

SCOTTISH FOLK-LORE AND FOLK LIFE

SACRED ROCKS AND STONES

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BY DONALD A. MACKENZIE



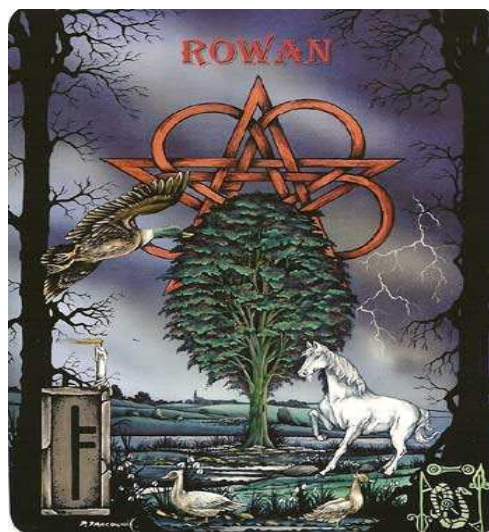
Dunino Den: Mysterious and Sacred Ancient Site in Scotland
With Enigmatic Rock Faces And Symbols

AND SACRED WELLS AND TREES

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A holy well or sacred spring in Angus in the east of Scotland.
It is situated in Glen Mark, which lies at the head of Glen Esk.



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Power derived by contact with stone - Cursing stones - Stones used in weather ceremonies - Stones as "soul bodies" - "Telling the stones" - The "worship stoned" and "bowing stones" - Boundary stones - Royal coronation stone - MacDonald chief installed in contact with stone - The chief's wand - Stone at coronation of King Alexander III - Gaelic bard as forerunner of Lyon king - MacLaren stones and necklace - Edinburgh and other "spitting stones" - The "holed rock" - of Brahan- Getting the answer - Oracular bird - Children cured at "holed rock"- Cakes used in divination ceremony - Ceremonial lighting of fire - Fear of removing standing stones - Wishes wished on prehistoric tomb - Raising the devil at stone circle - Child-getting stones - Burghead "cradle stone" - "Cup marked" stones - Relics of divination ceremonies - Loch Maree record - Healing stones - God stone broken in pulpit - Kelpie and Pict stone - Giant of Pictish broch in Berwickshire.

There is much evidence to show that certain stones or rocks were anciently believed to be sources of magical influence. Vows, invocations and curses were supposed to be made effective by reason of contact with stone. At Cromarty there is a big boulder known as the *Clach na Mallachd* ("Stone of Cursing"). Curses were delivered when an individual stood or knelt bare-kneed upon it. In the old Gaelic poem regarding Kennedy of Lianachan in Lochaber it is told of the glaiastig whom he compelled to build a house that before departing

"She sprang . . . on a grey stone
Of the field to pronounce his doom." ¹

Ceremonies were performed with stones to control wind and rain. M. Martin tells that when fishermen were detained by contrary winds on the island of Fladda, near Skye, they made use of a blue stone which was always moist and lay on the altar of a chapel dedicated to St. Columba. They washed the stone all round, "expecting thereby to procure a favourable wind". This stone was also an "oath stone" and "curing stone".

In Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland* ² it is told that a saint was wont to dispense favourable winds at the columnar rock called "Kempock Stane" in the Firth of Clyde. A confession in a witch trial at Auldearn in Nairnshire in 1662 was, according to the surviving record:

"When we raise the wind we take a rag of cloth and wet it in water, and we take a beetle and knock the rag on a stone and we say thrice over -

I knock this rag upon this stane,
To raise the wind in the devil's name.
It shall not lie until I please again."

Certain stones were reputed to be "soul bodies" (*coach anama*) of famous men. In the story of Finlay Changeling, as we have seen, a standing stone struck by a magic wand became a warrior, and when the warrior was struck by the wand he was transformed into a pillar stone.

The lingering sanctity of some standing stones is emphasized by names like *clach aoraidh* ("worship stone") and *clach sleuchda* ("genuflexion" or "bowing stone"). A Highland folk-saying, "telling it to the stones" (*ga innseadh do na clachan*), is

¹ J. G. Campbell, *Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands*, p. 171.

