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Anonymous

3867

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

From Mary McLean, Port-Charlotte, Islay.

Charms.

Anonymous

1 It is said that a woman can secure for herself a lad's attention and affection in spite of fate by throwing the water upon him in which an egg has been boiled; and there is a saying among people, which the reciter has often heard used as accounting for the fact of a lad being in love with an unprepossessing girl – "Chuir i uisge nan ubha air." (She has put the Egg water upon him). Which means that the charm of the water has accomplished for her what she had not sufficient personal charms to procure.

From Miss McAffer, Port-Charlotte, Islay.

Anonymous

2 The reciter, who was brought up in Islay, says she has often heard of strings being tied round children's necks to keep away the Evil eye; and she has also seen them herself, but in the cases she has seen, there was a charm attached to the string, such as a Coin that had been a kind of heir-loom, or a lucky nut. Another woman, also in Islay, says she has often known of parents applying to certain women who professed to have Eolas for these strings, which they tied round the child's neck, or arm, or wrist. She says that such charms were quite common to be seen in her young days.

From Miss Macintyre, Port-Charlotte, Islay.

Anonymous

3 Miss M. tells the following story which she heard

Anonymous

3868 2

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Charms.

her mother tell of what she herself had seen when she was a girl. Here is the story:—

One day a neighbour requested her to take care of her house and children while she would be absent, having to go to Port-Ellen on some business. Having agreed to do this obligement, she went, and noticed that when the woman was ready to start, the last thing she did before going, was to reach up to some thread she had hanging in the kitchen, and taking two of them, she spat on her hands, and crossed the threads on the cover of the cradle where the baby was lying. She then went round the cradle three times, and then went away. When she returned she took off the two strings, and put other two on in their place.

From Mrs McLean, Kintra, Islay.

4 Anonymous

The reciter, who is now an old woman, and a native of Islay, says that she recollects of a man who lived in the Parish of Kilchoman who used to give a writing to people when they applied to him on account of toothache. The writing was a charm intended to cure the toothache, and required to be worn upon the person of its possessor concealed in some part of the garment. Its existence was to be kept a profound secret, and the thing was never to be looked upon even by its possessor, and it was alleged that so long as these conditions were complied with, the toothache would give the wearer no trouble. Women usually wore it inside their stays.

Anonymous

3869

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Charms.

The reciter says that she saw one of these on one occasion, and that the writing on it was nothing but good words. It began:— "Peter sat upon a stone".

From Mrs Morrison, Portcharlotte, Islay.

Anonymous

3 The reciter says that she has heard always that it is a good thing for preventing any supernatural interference with the butter, in process of churning, to put something on the top of the churn staff, if one has to leave off churning for a little, for any reason. She says she knew a woman — the wife of a small farmer in the neighbourhood of where she lived, and always, when that woman had to leave the churn, during the churning operation, for no matter how short a time, she took the precaution to place a cogue, mouth down, on the top of the churn staff, and she professed to believe that the butter on the churn was quite safe, so long as it was so guarded.

From Mr Donald McTaggart, Portcharlotte, Islay.

Anonymous

6 Referring to the Clach-nathrach (the serpent-stone), which is used as a charm in some parts of the Highlands, the reciter says he himself saw one of them once, and he describes the way in which they come to be formed thus:— A great number of serpents congregate together, and form themselves into what the people call <u>a cnap</u>. By some means or another, they

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Charms.

manage to pierce a small hole through a hard stone. The stone which they chose is of a roundish shape. Having secured the hole through it, every one of them squeeze through, one after another, and in passing through, each leaves a portion of the slime that is on its body on the edges of the hole, and at the same time the hole is becoming larger and larger with every new comer that goes through it. It is this slimy matter that is left ~~by~~ on the stone that gives it its efficacy to cure, in cases where the stone is subsequently used for charming disease away. There is a story in this connection which the reciter has heard. It is of a lad who at one time lived with his father on the hill between Kilchearan and Gearrach, in Islay. The lad was sent on an errand one day to Gearrach, and when crossing the hill he came upon a crap of serpents, all clustered on the top of one another on a bare rock. The lad had his bare feet at the time, but although he had, he leaped on the serpents, and trampled fifty of them to death, and got no hurt by it. When he reached Gearrach he told what he had done, and the following day the farmer that was in Gearrach at the time was going down that way, and he killed other six at the same place.

Anonymous

3871 5

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Charms.

When the thing became known among the people, the opinion was that the Fifty six serpents had congregated there, and were about to form a clach nathrach, and would have done so. had they not been killed.

