



Horse and Hattock

Folk-Lore And Legends: Scotland

Scottish

Advanced
3 min read

The power of the fairies was not confined to unchristened children alone; it was supposed frequently to be extended to full-grown people, especially such as in an unlucky hour were devoted to the devil by the execrations of parents and of masters; or those who were found asleep under a rock, or on a green hill, belonging to the fairies, after sunset, or, finally, to those who unwarily joined their orgies. A tradition existed, during the seventeenth century, concerning an ancestor of the noble family of Duffers, who, “walking abroad in the fields near to his own house, was suddenly carried away, and found the next day at Paris, in the French king’s cellar, with a silver cup in his hand. Being brought into the king’s presence, and questioned by him who he was, and how he came thither, he told his name, his country, and the place of his residence, and that on such a day of the month, which proved to be the day immediately preceding, being in the fields, he heard a noise of a whirlwind, and of voices crying ‘Horse and hattock!’ (this is the word which the fairies are said to use when they remove from any place), whereupon he cried ‘Horse and hattock!’ also, and was immediately caught up and transported through the air by the fairies to that place, where, after he had drunk heartily, he fell asleep, and before he woke the rest of the company were gone, and had left him in the posture wherein he was found.

It is said the king gave him a cup which was found in his hand, and dismissed him.” The narrator affirms “that the cup was still preserved, and known by the name of the fairy cup.” He adds that Mr. Steward, tutor to the

then Lord Duffers, had informed him that, “when a boy at the school of Forres, he and his school-fellows were once upon a time whipping their tops in the churchyard, before the door of the church, when, though the day was calm, they heard a noise of a wind, and at some distance saw the small dust begin to rise and turn round, which motion continued advancing till it came to the place where they were, whereupon they began to bless themselves; but one of their number being, it seems, a little more bold and confident than his companion, said, ‘Horse and haddock with my top!’ and immediately they all saw the top lifted up from the ground, but could not see which way it was carried, by reason of a cloud of dust which was raised at the same time. They sought for the top all about the place where it was taken up, but in vain; and it was found afterwards in the churchyard, on the other side of the church.” This legend is contained in a letter from a learned gentleman in Scotland to Mr. Aubrey, dated 15th March 1695, published in Aubrey’s Miscellanies.

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