² Vol. VIII, p. 52.

given by Dr George Henderson.¹ It looks as if the stones were, like the bees, told of a death in former times. Henderson says that the phrase is repeated by a woman "under her breath" when narrating some untoward disaster, and that its use is supposed to avert any harm arising either to the speaker or the listener.

Stones were erected to mark clan boundaries and were ceremonially visited when "riding the marches" once a year. Chiefs met at boundary stones when disputes were settled. A clansman who went beyond a boundary stone did so at his own risk and could not claim the protection of his chief. It may be recalled in this connexion that the Roman god Terminus was a sacred boundary stone.

Courts of justice were held in historic times at stone circle.²

The ancient "coronation stone" of Scotland carried away to London by King Edward I of England, still remains in Westminster Abbey and is an interesting relic of the ancient belief that a sacred stone confers power and ensures that justice will be done.

Clan chief as well as kings took vows when in contact with stone. Dr Alexander Carmichael states that when a chief of Clan Donald (MacDonald) clan) was installed as "Lord of the Isles" at Loch Finlaggan in Islay he stood upon a stone "with the foot-marks cut in it" and was proclaimed "MacDonald" and "high prince of the seed of Conn". The eighth "Lord of the Isles" was, however, installed with ceremony at Kildonan in the island of Eigg. An account of the MacDonald installation ceremony by Hugh MacDonald, the Seanchie (Recorder) of Sleat, states:

"At this (ceremony) the Bishop of Argyll, the Bishop of the Isles and seven priests were sometimes present, but a Bishop was always present, with the chieftains of all the principal families and a Ruler of the Isles. There was a square stone seven or eight feet long, and the track of a man's foot cut thereon, upon which he stood, denoting that he should walk in the footsteps and uprightness of his predecessors, and that he was installed by right in his possessions. He was clothed in a white habit to show his innocence and integrity of heart, that he would be a light to his people and maintain the true religion. The white apparel did afterwards belong to the poet by right. Then he was to receive a white rod in his hand, intimating that he had power to rule, not with tyranny and partiality, but with discretion and sincerity. Then he received his forefathers' sword, or some other sword, signifying that his duty was to protect and defend them from their enemies in peace or war."³

M. Martin tells that a "young chief stood upon a cairn of stones, while his followers gathered around him in a circle, his elevation signifying his authority over them, and their standing below their subjection to him". After the proclamation of the chieftain, "the chief druid or bard performed a rhetorical panegyric setting forth the ancient pedigree, valour and liberality of the family as incentives to the young chieftain and fit for his imitation".

When Alexander III of Scotland was, in March, 1249, declared king at Sone, the Latin coronation formulas were recited in the abbey church and translated into Norman French. Then the royal heir, a boy of seven was conducted into the old burial ground and seated upon the "coronation stone", which was covered with "cloth of gold". An old Gaelic bard, wearing a scarlet robe, performed the ancient druidical custom of reciting the pedigree of the king. The Lyon King of Scotland in making Royal proclamations at the stone cross of Edinburgh, is perpetuating an immemorial Celtic rite. In former times he wore a scarlet robe. The stone market cross of old burghs is a relic of the times when vows, bargains and proclamations were made in contact with stone.

¹ *Survival in Belief Among the Celts* (Glasgow 1911) p. 190.

² *See my Scotland: The Ancient Kingdom*, p. 37. ³ *Carmina Gadelica* (1928 edition), Vol. 1. p. 323.

The late Mr MacLaren of Anie, Callander, possessed two dark stones shaped somewhat like kidneys, which, he told the writer when he exhibited them on the palms of his hands, had been handed down in his family for generations. He informed the writer that he had inherited them as rightful chief of the MacLarens along with a necklace of large amber beads, black with age, for the chief's wife.

