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OUR FAIRY LORE.

BY MRS. FEITCHTE.

HERE is one thing that our national literature will lack when it "comes to years of discretion," and in the history of our people, at least so far as the little folks are concerned, if not the "children of a larger growth," it will be felt as a serious loss. We have no National Fairy Lore. Alas! we began to be a people too late in the day for the shadow of morning romance still to linger through the broad light of practicality. *We have too much common sense!* The Faderland of the Rhine is haunted in every spot with reminiscences of the weird little people who occupy so conspicuous a place in its poetry, tradition, and grave story; the French have their Fays, if not so many of them; the Irish have their "Banshees," dear to their frightened and yet loving hearts; and "Merrie old England" has had good store of fairies to bless her lawns and forests.

Where but in England could that most exquisite poem, the "Midsummer Night's Dream" have been written?—and have the woods of that country any charm so great as that conferred by Puck and Oberon and Titania? *We have no such innocent and delightful mythology.* Our solitary poem, "The Culprit Fay," though pleasing and fanciful, is scarcely above the impeachment of imitation. 'Tis true, it says:

"The moon looks down on old Cro'nest,  
but we can scarcely feel as if that fairy drama had been enacted so near to us.

We cannot think, however, that any other land has produced any rhymes much more charming than these from the "Culprit Fay," upon the same subject:

"The elfin cast a glance around,  
As he lighted down from his courser toad,  
Then round his breast his wings he wound,  
And close to the river's brink he strode.  
He sprang on a rock, he breathed a prayer,  
Above his head his arms he threw;  
Then tossed a tiny curve in air,  
And headlong plunged in the waters blue."

That making the elfin breathe a prayer is the grand touch of the picture: the elves are afraid of holy water and holy spells in "ould Ireland."

(By the way, it is a little singular that when this poem was composed for the express purpose of proving that fairy dramas *could* be got up without the introduction of human characters, the principal interest of the story is founded upon the love of the Culprit Fay for a mortal maiden.

"He had lain upon her lip of dew,  
And sunned him in her eye of blue,  
Fanned her cheek with his wing of air,  
Played in the ringlets of her hair,  
And, nestling on her snowy breast,  
Forgot the lily-king's behest."

But we are quite content with this little failure, since the trial gave us the beautiful poem.)

One of the old English Chroniclers says: "Our Curate, Mr. Hart, was annoyed one night by these elves or fayries, coming over the downes, it being neare darke, and approaching one of the fayrie dances, as the common people call them in these partes, viz., the greene circles made by those sprites on the grasse, he all at once sawe an innumerable quantitie of pygmies or very smalle people, dancing rounde and rounde, and synginge, and makinge all manner of smalle odd noyses."

Now, this was no more wonderful than a sight seen by the eyes of a very intimate friend of ours, and by the gentleman who accompanied her, as they rode past a wood one damp evening just at the twilight hour. They saw a fairy circle, the most beautiful that could be imagined. It was about ten feet in diameter, and different from any of which they had ever read. It was a *circle of fire*, and seemed to be composed of a ring of little plants about four inches high, the leaves of which were blazing with a steady, mysterious light. This was, doubtless, a grand illumination in favor of some new-crowned queen, the plants being converted into chandeliers, and the little people holding their revels within the magic ring. It was a very surprising sight; and as the carriage drove slowly on, they fancied they could hear a fine music, discoursing thus:

"Round about, round about, in a fine ring-a,  
Thus we dance, thus we dance, and thus we sing-a,  
Trip and go, to and fro, over this green-a,  
All about, in and out, for our brave queen-a."

Naturalists will tell us this was a gathering of the minute insects whose phosphorizing power render them great mar-

vels to the ignorant. Alas! science is fast tearing away the slender veils of mystery which have for centuries, hung around many of our visual wonders. We shall be driven, for refuge, to make *scientific* creatures of the imagination—to give actuality and intelligence to elements and powers and relations. The muse *must* have food for Pegasus, or the steed will become a very worm.

There is danger that we shall become too practical. Our pursuit of money has none of the poetry about it; nor, for that matter, does the worship of the dollar, by any people, induce the poetic virtues and sentiments. *Repose* is necessary for the development of our inner nature—the imaginary world will only come at the call of the dreamer or thoughtful enthusiast. This state of repose it is hard for our hurrying crowds to find, and it may be years before that conservative time shall come. But, to keep awake in our hearts the remembrance of the world of fancy which forms such loving associations to the material world, we must not repress the longings which almost every child has to gaze upon that fairy realm; we must, rather, encourage the curiosity, and seek, by explaining the pleasing illusion, to turn the thoughts of the little one into these poetic channels which leave sweet traces in after-life, by their "green memories."

Our fairy lore? We may yet have it, if the fairies are not driven from every hearth and home, by the gross "spirits," which haunt them now like nightmares. We may yet have it, if the "schooling" of the child is of a less cold, calm, practical character, and if our authors shall do proper duty at the shrine of the Beautiful.

SONNET.

To the author of the poem on "Memory," in the ART JOURNAL for September, 1893.

BEFORE me gleams a "lake" of beauty rare;  
A white flower rocking on its crystal breast  
In dazzling purity, is hushed to rest  
As though no other blossom claimed its care.  
But lo! full many an opening bud as fair  
From "silken roots" hath to the surface pressed,  
And now the silvery lake is richly dressed—  
A myriad gems doth its bright bosom wear.  
That lake, sweet friend, I saw, when thy clear soul  
Upon its surface threw a "dream" so pure,  
Whose silken roots through many a heart have crept  
From your camelia in its silver bowl!  
Long may that lake such perfumed flowers allure.  
And wake sweet buds of thought which there have  
slept K.