passing over other trials in which powers of healing had been obtained by the so-called witches from the fairies, we come to curious evidence in that of Andro Man and others tried at Aberdeen in 1597. Andro, an old man, had first been visited sixty years before by the fairy-queen—the devil in the form of a woman, and had been familiar with her then and since, she giving him the power of healing and secret knowledge. Andro's real master was Satan, who appeared as an angel, asserting that he was God's son, and that his name was Christsonday. "The queen has a grip of all the craft, but Christsonday is the gudeman and has all power under God." The appearance of Christsonday as a stag and riding with the elf-queen and others to their feasting and revels, in which Andro joined, is described. He would believe himself to be in a fair room, but like other mortals who join the fairy revels, would find himself next morning in a moss. He had seen "sundrie

<sup>1</sup> Pitcairn, i. 162 ff.; *Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation*, ed. J. Cranstoun (Scottish Text Society), 1891, i. 365; James Melville, *Diary*, p. 137.

deid men" with the fairies—James V. and Thomas the Rymour, whose *amour* with the fairy queen was the subject of a mediaeval poem, as well as the well-known ballad, and who has been associated with elfland in Scottish tradition ever since. The doings at the fairy revels resembled these at the witch Sabbat: they are described graphically, and the language is coarse, though the meaning is *not* obscure. Andro added some details of a curious eschatology, gained from Christsonday, who showed him the fires of hell. Christsonday—a name otherwise unexplained, occurs in the evidence of other Aberdeenshire witches, who spoke of his dancing with them and with the fairy queen.<sup>1</sup> Fairy revels were thus being transmuted into the witch Sabbat; we are in elfland, but the cloven hoof is showing itself.

A series of trials which took place in Orkney in 1615-1616 shows the same mingling of beliefs. Katherine Carey, a healer, admitted that at sundown among the hills, "ane great number of fairie men mett her," among them "a "maister man," perhaps the devil. Another woman, Janet Drever, found guilty of sorcery, had caused the removal of a child into a fairy hill and had conversation with the fairies for twenty-five years. A third, Katherine Jonesdochter, who was able to transfer disease, had seen the trows come out of their hills and knew too much about them. Elspeth Reoch had been taught her craft by a man in green tartan who appeared to her with another man in black. The latter, who called himself "a farie man," was the spirit of a dead relative, neither dead nor living, and doomed for ever to go betwixt the heaven and the earth, *i.e.* he was with the fairies. Her sapient judges regarded him as the devil. A fifth woman, Isobel Sinclair, was under fairy control, as a result of which she had second sight.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, Aberdeen, 1841, i. 119 ff., 170 ff.

<sup>2</sup> J. G. Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1835, pp. 470, 532, 635 (Katherine Carey, Katherine Jonesdochter, Isobel Sinclair); *Maitland Club Miscellany*, ii. 167 f., 187 f. (Janet Drever, Elspeth Reoch).

In 1623 Isobel Haldane, who was both a healer and a witch, when asked if she had dealings with the fairy folk, said that one night she had been carried, whether by God or devil she did not know, to a hill which opened. Within it she remained three days, until a gray-bearded man brought her out again.<sup>1</sup> He seems to have been a kind of familiar or ghost, like Thomas Reid and William Simpson, and on later occasions she had invoked his aid. These different ghostly familiars dwelt in fairy-land, according to their own account; the Presbyterian inquisitors gave them another address!

The fairy hill comes into much greater prominence in the trial of Isobel Gowdie of Auldearne, Nairn, in 1662. The evidence in this trial is most copious, and abounds in details of current folk-lore and fairy beliefs and of the methods of witchcraft. Isobel had a lively imagination as well as the gift of the gab, and her clerical judges drank in the vivid accounts given by her of the methods of sorcery, of the Sabbat, of the witch-flight, and of elf-land. On one of her flights she and others had entered the Dounie Hills and came to a "fair and lairge braw room," guarded by elf-bulls, which resemble the water bulls of Highland folk-lore. The devil roughly shaped the elf arrow-heads, and the elf boys wrought them to a finer point within the "elfis howsses." Then the devil gave them to the witches, who, on their flight through the air, "spang" or flicked them from their thumbs at their victims, who fell dead. This method of using the elf-arrows by witches is found in most of the witch trials of this period. They were also shot by fairies in their flight through the air, or they caused a mortal carried off by them in their flight to make a similar use of them. The elf boys are described as small and "boss-backed," and as speaking "gowstie-like," *i.e.* in a hollow voice, and they suggest the misshapen dwarfs of other lands. The fairy queen, on the other hand, was

<sup>1</sup> Pitcairn, ii. 537.

clad in white and the king was well-favoured. "I got meat ther from the Queen of Fearrie mor than I could eat," said Isobel. One of the ministers, who revelled in the delusions and erotic ravings of this poor woman, had been shot at by her, but the elf-bolt unfortunately fell short of this credulous parson.<sup>1</sup>