Near Edinburgh market cross is the "heart of Midlothian", formed by granite setts in the street. The custom of spitting on the centre of it is still practised. In former times luck was secured, increase ensured and compacts made by spitting upon a stone. Fisherwives spat upon the first silver coin received when vending fish; livestock dealers spat on their palms when a bargain was arranged and before they shook hands. Brand refers to the spitting custom in the north of England when asseverations were made. Colliers who combined to demand an increase of wages spat upon a stone "by way of cementing their confederacy. Hence, "adds Brand, "the popular saying, when persons are of the same party or agree in sentiments, that 'they spit upon the same stone'.¹

There is a "spitting stone" at Forres. On Cromarty hill a "spitting stone" lies near a mountain ash (rowan tree) which is known as "the rock tree".

And interesting glimpse into the past is afforded by the surviving lore connected with a dolmen-like holed rock called "gara howl" (*Gaelic, gardah tholl*) in Brahan wood, a few miles distant from Dingwall. Contact with it was of importance in connection with divination ceremonies. A curiously vague but significant folk-tale tells of a man from Loch Ness area who was advised to visit "gara howl" to obtain his answer. On his arrival he sat beside it for a long time but nothing happened and he began to think his visit was in vain when, all at once, he heard a bird warbling the words, "Go to Epack-go to Epack!"

He went down to a neighbouring village and asked if anyone there knew of an "Epack" and was informed that a "wise woman" so named lived on the Mulbuie in the Black Isle. He visited Epack and "from her he got the answer".

Until recently it was the custom to take ailing children to this holed rock so that they might be cured. A fire was lit and the clothing of a stricken child was passed through the hole from one woman to another and then the child was passed through.

When a member of a family was seriously ill a woman baked cakes at the holed rock and, having fired them on a stone placed in proximity to a wood fire, left them on the summit of the rock. If by next morning they had vanished it was believed that the patient would recover, but if they remained it was feared that the patient would die. A Young south country doctor who was acting as a "locum" to a Dingwall doctor about twenty years ago attended a patient not far from the holed rock. On his second visit he found that the illness had taken a serious turn and he spoke gravely to the patient's mother who puzzled him greatly by remarking, "He is sure to recover, doctor; the cakes were taken last night". The southerner was puzzled and asked what she meant. "Oh! it's just a saying we will have," came the evasive answer. The doctor consulted the writer, who suspected that the reference was to a folk custom, and he ultimately discovered that the cake-divination custom was often practised by women, assisted by children, who gathered dry sticks for the fire but were sent away before the cakes were baked and deposited. The local clergymen, doctors and school teachers and even the husbands of some of the women guilty of perpetuating the pagan custom were quite unaware of it. A somewhat similar custom was condemned by *Jeremiah* (vii, 18): "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven."

¹ John Brand, *Popular Antiquities of Great Britain* (Bohn edition), Vol. III p. 261.

Although some archæologists would have it that tradition knows nothing of the pagan sanctity attached to ancient standing stones, a haunting reverence clings to them in some parts of Scotland. Ill-luck is supposed to follow those who destroy dislodge or remove the *clachan aoraidh*. The Rev. T. D. Miller,¹ referring to a megalith known in Gaelic as "the stone of Spotted Pig", says that "last century the farmer of the Old Spittal removed the stone for the foundation of a dyke, but shortly after a murrain broke out among his cattle, and he thought it prudent to replace it". Dr. George Hederson² found that "in the Highlands it is regarded as a source of danger to make use of pillared stones (*clachan carraghan*) in building human or other dwellings. Ill-luck or death follows any one who meddles with such 'druidical' stones as are found in the numerous stone circles in Inverness-shire.

The writer had an interesting experience in the district known as the Kyle on the borders of Sutherland and Ross and Cromarty. Between Bonar Bridge and Altas he saw a mound at the corner of a field and near crofters' houses and went to examine it. The tops of megaliths protruded on its summit; the mound appeared to be a "heaped stone circle". A crofter came out of one of the houses and, after being hailed in Gaelic, was asked if the relic had a name. He said it was called "hillock of my wish" (Gaelic, *Torr mo ghuidhe*), and said he understood that people had been buried in it long ago. "I hope," he said, "you are not going to dig into the 'tor', because they will be saying that the man who does that will die within a year."