From Malm McAffer, Orlabus, Islay. Anonymous

Ubags. 1

It appears that the term Ubag is understood to convey the idea of mischief making by means of certain charms. The reciter, who was brought up in Islay says that he saw a woman making an Ubag, and he describes the process in this way:- Having made a hole in the ground, she took a number of different kinds of pebble stones, and dropping them into the hole, either one by one, or in any case, leisurely, and not in the slump; at the same time repeating, as if to herself, some words; and when this was finished, she covered them all up by filling in the hole.

From Annie McLeod, a native of Berrera.

Anonymous 2

A native of Berrera says that she has known often of an Ubag having been made, in the outer Hebrides. They were usually made of three different colours of yarn. There would be yellow, grey, and red. This Ubag was sometimes put above the door of the person whom it was intended to injure, and was looked upon as a powerful instrument in taking away the torradh from milk cows. An

Anonymous

3872 6

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ubags.

incantation was always repeated when it was being placed anywhere. She says she has also seen three joints of straw put above a door for the purpose of taking away the torradh. In this case also, an incantation was used. These straw joints were called Alt an sop (the wisp joint). The reciter says that besides the use of these ubags in the way described, for doing injury to another, they were also, sometimes worn on the person as a protection against any injury that an ill wisher might be disposed to do to one.

From Mr A. MacKay, Gortan, Islay.

3 Anonymous

Speaking of the belief in the power which some people possess of doing mischief by means of Ubags. The reciter relates a case which has quite recently occurred in Islay, illustrative of this belief. The case was this. A certain woman, who is viewed with a little suspicion by some, called one day at a neighbour's house. What ever transpired during the visit does not seem to have come to the ear of the public, but the belief is that the visitor was offended by something, for when she was leaving, she took to drawing figures, that were evidently intended for circles, on the ground opposite the door. This alarmed the inmates, and the man

Anonymous

3873

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ubags.

of the house, who is said to be a believer in much of that kind of thing, suspecting that she was bent on doing them injury by these performances, followed her out-side, ordering her off. "Make off with you from there. We want none of your ubagan."

From Mr Donald McTaggart-Port-Charlotte, Islay.

4 Anonymous

The reciter, having been asked, whether he had ever heard of people changing the fire place from one place in the house to another, because they supposed that ill luck was following it where it was? Answered, "Oh yes, often"; and he went on to tell the following story, which he said he re-membered having heard when he was young. The story was to this effect:- There were people living up about Kilmeny at one time, and a number of their children died in infancy: Not one of them lived to get the length of walking, and nobody could find out what was the cause of them dying. At length, when they were going to go away with the funeral of the last that died, the servant-man they had did not appear to be thinking of getting ready to go along with the company, and when his master saw that he was not preparing, he said to him to "make ready and come to the funeral." But the lad excused himself by saying that he could not go, because

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

UBags.

he had some thing else to do at that time. So as soon as he got them away, he set to, and having re-moved the fire out-side of the house for the present, he dug up the floor under where it had been, and when he had gone down a piece, he came upon an old cloth in which were tied a great many nail parings and various other things. He took it out-side, and having added a lot of fuel to the fire, until it was blazing, he threw the cloth, with all that was in it, ~~into~~ the middle of the fire, and took to his heels as fast as he could lift a foot. In a moment shots went off from the cloth, like the firing of Cannon. When all was over, and he could venture to go back to the fire, he went, and again removed it back into the house, but this time he put it in a different place from where it had been before, and ever after that his master's children lived, and thrived. It was said that the Lad had found out some way, but nobody knew how, that there was some UBag under the fire that was causing the Children's death.

5.

The reciter says he has often enough seen strings tied round Children's necks or arms to protect them from being injured by an evil eye, or such. The strings were put on after having been soaked in some thing.

Anonymous

3875

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

From Mrs Morrison, Port-Charlotte, Islay.

Corp creadha. Anonymous

1 It is told of a farmer that was at one time in Ardnave, in Islay, that on one occasion he became unwell. He was very much pained all through his body, and gradually growing worse. No body knew what was the matter with him until one day, when his shepherd was down about the shore, he happened to go in to a cave, and what did he find but six Cailleachs, three sitting on each side of a clay figure, and they were sticking pins into it. He judged at once that it was his master they were working at by means of the Corp creadha, and that here was the Explanation of his illness. He hunted the Cailleachs about their business, and smashed the Corp creadha in pieces, and from that day the pain left his master, and he became quite well.

From Norman Morrison, Carloway, Lewis.

Anonymous

2 It is believed in Lewis that those who are versed in the art of witchcraft, can injure either beast or body by make a Corp creadha. Their method is to make a figure of clay to represent whatever they intend injuring, it may be a human being, or a neighbour's horse, or cow, or other animal.

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

They buried the figure in a hole, and the idea was that as the clay crumbled away, in like manner, and at the same rate, the living creature it represented would pine away also until death would put an end to him or her.