About the same time (1662) a trial in Bute revealed curious evidence. Here the devil seems to be in opposition to the fairies, giving the witch knowledge of their ill deeds, while she herself cured the "blasting" of their human victims, caused by a whirlwind raised about them by the fairy folk. Fifteen years later two men were tried at Inveraray, and one of them, Donald MacMichael, told how he had entered a fairy hill, where dancing was going on. The fairy king was like "ane large tall corporal Gardman, and ruddie." One of the fairy women engaged Donald to return eight nights after. He obeyed and was in the hill for a month, playing the "trumps" while the fairies danced. At other times and places he had met them, but received a stroke from them for having revealed his dealings with them to a friend. They gave him secret knowledge about various stolen goods; for this and for consulting with evil spirits, Donald was hanged. The judges regarded the fairy revels as diabolical and full of sorcery.<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of the seventeenth century a pious schoolmaster called Brown at Jedburgh was afflicted with a wife who was a witch. His godly remonstrances were as obnoxious to her as Mrs. Cruncher's "floppings" were to her husband Jerry, and they so annoyed her that she and her associates drowned him in the Jed. While this was going on fairies had been seen dancing on the steeples of the abbey. They were then joined by the witches,

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.* iii. 603 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Highland Papers*, ed. J. R. M. MacPhail (Scottish History Society, ser. 2, vol. xx.), iii. 23 f., 36 ff.

and a banquet of ale and wine stolen from a locked cellar, was celebrated. Mrs. Brown was hanged for her evil deeds. In this district of Teviotdale the friendship of fairies and witches appears in many folk traditions existing at a much later period.<sup>1</sup>

The last example which I shall give concerns the notorious Major Weir and his sister, whose dealings with Satan cast a horror over Edinburgh in 1670 and for long after. At the trial Jean Weir associated her alleged sorceries with the fairy world. As a younger woman she had kept a school at Dalkeith, and one day a woman had entered the school desiring her to speak with the "Queen of Farie," and "strick and battle with the said queen on her behalf." Next day, a little woman appeared, and gave her the root of a herb, telling her that she would be able to do whatever she desired by its means. This little woman, apparently the fairy queen, laid a cloth on the floor, and caused her to stand on it, with her hand on the crown of her head, and say thrice: "All my cross and my troubles goe to the door with thee." When next Miss Jean span, she found more and better yarn on her pirns than could be spun in such a time—a true fairy gift, though it frightened her, and she believed that she had renounced her baptism—the fairy rite having some resemblance to the traditional Satanic renunciation of Christianity at the Sabbat, and her indictment so regards it. The evidence at the trial of the Weirs is full of *diablerie* and horror; for our purpose it is interesting as showing how fairydom is mixed up with Satan's craft.<sup>2</sup>

(3) King James VI. was deeply read in the works of the demonologists. His own book recapitulates the current ideas, but it also shows the tendency to make fairyland a

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Magazine*, vi. [1820], 533 ff.

<sup>2</sup> G. Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, Edinburgh, 1789, pp. 150 ff.; R. Law, *Memorials*, ed. C. K. Sharpe, Edinburgh, 1819, p. 27; *Books of Adjournal*, in Scott, *Minstrelsy*, p. 206 f.

province of Satan's kingdom. Its author had carefully attended to the evidence of Scottish witch trials, as some passages of his show. One of the interlocutors asks how it is that witches have confessed that "they have been transported with the Phairie to such a hill, which opening, they went in, and there saw a faire Queene, who gave them a stone which had sundrie virtues, which at sundrie times hath been produced in judgment."<sup>1</sup> The other replies that it is a delusion of the devil, who, when the witches' senses are asleep, presents to their fantasy such hills and houses within them, such glistening courts and trains, and, their bodies being senseless, places in their hand a stone or such like thing, which he makes them believe to have received in such a place. This is sound enough reasoning, granting the existence of the devil, but it is strange that the British Solomon should still believe in an actual bodily transport to the Sabbath. The fairies, in his opinion, were delusive creations of the devil. The foretelling by witches of the death of persons seen by them in fairyland, not persons already dead, is either a mistake or a diabolical prompting. Rather unreasonably, while James pities those, not being witches, to whom fairies appear, he thinks that witches, seeing them in fantasy, ought to be punished. They were willing victims of the father of lies. Some speak of their traffic with fairies in order that ignorant magistrates may not punish them, as they would punish witches leagued with the devil. This is possible, and, while some of the "witches" made no pretension to alliance with the devil, it was certainly a widespread belief that fairies could give supernatural power to their favourites. It may partly explain the mingling of the two beliefs; but if so, we have not met with such magistrates as would have accepted this milder origin of the witches' power, and clearly the king would not have tolerated them.

<sup>1</sup> James VI., *Daemonologie*, bk. iii. cap. 5, cf. iii. 4.