In further conversation he said that it was an old custom to wish wishes and make compacts upon the mound.

Memories of old customs linger in folk-beliefs regarding groups of megaliths. An Edinburgh archæologist who was measuring a stone circle in Moray asked a ploughman if there were any "stories" regarding it, and the reply was to the effect that if one came at midnight and walked around the circle three times "by the left" one would "raise the devil".

Barren women visited certain stones or outcrops of rock, some of which had "cup marks", at periods when the moon was "in growth" with desire to become mothers. "Child-getting" stones were formerly known in various parts of Scotland, and many of them have been broken up buried or removed. On the slopes below Salisbury Crags, Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh, are the "slippy stanes", and children who have for generations slid down them appear to have been perpetuating the ancient "child-getting" custom.

Another custom kept alive by imitative children has been recorded by Sir Arthur Mitchell.³ In Burghead Chapel yard a hollow resembling "cup marks" on ancient stones and rocks has been beaten out on a gravestone by young people by means of a beach pebble. They knew it as the "cradle stone", because when they struck it they put their ears to the hollow to hear the sound of a rocking cradle and the crying of a child. There is no record as to how this significant custom originated, but it may be that the gravestone had been "cup marked" before it was dressed and lettered. The Kilchoman sculptured stone has "cup marks" on its base, near which lies a stone of phallic shape. It maybe that the mysterious cup marks on stones are relics of divination ceremonies connected with birth and death.

In the records of the Presbytery of Dingwall there is an interesting reference, dated 5th September, 1656, in connexion with the "superstitious practices" in the Loch Maree area. It was believed that -

¹ Tales of a Highland Parish (Glenshee) Perth 1925, pp. 40-1. ² Survivals in Belief among the Celts, pp. 198-9. ³ *The Past in the Present* (Edinburgh, 1880) pp.263-5.

"future events in reference especiallie to lyfe and death, in taking of Journeyis, was expect to be manifested by a holl (hole) of a round stone quherein (wherein) they tried the entering of their heade, which (if they) could doe, to witt be able to put in thair heade, they exspect their returning to that place, and failing they considered it ominous."

Healing stones were formerly common. Dr. George Henderson had personal knowledge of "magic stones" being dipped in water to avert evil eye. In a book written by a Highland clergyman¹ is an account of a Free Church minister's denunciation of a "good stone" which was known as the "stitch stone" (pain stone). Mr. MacDonald writes:

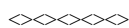
"The stitch-stone was a charm supposed to give relief in cases of severe pain from sciatica up to acute pleurisy. It was common property, and always kept by the person who used it last till required by another. The last specimen of which I heard about 30 years ago was in Erradale, parish of Gairloch. Mr. Matheson, Free Church minister, got hold of it and took it to the pulpit one day. At the close of the service he held it up before the congregation, remarking that the "god of Erradale" was the smallest god of which he had ever heard or read. It was a small piece of flint stone, 3 or 4 inches long, found on the shore and highly polished by the actions of the waves. . . Mr Matheson broke it in their presence and yet no dire results followed."

Some standing stones and cairns have long had associations with supernatural beings, or folk heroes who have been fused with them in the traditions of the folk. Our Cailleach, as we have seen, had connexions with megalithic remains. In the Coldingham area of Berwickshire a chambered cairn, demolished over a century ago and a standing stone known as a "Pech", or "Pecht", stone were connected with the kelpie of Draedan burn, who is celebrated in a rhymed version of a folk-story:

"Grisly Draedan sat alane
By the cairn and Pech stane.
Said Billie wi' a segg sae stout
I'll soon drive grisly Draedan out.
Draedan leuched (laughed) and staked awa'
Syne vanished in a babanqua (quagmire)."

This quagmire is now the drained and cultivated "Billie-mire", or Billy-mire".

