

Brownies and Boggles

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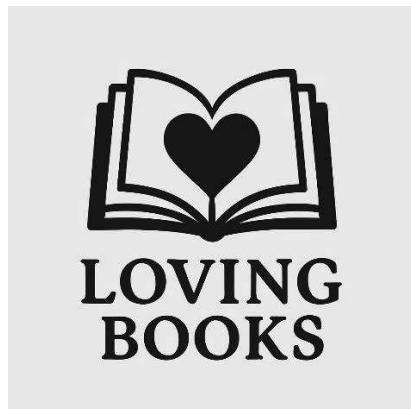
By



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Illustrated by Edmund H. Garrett

**ILLUSTRATED & PUBLISHED
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ISBN: 978-9403-865-86-7



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THE LITTLE "NECK" IN THE SWEDISH RIVER.

L. Imogen Guiney

BROWNIES AND BOGLES

BY

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY

Author of
Songs at the Start
Goose-Quill Papers
The White Sail

Fifty Illustrations by Edmund H Garrett

BOSTON

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CHAPTER I.

WHAT FAIRIES WERE AND WHAT THEY DID.

A FAIRY is a humorous person sadly out of fashion at present,

who has had, nevertheless, in the actors' phrase, a long and prosperous run on this planet. When we speak of fairies nowadays, we think only of small sprites who live in a kingdom of their own, with manners, laws, and privileges very different from ours. But there was a time when "fairy" suggested also the knights and ladies of romance, about whom fine spirited tales were told when the world was younger. Spenser's Faery Queen, for instance, deals with dream-people, beautiful and brave, as do the old stories of Arthur and Roland; people who either never lived, or who, having lived, were glorified and magnified by tradition out of all kinship with common men. Our fairies are fairies in the modern sense. We will make it a rule, from the beginning, that they must be small, and we will put out any who are above the regulation height. Such as the charming famous Melusina, who wails upon her tower at the death of a Lusignan, we may as well skip; for she is a tall young lady, with a serpent's tail, to boot, and thus, alas! half-monster; for if we should accept any like her in our plan, there is no reason why we should not get confused among mermaids and dryads, and perhaps end by scoring down great Juno herself as a fairy! Many a dwarf and goblin, whom we shall meet anon, is as big as a child. Again, there are rumors in nearly every country of finding hundreds of them on a square inch of oak-leaf, or beneath the thin shadow of a blade of grass. The fairies of popular belief are little and somewhat shriv-

elled, and quite as apt to be malignant as to be frolicsome and gentle. We shall find that they were divided into several classes and families; but there is much analogy and vagueness among these divisions. By and by you may care to study them for yourselves; at present, we shall be very high-handed with the science of folk-lore, and pay no attention whatever to learned gentlemen, who quarrel so foolishly about these things that it is not helpful, nor even funny, to listen to them. A widely-spread notion is that when our crusading forefathers went to the Holy Land, they heard the Paynim soldiers, whom they fought, speaking much of the Peri, the loveliest beings imaginable, who dwelt in the East. Now, the Arabian language, which these swarthy warriors used, has no letter P, and therefore they called their spirits Feri, as did the Crusaders after them; and the word went back with them to Europe, and slipped into general use.

"Elf" and "goblin," too, are interesting to trace. There was a great Italian feud, in the twelfth century, between the German Emperor and the Pope, whose separate partisans were known as the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. As time went on, and the memory of that long strife was still fresh, a descendant of the Guelfs would put upon anybody he disliked the odious name of Ghibelline; and the latter, generation after generation, would return the compliment ardently, in his own fashion. Both terms, finally, came to be mere catch-words for abuse and reproach. And the fairies, falling into disfavor with some bold mortals, were angrily nicknamed "elf" and "goblin"; in which shape you will recognize the last threadbare reminder of the once bitter and historic faction of Guelf and Ghibelline.

It is likely that the tribe were designated as fairies because they were, for the most part, fair to see, and full of grace and charm,

especially among the Celtic branches; and people, at all times, had too much desire to keep their good-will, and too much shrinking from their rancor and spite, to give them any but the most flattering titles. They were seldom addressed otherwise than "the little folk," "the kind folk," "the gentry," "the fair family," "the blessings of their mothers," and "the dear wives"; just as, thousands of years back, the noblest and cleverest nation the world has ever seen, called the dreaded Three "Eumenides," the gracious ones. It is a sure and fast maxim that wheedling human nature puts on its best manners when it is afraid. In Goldsmith's racy play, *She Stoops to Conquer*, old Mistress Hardcastle meets what she takes to be a robber. She hates robbers, of course, and is scared half out of her five wits; but she implores mercy with a cowering politeness at which nobody can choose but laugh, of her "good Mr. Highwayman." Now, fairies, who knew how to be bountiful and tender, and who made slaves of themselves to serve men and women, as we shall see, were easily offended, and wrought great mischief and revenge if they were not treated handsomely; all of which kept people in the habit of courtesy toward them. A whirlwind of dust is a very annoying thing, and makes one sputter, and feel absurdly resentful; but in Ireland, exactly as in modern Greece, the peasantry thought that it betokened the presence of fairies going a journey; so they lifted their hats gallantly, and said: "God speed you, gentlemen!"



"GOD SPEED YOU, GENTLEMEN!"