3 There is a story told of a minister who was at one time in Ross Shire, and who was killed by a corp creadha that was said to have been made for him. The story was that this minister had in some way or other offended two women who were parishioners of his own, and to have their revenge upon him, what did they do, but make a corp creadha for him, and having put a great many pins in it, they hid it in the dunghill at the minister's house. The thing was not found out at the time, and the minister began to complain. He had terrible pains throughout his body, and was otherwise visibly wasting away. By and by he began to feel dreadfully sleepy, and could not keep his eyes open. Even in the pulpit he would sometimes fall asleep. Suspicion fell upon the two women at the time, but it could not be proved, for no one had discovered the Corp Creadha. At last the minister died from the effects.

Anonymous

3877

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Corp chrè.

From Mr Angus Maciver, Back, Lewis.

Anonymous

The reciter says that the practice of making a corp chrè for injuring an enemy was a common enough thing in his native island of Lewis. The corp was usually a roughly formed image of the human body, made of clay, but sometimes it was just a clay ball, round which the operators wound different-colours of wool, and stuck pins in it, which were supposed to bring pains on the person for whose ill it had been made. The reciter says that he himself has known of a case where a ball of this description was made. He also says that he knows a man in Lochcarron for whom some ill wishers once made a corp chrè. The man became ill, and during his illness a friend of his came by chance one day upon a corp chrè in a stream of running water near the sick man's house. The finder brought the corp to the sick man, who took possion of it, and had it locked up in his chest. He got over the illness, but never could get it out of his mind but that the corp chrè was intended to bring about his death, and had been the cause of his illness. He still keeps the corp chrè under lock and key, and although the reciter has heard it said that he talks of it quite frankly, and even shows it to friends at times, still he is very careful about its preservation, and especially,

Anonymous

3878 12

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Corp chrè.

to prevent its falling into other hands, for he has a kind of belief that if it were allowed to go to waste, it might still bring mis-chief upon him, in fulfilment of its first intention.

From Mrs McColl, Tobermory.

Anonymous

2

The reciter says that she remembers a story she used to hear told in Mull about a corp chrè. The story was to this effect:—

It was a gentleman who was very ill: in fact every body thought he was dying. One day a friend of his was walking about, when he came upon four Cailleachs strong at work, making a corp chrè. He felt quite certain that this was now the Explanation of the gentleman's illness, and so, he got a hold of the corp, and took it from them — men are so strong. It was nearly covered with pins. Three more would have killed the gentleman. Well, the man went home to the gentleman's house and the corp chrè in his hand, and on the way he pulled out a pin now and again, and with every pin taken out the sick man was getting better; and after all the pins had been removed, the pain entirely left the gentleman, and he recovered, and was in a very short time quite strong and in good health.

Anonymous

3980

—Folk Lore of the West Highlands—

Witchcraft. Corp chreadh.

From Mr Ross, Broadford, Skye.

Anonymous

The reciter, who is a native of the island of Skye says that it is a common belief among his country people that injury may be done to one by means of the corp chreadh. He describes the process thus:— A lump of clay is roughly formed into the form of the person whom it is intended to injure. When it is finished, a number of pins are stuck in to it, from a half to three fourths in. The corp is then secretly deposited in some running stream, in such a manner that the water can play upon it, and as the figure is moved by the force of the water, the pins are intended to tear the clay, which is believed to cause similar pain in the body of the person who is represented by the clay figure. The action of the water in crumbling away the clay, is also believed to have its parallel in the effect of disease on the real body; and just in proportion as the clay is wasted away by the tearing of the pins, and the action of the water, in the same proportion will the person who is being operated upon waste

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Witchcraft. Corp Chreadh.

away too under pain and disease. The reciter says that he has always heard in his native place that it is necessary for the ~~[illegible]~~ success of a corp chreadh, that some man should be present, and looking on during the time of its construction. He relates the following case which he says he has often heard told:—

There was one time a laird of Raasay who was very much disliked by his people. One night his ~~[illegible]~~ herd saw a light in an old boothy, and when he went and looked in, he saw a number of Cailleachs ~~throng~~ making a corp chreadh, and the laird's own neice along with them. The moment he saw what was going on, he turned his head away, and went direct to the laird to whom he told what he had seen, and that his own neice was also among the Cailleachs. The corp-chreadh did not take effect, but the laird was so enraged against his neice for the part she had taken in the affair, that he opened a vein in her arm, and allowed her to bleed to death, as a punishment.

Anonymous

3982

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Witchcraft: Corp chreadh.

From Mrs Morrison, Kintail.