"Pact" is the Lowland rendering of "Pict", or "Pect". Not far distant from the "Pech stane" are the impressive ruins of a Pictish broch of the Romano-British period. According to the local tradition, it was occupied by "a freebooting giant who long carried on a successful system of depredation and, shut up in this place of power, effectually screened himself from the hands of justice". The raiding Picts, or Pechts, who occupied the broch of "Eden's Ha" were thus - like Arthur, Wallace and other later warriors - associate with the giants.²



¹ Rev. K. MacDonald Applecross, *Social and Religious Life in the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1902. p. 34.

² Alexander Allan Carr, *A History of Coldingham Priory* (London, 1836). pp. 9012 and 20-1. "Segg" in the rhyme is a sedge-like weapon "Babanqua" is probably "bobbing quag".

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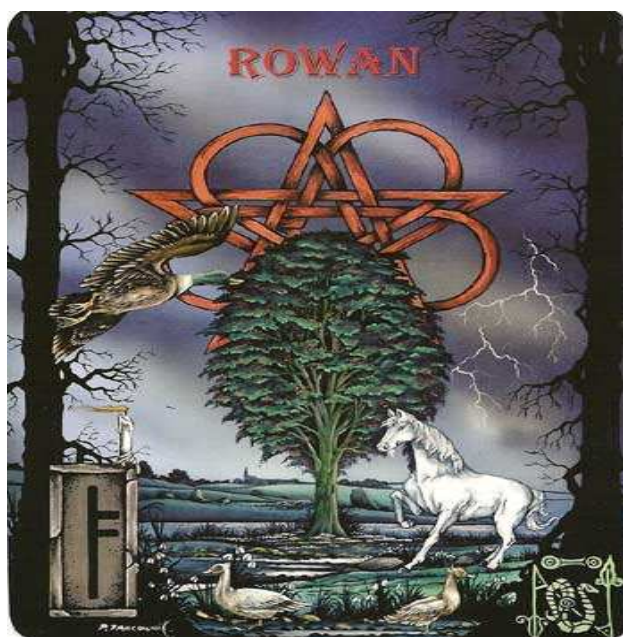
SACRED WELLS AND TREES

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BY DONALD A. MACKENZIE



A holy well or sacred spring in Angus in the east of Scotland. It is situated in Glen Mark, which lies at the head of Glen Esk.



Magical influence of water - River pools and wells - Evil eye cure - Pagan wells Christianized - Pictish well revered as a god - Well near "Druid's Port" - Yew tree well - Well of the Cailleach - Wells associated with standing stones - Wising wells - Culloden well offerings - Edinburgh wells - "New water" of "Well of Youth" - Well water protects baking - St Mary's well water for dying persons - Sacred trees - Fortingal yew - Oracle birds - Hazel milk tree and fire and lighting tree - Caltons of Edinburgh and Glasgow - The fairy boy of Leith - Highland fairy boys - Hazel as a god - Kentigern and the hazel - Rowan tree as "rock tree" - Sacred trees taboo - Trees as "soul bodies" - Trees growing from graves of lovers - Why houses are decorated at Christmas - Red berry protection - Druidical sacred groves in Galatia and Western Celtic area - Druidism and Cermunnos from Anatolia - Druidism - Last Judgement at druidical grove - Story of Sandy Wood - The "nemet" and the "Druid's Port".

There still survives in rural Scotland a haunting belief in the efficacy of water as a source of magical influence in granting wishes in warding off the attacks of supernatural beings and as a life-giver and therefore as a curative agency. Certain river pools are reputed to possess power and especially those under a bridge leading to a churchyard - "the bridge over which the dead and the living pass". Water from such a pool may be used when performing ceremonies to cure an illness brought on by the sinister influence of "evil eye". It is a piece of silver has been dropped into the water. Then the sufferer is given three sips of the "silver water", the remainder being sprinkled around him or her and around the fireside. The writer has personal knowledge of this ceremony and possesses a wooden ladle which was used when "silver water" was given to himself as a child to effect a cure of a sudden illness believed to have been caused by "evil eye".