Fairies had their followers and votaries from early times. Nothing in the Bible hints that they were known among the heathens with whom the Israelites warred; nothing in classic mythology has any approach to them, except the beautiful wood and water-nymphs. Yet poet Homer, Pliny the scientist, and Aristotle the philosopher, had some notion of them, and of their influence. In old China, whole mountains were peopled with them, and the coriander-seeds grown in their gardens gave long life to those who ate of them. The Persians had a hierarchy of elves, and were the first to set aside Fairyland as their dwelling-place. Saxons, in their wild forests, believed in tiny dwarves or demons called Duergar. Celtic countries, Scotland, Brittany, Ireland, Wales, were always crowded with them. In the "uttermost mountains of India, under a merry part of heav-

en," or by the hoary Nile, according to other writers, were the Pigmeos, one cubit high, full-grown at three years, and old at seven, who fought with cranes for a livelihood. And the Swiss alchemist, Paracelsus (a most pompous and amusing old bigwig), wrote that in his day all Germany was filled with fairies two feet long, walking about in little coats!

Their favorite color, noticeably in Great Britain, was green; the majority of them wore it, and grudged its adoption by a mortal. Sir Walter Scott tells us that it was a fatal hue to several families in his country, to the entire gallant race of Grahames in particular; for in battle a Grahame was almost always shot through the green check of his plaid. French fairies went in white; the Nis of Jutland, and many other house-sprites, in red and gray, or red and brown; and the plump Welsh goblins, whose holiday dress was also white, in the gayest and most varied tints of all. In North Wales were "the old elves of the blue petticoat"; in Cardiganshire was the familiar green again, though it was never seen save in the month of May; and in Pembrokeshire, a uniform of jolly scarlet gowns and caps. The fairy gentlemen were quite as much given to finery as the ladies, and their general air was one of extreme cheerful dandyism. Only the mine and ground-fairies were attired in sombre colors. Indeed, their idea of clothes was delightfully liberal; an elf bespoke himself by what he chose to wear; and fashions ranged all the way from the sprites of the Orkney Islands, who strutted about in armor, to the little Heinzelmännchen of Cologne, who scorned to be burdened with so much as a hat!

People accounted in strange ways for their origin. A legend, firmly held in Iceland, says that once upon a time Eve was washing a number of her children at a spring, and when the Lord appeared

suddenly before her, she hustled and hid away those who were not already clean and presentable; and that they being made forever invisible after, became the ancestors of the "little folk," who pervade the hills and caves and ruins to this day. In Ireland and Scotland fairies were spoken of as a wandering remnant of the fallen angels. The Christian world over, they were deemed either for a while, or perpetually, to be locked out from the happiness of the blessed in the next world. The Bretons thought their Korrigans had been great Gallic princesses, who refused the new faith, and clung to their pagan gods, and fell under a curse because of their stubbornness. The Small People of Cornwall, too, were imagined to be the ancient inhabitants of that country, long before Christ was born, not good enough for Heaven, and yet too good to be condemned altogether, whose fate it is to stray about, growing smaller and smaller, until by and by they vanish from the face of the earth.

Therefore the poor fairy-folk, with whom theology deals so rudely, were supposed to be tired waiting, and anxious to know how they might fare everlasting; and they waylaid many mortals, who, of course, really could tell them nothing, to ask whether they might not get into Heaven, by chance, at the end. It was their chief cause of doubt and melancholy, and ran in their little minds from year to year. And since we shall revert no more to the sad side of fairy-life, let us close with a most sweet story of something which happened in Sweden, centuries ago.

Two boys were gambolling by a river, when a Neck rose up to the air, smiling, and twanging his harp. The elder child watched him, and cried mockingly: "Neck! what is the good of your sitting there and playing? You will never be saved!" And the Neck's sensitive eyes filled with tears, and, dropping his harp, he sank forlornly to

the bottom. But when the brothers had gone home, and told their wise and saintly father, he said they had been thoughtlessly unkind; and he bade them hurry back to the river, and comfort the little water-spirit. From afar off they saw him again on the surface, weeping bitterly. And they called to him: "Dear Neck! do not grieve; for our father says that your Redeemer liveth also." Then he threw back his bright head, and, taking his harp, sang and played with exceeding gladness until sunset was long past, and the first star sent down its benediction from the sky.

CHAPTER II.

FAIRY RULERS.

THE forming of character among the fairy-folk was a very simple and sensible matter. You will imagine that the Pagan, Druid and Christian elves varied greatly. And they did; still their morals had nothing to do with it, nor pride, nor patriotism, nor descent, nor education; nor would all the philosophy you might crowd into a thimble have made one bee-big resident of Japan different from a man of his own size in Spain.

They saved themselves no end of trouble by setting up the local barometer as their standard. The only Bible they knew was the weather, and they followed it stoutly. Whatever the climate was, whatever it had helped to make the grown-up nation who lived under it, that, every time, were the "brownies and bogles." Where the land was rocky and grim, and subject to wild storms and sudden darknesses, the fairies were grim and wild too, and full of wicked tricks. Where the landscape was level and green, and the crops grew peacefully, they were tame, as in central England, and inclined to be sentimental.

And they copied the distinguishing traits of the race among whom they dwelt. A frugal Breton fairy spoke the Breton dialect; the Neapolitan had a tooth for fruits and macaroni; the Chinese was ceremonious and stern; a true Provençal fée was as vain as a pea-