Anonymous

2 A Kintail lady says that the belief in the power to bewitch by means of the Corp chreadh is still very strong both in the island of Skye, and in Kintail. She knew a girl in the latter place, who had a constant dread of it, and who often spoke to her (the reciter) of a certain woman whom she suspected of attempting to injure her. The girl firmly believed that this woman was dealing in corp chreadh making with the view of destroying her.

This lady says she has found the same belief with regard to the effect of corp chreadh making in Ireland, where it appears the art is practised in the same manner, and for the same ends as it is done in the Highlands of Scotland.

From D. Fillies, Bowmore, Islay.

3 Anonymous

The reciter, who is a native of Islay, says that he believes in Witches and in the power of Witches. He has often enough heard of the corp chreadh in his native island, and relates the following case where it was ap-plied, as he heard it told. One time a lad

Anonymous

3983 4

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Witchcraft: Corp chreadh.

courted a girl with a view to marriage. They were long going together, and it was arranged that the marriage was to take place – the time being fixed, but at the last moment he proved false, and drew back in favour of another girl. The injured girl's mother, who was a witch, made a corp chreadh for him, and filled it all over with pins, and then hid it in a small burn. In a short time the fellow became unwell, and had fearful pain all through his body. Nothing could give him ease, and with the pain he wasted away until he died at last.

From A. Macdougall, a native of Jura.

4 Anonymous.

The reciter says that people still practise corp chreadh making in Jura with the view of doing injury to one whom they dislike. He says that he has often heard of a corp chreadh which a person once made for an old laird of Jura. He knows the spot where it is said to have been made, and has been on it. The laird was almost gone, but fortunately one of the clan got an inkling of what was going on, and having got a hold of the corp chreadh, broke it up and thereby saved the laird's life.

Anonymous

3984

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

From Ronald McLean, Lyrabus, Islay.

Anonymous

The following is an Islay Ursgeul which has been taken down, as nearly as possible in the words of the reciter who is himself a native of the island.

"Uair san t-saoghal so, nur a bhitheadh piobairean a' feuchainn aon a cheile, bha piobair a comhnuich ann an Gortantaoid. Cha robh a leithid san duthaich idir. Shachair aon uair gun robh uile phiobairean na duthcha air an cruinneachadh an sin gus là mòr a bhi aca: agus bha duais mhor ri bhi aig an t-aon a b'fhearr a dheanadh, ach an fheadhainn a chailleadh an là, chailleadh iad gach ni bha aca — crodh, agus gach rud eile.

Air an là roimh là a chruinneachadh, chaidh Piobair Ghortantaoid thar a mhonaidh air son buideal uisge-beatha a bhiodh aige gu treat a thoirt do chach nur a thigeadh iad air an aghaidh. Fhuair e an t-uisge-beatha, agus nur a bha e tilleadh dhachaidh, agus e leis, car an amoch, choinnich boireannach e air an rathad. Choisich i r'a thaobh pios, agus mu dheireadh, dh'iarr i rud uaithe. Dhiult e i gu crosda, agus air an spot thuit e marbh le saighead shith a thilg i air. Bha iongantas air an fheadhainn aig an tigh, de

—Folk Lore of the West Highlands—

Uirsgeul.

thainig ris, agus dh'fhalbh brathair dha, air mharcachd air son an t-uisge beatha. Ghabh esan an rathad cheudna, agus air a thilleadh choinnich a' bhean e 'sa mhonadh, agus dh'iarr i cuid de'n uisge beatha, ach ars esan nach d'thugadh e aon deur dhi. Nur a chuala i sin, leig i saighead a mach, agus mharbh i an t-each a bha fodha. Nur a chunnacas leis a chuideachd aig an tigh nach robh coslas gun tilleadh an fhir so aon chuid, dh'fhalbh an treis brathair a dh'fhaicinn de thainig ruitha, agus an t-uisge beatha. Thachair dhasan mar thachair do chach. Choinnich e ris a bhean san aon aite far an do choinnich i r'a dha bhrathairean, agus nur a dh'iarr i cuid de'n uisge beatha, thug e dhi uiread sa thoilicheadh i a ghabhail. Nur a fhuair i an t-uisge beatha, thubhairt i ris, Nam feuchadh e anns a phiobaireachd air an là'r na mhaireach, gun deanadh ise cinnteach e as an duais; Ach fhreagair esan i— "De mar dh'fheuchas mise? Cha robh piob ri m' bheul riomh. B'e mo bhrathar a bha math

ursgeul.
air a phiob."

"Coma leat sin", ars ise, gabh thusa piob do bhrathair, agus cuiridh mise feadan innte dhuit, agus cha bhi piobair 'sa chuideachd a chumas ruit. Ach nur a bhios an la seachad, feumaidh tu teachd h-ugamsa, agus share a thoirt dhomhsa dhe na gheibh thu mar dhuais."