The "water of power" is more generally drawn from a particular well and especially one named after a saint. Many pagan holy wells were "taken over" by the early Christian missionaries who supplanted the Druids and even the deities, as did St Mourie, whose name clings to Loch Maree and Isle Maree, and to whom bulls were sacrificed as late as the seventeenth century. Adamnan,¹ the abbot of Iona, tells that when St Columba visited the province of the Picts he found that a well was "reverenced as a god". Its water was "taboo" and supposed to cause those who drank of it or washed in it to become leprous or blind, but after St Columba blessed it "many diseases were cured by the same spring".

A well in Easter Ross which still retains a pre-Christian association is known in Gaelic as the "well of the black sword of Erin, facing the sun in the Druid's Port".² Another, not far from it, is called the "well of the yew" and, according to the local lore, it cured the diseases known as "white swelling" before the yew tree that flourished beside it was cut down.

Another well which was never Christianized is referred to in *Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland*.³ It is situated in Keith parish in Banffshire near standing stones on "Card's Hill" ("artificer's hill"). The parish minister wrote of it:

"A little below this circle is a very fine fountain of excellent water called *Taber Chalich*,² or 'Old Wife's Well'."

The name really signifies "Well of the Cailleach", the "Scottish Artemis". People visited this well to make offerings, as they did also to another well in the neighbourhood and to a cascade known as the "Linn of Keith".

The "Well of Virtues" at Caste Bay in Barra is similarly associated with standing stones and has long been credited with the cure of diseases. At Tullybelton (*Tulach Bealltuinn*, i.e. "Beltane Hill"), near Stanley in the parish of Auchtergaven in Strathgairn, a well was visited on Beltane morning (1st May). When the visitors had drunk of its water they walked around it "by the right" nine times and then walked around the standing stone beside it. Thus in pagan times certain groups of standing stones were associated with sacred wells, as were certain sacred trees.

Many sacred wells were regarded as "wishing wells" and are still referred to as such. Pins, pieces of money or food offerings were dropped into them or left beside them. Numbers of Inverness people still visit "Culloden Well" on the first Sunday in May and drop coins into it. The money thus collected is given to Inverness Royal Infirmary. In Grange Road, Edinburgh, there is a wall-drinking fountain and the

¹ *Life of Columba, Book II, Chapter X.* ² *W, J. Watson Place-Names of Ross and Cromarty, p. 56.*
The Scottish "Erin" is referred to here. ³ *1793, Vol. V, pp. 429-30.*

carved inscription "Penny Well" keeps alive the memory of a former custom associate with the spring from which the water supply is drawn. An Edinburgh "wishing well" is that of St Anthony, near the ruins of the chapel of St Anthony, below Arthur's Seat.

The water of some wells is reputed to be most effective when drunk at dawn. As we have seen, the Caileach renewed her youth by drinking from a well at dawn before a bird chirped or a dog barked. Like the "new water" of the Nile, which comes when that river begins to rise in flood, the "new water" of the "well of youth" was supposed to possess "life-giving" qualities.

Water from a sacred well was used to protect a baking from supernatural beings, and especially the fairies, who were supposed to extract "the substances" from the oatmeal cakes or bannocks. The water was sprinkled upon and about the cakes as they were drying on "the cheeks" of the fireplace. Holy water was also sprinkled the threshold and window-sills to keep away the demons. At Tarradale, Muir of Ord, Ross and Cromarty, is a spring called *Tobar Mhuire*¹ ("St Mary's Well"). When a sick person asks for a drink of the water of this well, the request is taken as an indication that death is near. "She asks for a drink of *Tober Mhuire*," remarks the woman who acts as the nurse and to all who hear her this means that the patient is aware that she is dying:

Oh! my lips are sere and burning -
For thy water I'll be yearning
And yon road of no returning,
*Tober Mhuire.*²

Sacred trees include the rowan (mountain ash), the holly, mulberry, the yew, the oak the apple tree and the hazel. Iona, as we have seen, was associated with a druidical cult of the yew. at Fortingal in Perthshire is a very ancient yew that appears to have been in existence in pre-Christian times. Oracle birds were wont to haunt certain trees and there are stories of men or women enclosed in trees who were no doubt originally deities or ghosts.