Thus in Scotland the connexion between fairy, witch, ghost, and devil tended to be a close one. There are many pieces of subsidiary evidence which must be passed over, and the evidence for this mingling of beliefs is less copious elsewhere. Yet we find it in sporadic trials or traditions in England and in Germany. Fiends, fairies, and hags are classed together by English poets, divines, and enquirers into the supernatural. Yet the trial of an English healer cited by Webster in his *Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (1677), while it bears a close resemblance to certain incidents of the Scottish trials, shows how enlightenment was beginning to influence those in authority. A man who professed the art of healing was arrested on suspicion of witchcraft. He healed by means of a white powder which he obtained in the following manner. Troubled in mind about providing for his wife and children, he was met one night by "a fair woman in fine cloaths" who enquired what his grief was, and, on learning it, promised to help him to gain money by healing. Next night he met her by appointment, and she led him to a hillock at which she knocked thrice. The hill opened; they entered, and reached a hall where sat a queen in great state with many people about her. His friend presented him to this queen, who bade her give him a box of the powder with directions for its use, after which he was led outside the hill. This hall, he alleged, was no lighter than with us at twilight—a common description of the light of elf-land. When he required more of the powder, he went to the hill, knocked thrice, and said: "I am coming! I am coming!" when it opened to receive him. As there was no proof of sorcery the judge took the sensible course of dismissing the man with an admonition, regarding the whole matter as a delusion. Webster had been present at this trial, but the account he gives of it is from the pen of Durant Hotham, in his epistle prefaced to a work of Behmen's. By this time there was a reaction



against witchcraft trials in England, and this doubtless accounts for the mild treatment of this man. Hotham himself, however, held that the man really obtained the powder from an evil spirit as the result of a pact between them.<sup>1</sup>

In France fairies are still sometimes regarded in popular belief as sorceresses, or their revels are and were participated in by these as well as by demons, while many centuries ago the trial of Joan of Arc shows that her judges, if not the folk, were determined to regard the *fées* as evil spirits, and to connect them with the devil and the Sabbat.<sup>2</sup> In Germany the names given to the witches' devils are sometimes of an elfin kind; the spells of witches concern elfins, dwarfs, and the like, rather than devils; and the goblins sent forth by sorceresses to do mischief were known by fairy names—*elbe*, *holden*, *holderchen*, etc.<sup>3</sup>

As far as Scotland was concerned the mingling of belief occurred in the Lowlands, in Perthshire, in Moray, in Aberdeenshire, in the Western Isles, and in Orkney. Some of the alleged witches were mere healers, their craft gained from the fairies. Others were accused or accused themselves of more sinister aspects of sorcery and devildom as well as of dealings with the fairies. Both came under the same condemnation. Judges and ecclesiastics under the sway of the current demonology shared the terrors of the time, and were ready to regard the most harmless

<sup>1</sup> F. Hutchinson, *Historical Essay concerning Witchcraft*, London, 1718, p. 125; J. Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, London, 1677, p. 300 f.; M. Pitt, *Account of Anne Jefferies*, 1696, in J. Morgan, *Phoenix Britannicus*, London, 1732, p. 545 f.

<sup>2</sup> P. Sébillot, *Le folk-lore de France*, Paris, 1904-7, i. 202, 229; *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*, ed. J. Quicherat, Paris, 1841-9, i. 67, 187, 209 ff., ii. 390, 404, 450; M. Del Rio, *Disq. Magicae*, 1612, lib. v. app. 2. p. 362.

<sup>3</sup> J. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, tr. J. S. Stallybrass, London, 1882-8, pp. 1041, 1061 ff., 1073 f., 1621.

nonsense as evidence of Satanic power. The Rev. Robert Kirk of Aberfoyle (*ob.* 1692) seems to have been alone in that age in regarding fairies as outside Satan's kingdom, to have a real existence which is not demoniacal, and to be worthy of a scientific examination. All this is found in his delightful book, *The Secret Commonwealth*, *i.e.* of the elves, fauns, and fairies, which appears to have remained in MS. until Sir Walter Scott published it in 1815. It was later edited by Andrew Lang in 1893. Kirk refused to believe that the arrow-heads were made by devils and not by fairies, for the continual torments of devils would not allow them so much leisure.

The evidence of the victims shows how easily pre-conceptions and vivid belief in current superstitions may give rise to dreams or hallucinations, regarded then as real experiences, or how actual events can be interpreted in terms of such beliefs. None of the judges seems to have seen that the matters alleged were delusions and that the victims were to be pitied. Rather they accepted these delusions as fact, and by leading questions, usually in combination with the application of torture, confirmed the victims in their delusions, and induced them to admit what they were asked. Ignorant, simple-minded, and half-witted as the victims were, they only too readily yielded what their accusers suggested or demanded of them. The mingling of really separate beliefs was perhaps thus also brought about by the determination of the judges to find Satan's craft everywhere, quite as much as by the folk themselves and their attribution of similar things to different orders of beings. The boastings and ravings of half-crazy and self-conscious as well as self-deluded persons, the hallucinations of women dominated by the superstitions of the time, the admissions of victims maddened by torture, were alike accepted as evidence, and that evidence was regarded as fact by men of learning and knowledge sitting in the seat of judgment. All this throws

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a singular light upon the mental outlook of the time. It also helps us to understand why some scientific minds accept, and encourage by their acceptance, these superstitions which for one reason or another, are enjoying a recrudescence in our own time.