Ghabh e ris mar thubhairt i, agus dh'fhalbh e thun na cluiche, agus mar a thubhairt a bhean, cha robh anns a chuid-eachd uile gu leir neach a thigeadh am faguis da. Bhuidhinn e gach duais a bha ann, agus fhuair e moladh air leth. Cha chualas a leithid de phiobaireachd le duine dhe na bha lathair a riomh roimhe. Ach leis na fhuair e de mholadh, chaidh am boireannach gu buileach as a chuimhne, agus dh'fhalbh e a seinn gus an do ruig e an uamh mhor an taobh thall do Ghortantaoid, agus ghabh e steach do'n uamh a seinn. Ach ma ghabh, cha b'an gu tighinn a mach a rithist. Fad seach-duinn an deigh sin, nur a chuireadh daoine an cluas ris an talamh,

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

chluinneadh iad fuaim nam piob, agus b'e an ceol a bha aige "Cha till Mac Crimmon".

Bha piuthair aig na brathairean ud a bha comhnuich air a chroite aca, agus bha teaghlach og aice. Bha an t-aon a b'oige air a broillich. Aon latha, nur a bha i na suidhe aig an teine, agus am balachan so 'na h-uchd, co thainig a steach ach a' bhean a choinnich ri a brathairean roimhe sa mhonadh. Shuidh am boireannach so sios, agus cha robh i fada 'na suidhe nur a leum an leanabh a gairdeanaibh a mhathair, gu braigh an leabaidh, far an robh piob brathair a mhathar, agus air dha a thoirt a nuas, thoisich e air seinn ceol gu binn sa chualas riomh. Bha mathair an leanabh 'na h-eigin aig a so, agus san a bha i toileach a bhi cumail a mach nach b'e so a mac fein idir, ach aon a dh'fhagadh 'na aite, agus gum deachaidh a fear fein a thoirt air falbh. Ach bha cuid de na coimhearnaich a thainig a steach nur a chuala iad an ceol, agus thubhairt iadsan gum b'e an leanabh aice fein a bha ann gu cinnteach. Agus air bharrachd air sin, thubhairt cuid da paisdean fein, gum fac iad am boireannach a thainig a steach, a deanadh rud eigin air

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

pluic an leanabh. Air dhi sin a chluinntinn, cha do lean mathair an leanabh a'chnis ni b'fhaide, agus bha 'm balachan 'na fhear ciuil co binn, cha robh duine dlu laimh, no fad as a dheargadh air.

Anns na h-amanna a bha'n sin, b'abhaist famhairean a bhi tighinn a nall a Muile, agus a Ceanntire — Creachadairean, a bhitheadh a toirt leo spreidh, agus gach rud eile a gheibh-eadh iad, agus cha robh duine ann a b'urrainn stad a chuir orra. Uair a bha 'n sud thainig na famhairean rathad Ghortantaoid, agus nur a chunnacas iad a tighinn, theich gach duine gus e fein a shabhaileachadh, ach bha 'n lean-abh so a nis air fas suas gu bhi 'na bhalach smiorail, tapaidh, agus nur a chunnaic esan Cach a' togail orra, thubhairt e nach teicheadh esan co dhiu, agus sheas e a ghruinnd. Nur a bha na famhairean a' dluthadh ris, thainig am boireannach far an robh e, agus thug i dha ~~sigh~~ saighead shithe, gus a thiligeadh oirra. Dh'fhan am balach gus an d'fhuair e na famhairean uile ann an aon sreath, agus an sin leig e aon saighead 'na measg, a ruith air

—Folk Lore of the West Highlands—

Urisgeul.

an t-sreath, o cheann gu ceann, agus mharbhadh sea deug dhiubh. Chuir sin stad orra, agus o'n am sin, cha d'thainig famhairean tuille as na h-aiteacha ud a dh' Ile.

Bha 'm balach agus a mhathar a' faotainn air an aghaidh gu math, agus thoisich am boireannach ri bhi fuireachd leo am bidheantas. Bhiodh esan an comhnuidh ri piobaireachd, agus cha robh a leithid san duthaich idir. Nur a bhiodh teadan a phiob am feum Ceartaicheadh, cheartaicheadh am boireannach e. Chaidileachadh i feadh an latha, agus bhiodh i air falbh feadh na h-oidhche ann an cliabh a bha aice. B'e so an doigh a bha aice nur a bhiodh i falbh. Cheangaileadh i an cliabh ri slabhruidh an t-simileir, agus ghabhadh i rann a bha aice air a shon, agus ann feadh a biodh i ris an rann, luaisgeadh i a' chliabh a null's a nall os cionn an teine. Aig deireadh an rann, leumadh i steach do'n chliabh, agus ghrad ghabhadh i suas troimh 'n t-simileir. Nur a sheibheadh i mach, thionnadh a' chliabh gu bhi na shoitheach seolaidh, agus dh' fhalbhadh a chailleach far an toilicheadh i, agus cha'n

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

fhaichte tuille i gu maduinn an ath latha. Nur a bhiodh i ris an obair so, bhiodh am balach a cumail a shùl oirre, agus dh'ionnsuich e fein an rann aice.