The hazel was a sacred tree which was connected with the milk-yielding goddess because of the "milk" contained in its green nut, and with the deity of fire and therefore of lightning and thunder, because its wood was used to make fire by friction. Water diviners still use hazel twigs. The "hazel rod" was formerly used as Brand notes to detect veins of gold, lead, coal &c. Hazel nuts are favoured at divination ceremonies practised at Hallowe'en.

A hazel-grove is in Gaelic *Calltuin* and there are "Caltons" in Edinburgh and Glasgow and elsewhere. The Edinburgh "Calton" was a fairy mound, and Sir Walter Scott in his *Minstrelsy of th Scottish Border* (Vol. 1) quotes from Captain George Burton's *Pandæ-monium, or the Devil's Cloister Opened* (1684), an account of a lad called "The Fairy Boy of Leith" who was wont to make weekly visits to the fairies under Calton Hill and act as their drummer boy. Thus belonged to the class of musicians who, like the Strathspey fiddlers of the Inverness mound dance, provided music for the "little people". There are many Highland stories of boys who were wont to associate with the fairies. A herd known as *Dòmhnall ruadh nan sithichean* ("Red Donald of the Fairies") was one of these. The fairies transported him often from a farm near Dalnacardoch in Perthshire to his father's house at Ardláraich in Rannoch, to which he obtained entrance even when the door was barred at night. Another "fairy boy" was known in Benderloch, on the north side of the mouth of Loch Etive in

¹ Pronounced *Tober Voorie*.

² *My Elves and Heroes*.

Argyll, as "Callum Clever". When sent on an errand he was carried very quickly for many miles by his fairy friends. The "Fairy Boy of Leith" story, collected and somewhat rationalized by an Englishman, was no doubt a variant of the "fairy boy" tales still current in the Highlands. Its chief interest is its record of the traditional association of supernatural beings with the hazel-grove hillock of Edinburgh. In early Gaelic the hazel was *coll* and in Keating's *History of Ireland* (Vol. i. Section `12) it is stated that "Coll (hazel) was god to MacCuill". The hazel was a life-giving tree in the Irish elysium. From hazel growing above a pool red nuts fell into the water and were swallowed by the sacred salmon, which thus acquired its red spots.

A memory of ceremonial use of hazel in producing "friction fire", or "new fire", is contained in Joceline's *Life of St Kentigern* (Chapter VI). Kentigern, when a boy took his turn as guardian of the sacred fire in the monastery, but certain of his jealous juvenile rivals extinguished it. He went however to a hazel tree and, drawing out a bough, prayed for "new light". a wonderful thing followed. Fire came from heaven, seizing the bough, and the youth knew that God had "sent forth his Light".

A rowan tree on Cromarty Hill has, as indicated, long been known as the "rock tree". Before boys went cliff-climbing they threw stones at this tree. When a stone darted sideways the thrower shouted, "The danger goes past". If, as it chanced, a stone came back toward the thrower, he returned homeward, believing that if he went climbing that day he would meet with some injury, if not death. In a hollow in this tree some fishermen were wont to deposit small white stones before setting out for the herring-fishing grounds at a distance from home. Their luck was supposed to be thus secured.

It was considered perilous to do any injury to a sacred tree or bush. M. Martin, writing regarding Loch Siant Well in Skye, says, "There is a small coppice near to the well, and there is none of the natives dare venture to cut the least branch of it for fear of some signal judgement to follow upon it."

There are traces of the ancient belief that certain trees are not only habitations of deities but "soul bodies" of individuals. In "The Sea Maiden" folk-tale three sons are born to the fisherman and three trees grow up behind this house. "When one of the sons dies," the fisherman is informed by the mermaid, "one of the trees will withers."¹ Sir Walter Scott in his *Journal* (13th May 1829) tells of an oak tree growing beside a well in the grounds of Dalhousie Castle, near Dalkeith. "I saw the Edgewell tree," he writes, "too fatal, says Allan Ramsay, to the family from which he was himself descended." The belief prevailed that a branch fell of the tree before the death of a member of the family.