Aon latha, ~~mach~~ nur nach robh i san tigh, ghabh e a cliabh, agus air dha a crochadh air an t-slabhruidh, mar a b'abhaist do'n chailleach a dheanadh, ghabh e 'n rann agus nur a leum e sa chliabh, bha ~~xx~~ ~~xx~~ e mach an t-simileir an am priobadh na sùl. Cho luath 's a bha e mach, thionndaidh a chliabh gu soitheach mar a b'abhaist, agus an ceann beagan uine bha e amach ann a' meadhon na fairge. An deigh dha an uine chuir seachad ga thoileachedh fein, smuain-ich e nis air tilleadh dhachaidh, ach a nis cha b'aithne dha an soitheach a stiuireadh, oir ged a dh'ionnsuich e an rann air son falbh, cha chual e riomh an rann air son tilleadh. am feadh 'sa bha so dol air aghaidh, bha iogantas air a mhathar de bha ga chumail, agus bha i ann an iomagan mòr. Le sin thainig a bhean eile steach agus dh'fheoraich i de bha cearr? Fhreagair bean an taighe i, gur e bha ann gun deachaidh a mic a mach troimh 'n t-simileir am feasgair roimhe sin, agus nach do thill e fathast. "Na biodh eagal sam bith ort", ars a

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

Bhean, "tillidh do mhac ma ni thusa mar a dh'-iarras mise ort." Le sin rinn i gad air an do chuir i tri snuim. "So", thubhairt i, "thoir so leat, agus theirig gu mullach a leithid so de cnoc, agus nur a ruigeas tu a mhullach, fuasgail a chend snuim, agus an ceann beagan uine ris fuasgail an dara fear, ach air son na chunnaic thu riomh, na fuasgail an treis snuim".

Rinneadh mar dh'orduich a chailleach. Dh'fhalbh mathair a' ghille, agus nur a ruig i mullach a chnoic, a' cumail a suil ri fairge, dh'fhuasgail i a chend snuim. Cha bu luaithe a rinn i so, na chunnaic i a mic a' tighinn, a' seoladh ann an soitheach a luinn. An ceann beagan uine ris dh'fhuasgail i an dara snuim, agus an sin chunnaic i e ag iomaireadh bàta beag ris a chladach. An a' mionaid dh'eirich e as an uisge, mar gum bè balloon a bha ann. Thainig e nuas aig a taoibh, agus thionndaidh e gu bhi na chliabh mar bha e roimh. Ghlaodh a mhathar, nur a chunnaic i r'a taoibh fein e, "De so, tha mi ~~faicainn~~ faicinn? An cliabh, agus thu fein ann sabhailt, ged bha mise fo iomagan mòr as do leth".

"Cha ruigeadh sibh a leas", ars Esan, oir bha

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

mise ann an cuideachd ciatach, agus dh'ionnsuich mi iomadh port gasda a sheinn ón a dh'fhalbh mi."
Chinn an gille so gu bhi 'na dhuine ciatach, agus bha teaghlach mór aige, agus rinn a' chailleach iad uile nan deagh phiobairean. B'e so an doigh san do dh'ionnsuich Clann Mhic Criomain a phiobaireachd.

Translation.

There was a time in this world, when pipers would be trying one another, a piper lived at Gortantaod. There was not his equal in the country. It happened one time that all the pipers throughout the Country were gathered together there, where they were to have a great day: And a large prize was to be given to the one that would do best, but those that would lose, were to forfeit all they possessed — cattle, and every thing else.

On the day previous to the one on which the gathering was to be, the Gortantaod piper went across the hill for a Keg of Whisky that he would have to give a treat to the others when they would come forward. He got the Whisky, and when he was on his way home with it, pretty late, a woman met him on the road. She walked by his side a piece, and at last asked some thing from him.

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Urgent.