There are several ancient stories of trees growing from the graves of lovers and entwining their branches in loving embrace. In the Border ballad of "The Nut-brown Maid" the lovers perish:

"Lord Thomas was buried without kirk wa',
Fair Annet within the quire;
And o' the tane there grew a birk,
The other a bonnie brier.
And aye they grew, and aye they threw,
As they would fain be near;
And by this ye may ken right weel
They were twa lovers dear."

In the ballad of "The Douglas Tragedy" are the verses:

¹ J.F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands, Vol. II, Story IV.*

"Lord William was buried in St. Marie's Kirk,
Lady Margaret in Marie's quire;
Out o' the lady's grave grew a bonnie red rose
And out o' the knight's a brier.

And they twa met, and they twa plat (pleated),
And fain they wad be near;
And a' the world might ken right weel
They were twa lovers dear."

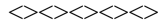
Red berries plucked from the rowan or holly were used to protect human beings and domesticated animals from evil influences. Houses were protected by decorating the doorways, windows and walls with branches of red-berry trees. Thus had origin the custom of the Christmas decoration of rooms.

A druidical sacred grove in which there was a stone shrine, a certain holy tree or a sacred well was anciently know as a "nemeton", a name which in Irish Gaelic survives as "nemeton", and in Scottish as "nemet". The Celtic Galatæ who settled in Galatia in the third century B.C. had a "Drunemeton" ("chief nemeton") in which the court of justice met and councils were convened. The Druids acted as judges and legislators. It may well be that Druidism was introduced into the Western Celtic area from Galatia, where as we have seen, the Celts became converts to the cult of Attis and the "Great Mother" goddess of Pessinus. From Galatia, too, as a result of cult-blending appears to have come the horned god Cernunnos, who on the Gundestrup cauldron found in Jutland, the ancient country of the Cimbri, is associated with Asiatic fauna and flora and the Great Mother.¹

In Gaul the annual druidical assembly was, as Julius Cæsar states, held in the land of the Carnutes nation. When the Gauls introduced the deified Augustus into their pantheon he was worshiped in the "Augustonemeton". Professor W. J. Watson refers to "nemeton" in Gaul, including one sacred to the goddess Belisama. In Brittany there was a "wood of the nemet". "Nemed" is rare in Irish place-names, but in Scotland there survive many "nemet" place-names, especially in the aspirated forms of "Navity" or "Nevity" (*neimhidh*), "Nevyth", "Nevay" or "Neve". Rosneath is in Gaelic "Rosnevy" (Ros-neimhidh) and there are other "nemet" names in Clackmannan, Fife, Perthshire, Angus, Aberdeenshire, Banffshire, Inverness-shire, Ross and Cromarty and Sutherland.² There lingered well into Christian times the memory of druidical courts of justice a the old "nemets". At Cromarty a gravestone lying outside the old churchyard of St Regulus is sacred to the memory of Alexander (Sandy) Wood, a man with a stutter, who had suffered a wrong at the hands of a neighbour of fluent speech. It was believed that the Last Judgement would be held at Navity, the druidical "nemet", and Wood was at his own request buried outside the churchyard so that when the dead arose at the last day he would be able to reach Navity and stutter his story to the Great Judge before the man who had wronged him could get over the churchyard wall. The wall has long been removed, but the churchyard is enclosed by a spiked railing even more difficult to climb. The lettered gravestone of Sandy shows that he died in the year 1690.

Navity slopes towards the beach on the southern shore of the Moray Firth, just outside the Cromarty Firth between the Eathie burn deep dell, which reeks of fairy-lore, and St Bennet's wishing well, with over-hanging bush still fluttering with rags in the year 1934. On the opposite side of the firth is "Druid's Port" (*Port an Druidh*), to the west of the fishing village of Shandwick. From the ridge of Navity Hill one can

see Inverness, where in the sixth century St Columba came into contact with the Pictish Druid Broichan, from whose dictatorship the Christian missionary released King Brude and his senate.



¹ *My Buddhism in Pre-Christian Britain.*

¹ W. J. Watson, *History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland.*