He refused her angrily, and on the spot he fell dead from a fairy arrow with which she struck him. Those at home were wondering what had come over him, and a brother of his went off on horse back for the Whisky. He took the same road, and on his way back, the woman met him on the hill, and asked a share of the Whisky, but he said he would not give her a drop. Upon hearing that she let an arrow fly, and killed the horse that was under him. When those at home saw that there was no appearance of this one either coming back, the third brother went off to see what had come of them and the Whisky. It happened to him as it had happened to the others. He met the woman at the same place where she had met his two brothers, and when she asked a share of the Whisky, he gave her as much as she cared to take. When she got the Whisky, she said to him that if he would try in the piping match the following day, she would assure him of the prize; but he answered her.

"How can I try? I never had a pipe at my mouth. It was my brother that was good at the pipes."

"Never mind", she said, "take you your brother's

Urgent.

pipes, and I will put a chanter in them for you, and there will not be a piper in the Company that can hold to you: but when the day is past, you must come to me, and give me a share of whatever prize you get.

He consented to do as she had said, and went to the Competition, and as the woman had said, there was not one in the whole Company that could come within sight of him. He gained every prize that was in it, and got Extraordinary praise. Such piping had never before been heard by any of all who were present. But with so much praise as he got, the woman went quite out of his mind, and he went on playing until he reached the big cave beyond Gortantaod, and he went in to the cave playing. But if he did, it was not to come out again. For a week after that, when people would put their ear to the ground, they would hear the sound of the pipe, and the tune he had was "Cha till Mac Crimmon".

These brothers had a sister who lived on their croft, and who had a young family. The

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

youngest was on the breast. One day, when she was sitting at the fire, and this little boy in her lap, who came in but the woman who had met her brothers before on the hill. This woman sat down, and she was not long sitting when the child jumped from his mother's arms, to the top of the bed, where his uncle's pipes were, and having taken them down, he commenced to play as pretty a tune as had ever been heard. The child's mother was terribly perplexed about this, and was inclined to the belief that this was not her own son at all, but one that had been left in his place, and that her own had been stolen. But there were some of the neighbours who had come in when they heard the playing, and they maintained that it was her own child without the least doubt. And besides that, some of her own children told that they had seen the woman who had come in doing something to the side of the child's mouth. Upon hearing that the child's mother did not follow the matter further, and the boy was so sweet a player, there was not a man near

3996 13

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

or far away who could approach him.

In those times, giants used to come over from Mull and Kintyre — Freebooters, that would be taking away cattle, and everything else they could get; and there was no man able to stop them. On a time that was yonder the giants came the way of Gortantaod, and when they were seen coming, every man fled to save himself, but this child was now grown up to be a lithe, clever lad, and when he saw the others taking to their heels, he said that he, at any rate, would not flee, and he kept his ground. When the giants were coming near him, the woman came where he was, and gave him a fairy arrow to fire at them. The lad waited until he got all the giants in one line, and then he let fly the arrow among them, which ran along the line, from end to end, and sixteen of them were killed. That put a stop to them, and from that time, giants never came again from these places to Islay.

~~Bha 'n balach agus~~

3997[14]

Folk Lore of the West-Highlands

Ursgeul.

The boy and his mother were getting on well, and the woman began to live for the most-part with them. He practised playing the pipes a great-deal, and there was not his equal in all the Country. When the Chaunter of his pipe needed trimming, the woman trimmed it. She used to sleep during the day, and at night, she would be away in a creel she had. This was the way she had when she would be going away. She would tie the creel to the chain of the chimney, and would sing a rhyme she had for the purpose; and while she was at the rhyme she swung the creel backwards and for-wards above the fire. At the end of the rhyme she would jump into the creel, and in a twinkling, she would be up through the Chimney. When she got out-side, the creel would turn into a sailing vessel, and the Cailleach would go where she liked, and would not again be seen till the next morning. While she would be at this work, the boy kept his eye on her, and he learned her rhyme.

One day, when she was not in, he took her creel, and when he had hung it on the chain, as the Cailleach used to do, he repeated the rhyme, and when he ~~[illegible]~~ jumped into the creel, he was out

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

by the chimney in the twinkling of an eye. As soon as he was out, the creel turned into a vessel as usual, and in a little time, he was out in the middle of the sea. After he had passed the time pleasing himself, he now thought of returning home, but now, he did not know how to steer the vessel, for although he had learned the rhyme for going away, he had never heard the rhyme for coming back. While this was going on, his mother was wondering what was keeping him, and she was very anxious. With that, the other woman came in, and she asked her, What was wrong? The house wife answered, that her son had gone out through the chimney the evening before that, and that he had not yet returned. "Be not a bit afraid", said the woman, "your son will come back, if you will do as I order you". With that she made a gad, on which she put three knots. "Here", said she, "take this with you, and go to the top of such a hill, and when you will have reached the top of it, open the first knot, and after that a little while, open the second; but for all you have ever seen, do not open the third knot." It was done as the Caillcach had ordered. The boy's mother went, and when she reached the top of the

Anonymous

3999 16

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

hill, Keeping her eye seaward, she opened the first knot. No sooner had she done this, than she saw her son coming sailing in a splendid vessel. In a short time again she opened the second knot, and then she saw him rowing a little boat towards the shore. In a minute, it rose out of the water, as if it were a balloon. It came down at her side, and turned to be a creel as it had been before. His mother cried when she saw him beside her:-

"~~What is this~~" "What is this I see? The creel, and yoursely safe in it, although I was very anxious about you".

"You did not need", he said, "for I was in splendid company, and have learned to play many very nice tunes since I went away".

This lad grew up to be an excellent man, and had a large family: and the cailleach made them all first-rate pipers. This was the way the Mac Crimmon Clan learned to play the pipes.

From Dugald Bell, Port-Charlotte, Islay.

2 Anonymous

Bha dithis peathraichean an sud, agus phos an dara te duine beartach, agus an te eile duine bochd. Bha pailteas aig an te beartach, ach cha robh aice ach an da bhean r'a itheadh — a bean fein, agus bean

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Ursgeul.

a fir. Ach bha teaghlach mòr aig am piuthair eile. La bha 'n sud, chunnaic an te beartach a peathar bochd a tighinn a nios an rathad le triuir paisdean a coiseachd r'a taoibh, agus aon eile 'na h-uchd. San a thoisich i ri magadh oirre, agus thubhairt-i ris an duine aice fein, "Nach cosmhuil i ri muc-uircein le a h-alach 'na deigh. Chronaich a fear i, ag radh rithe, "Cha bu chorr dhuit a leithid sin a radh. Tha aice na cheann-aicheadh gach ni tha agadsa, agus cha cheannaicheadh na h-agadsa na tha aicesa. Tha ise na's beartaiche na tha thusa.
Uair eigin an deigh sin, chunnaic an Cruith-fhear iomchuidh gu'n gineadh i so, agus nur a rugadh an leanabh, san a bha ceann Uircein air, agus b'an a trough a bhithead e 'g itheadh a bhiadh.

Translation.

There were two sisters, and one of them married a rich man, and the other, a poor man. The one that was rich had plenty, but she had only the two months to eat it — her own month,

Anonymous

4001

Folk Lore of the West Highlands

Urgent.

and that of her husband. But the other sister had a large family. One day the rich one saw her poor sister coming up the road, with three children walking by her side, and another in her lap. She began to mock her, and said to her own husband, "Is'nt she like a breeding sow, with her litter after her". Her husband re-bukked her, saying to her, "You ought not to say the like of that. She has what would buy all you have got, and what you possess would not buy what she has. She is richer than you are".

Some time after that, the Creator saw fit that this one should bring forth, and when the child was born, it had a pig's head, and it was from a trough it was fed.

From Mr A. Maciver. Back. Lewis.

Anonymous

3 There was one time a giant of mormons size and strength living in the North Highlands. He lived in a cave, and was known by the name of Tannas Croc Beag. He was a cruel malicious ~~wretch~~ wretch. There was a giantess living in another cave near his. She was nearly as big, and as strong as Croc Beag himself, and

Ursgeul.

they would be constantly quarrelling. He wanted to drive her out of her cave, and with this intention he used to go in to her cave at night, and would beat her most unmercifully, until her screams and howls would be heard for miles all round. People were greatly annoyed with the noise they made, and at last a very strong man who was one of those who lived in the district went to the giantess and told her that they would be forced to do something to protect themselves from the constant disturbance, unless she would give up her screaming at night. She listened to all he had to say, and then told him that she could not help it, and how Cone Beag was ill using her, but she said if he would kill the giant she would do anything in the world for him in return. The man thought it was nonsense for him to think of that, but she said to him that Cnoc Beag had a mole on his skin, right over his heart, and if any body would strike this mole with a six pence fired from a gun, the giant would never again draw another breath. She also said that if he would agree to make the trial, she would

—Folk Lore of the West Highlands—

Ursgeul.

carry him on her back to Cnoc Beag's cave. The man agreed, and got on the back of the giantess. When they reached the cave the man put a sixpence in his gun and having fired, struck fair on the mole, and the giant fell dead on the spot. The giantess was so glad when she saw him dead that she said to the man who had shot him, that any thing he chose to request her to do for him, she would undertake to do it. He pointed to a number of stags that were in sight on the hill tops, and said that these were his horses, and that he would be very thankful to her if she would drive them in to his stable. At once she said she would do that, and away she went, and gathered every one of them into the stable. When she had them secure, she came to the man, and told him that she had had a good deal of trouble with them, before she had got them down from the hills, but had managed them at last, and that they were now shut up in the stable waiting for him.