

## RHYMES UPON NATURAL OBJECTS.

THIS is a pleasing class of rhymes. Most of them have evidently taken their rise in the imaginations of the young, during that familiar acquaintance with natural objects which it is one of the most precious privileges of youth in rural situations to enjoy. A few of them may be said to rise to genuine poetry.

### RAIN.

Youngsters are often heard in a Scottish village apostrophising rain as follows:—

Rain, rain,  
Gang to Spain,  
And never come back again.

The child's address to rain in Northumberland is—

Rain, rain, go away,  
Come again another day;  
When I brew, and when I bake,  
I'll gie you a little cake.

'It was the practice among the children of Greece, when the sun happened to be obscured by a cloud, to exclaim, "Εξελχ' ὦ φιλ' ηλιε!"—"Come forth, beloved sun!" Strattis makes allusion to this custom in a fragment of his Phœnissæ:—

Then the god listened to the shouting boys,  
When they exclaimed, "Come forth, beloved sun!"

It is fortunate that our English boys have no such passion for sunshine; otherwise, as Phœbus Apollo hides his face for months together in this blessed climate, we should be in a worse plight than Dionysos among the frogs of Acheron, when his passion for Euripides led him to pay a visit to Persephone. In some parts of the country, however, the children have a rude distich which they frequently bawl in chorus, when in summer-time their sports are interrupted by a long-continued shower:—

Rain, rain, go to Spain;  
Fair weather, come again.'

—*St John's Manners of the Ancient Greeks*, 1843.

### SUNNY SHOWERS.

There is an East Lothian rhyme upon a sunny shower,

which, I must confess, is melody to my ears. It is shouted by boys when their sport is interrupted by that peculiar phenomenon :—

Sunny sunny shower  
Come on for half an hour ;  
Gar a' the hens cower,  
Gar a' the sheep clap ;  
Gar ilka wife in Lammermuir  
Look in her kail-pat.

The presumed reason for looking in the kail-pot must be readily understood by many. The rain generally drives down some particles of soot from a wide chimney of the old cottage fashion of Scotland. The pot, simmering on the fire with its lid half-raised, is of course apt to receive a few of these, which it is the duty of the good dame to look for and remove.

#### THE RAINBOW.

Our boys, when they see heaven's coloured arch displayed, cry in chorus—

Rainbow, rainbow, rin away hame,  
The cow's to calf, the yowe's to lamb.

Or,

Rainbow, rainbow,  
Rin away hame ;  
Come again at Martinmas,  
When a' the corn's in.

#### SNOW.

When snow is seen falling for the first time in the season, the youngsters account for it in the following poetical way :—

The men o' the East  
Are pyking their geese,  
And sending their feathers here away, here away !

#### HAIL.

Rain, rain, rattle-stanes,  
Dinna rain on me ;  
But rain on Johnnie Groat's house,  
Far o'er the sea.

Sung during a hail shower.

WILL O' THE WISP.

A child's rhyme on this object in Ayrshire—

Spunky, Spunky, ye're a jumpin' light,  
Ye ne'er tak hame the school weans right ;  
But through the rough moss, and o'er the hag-pen,  
Ye drown the ill anes in your watery den !

WIND.

In a similar strain of metaphor is their riddle on a high wind—

Arthur o' Bower has broken his bands,  
And he's come roaring owre the lands ;  
The king o' Scots, and a' his power,  
Canna turn Arthur o' Bower.

MIST.

In an enigmatical couplet on mist, there is the same turn for idealisation—

Banks fou,\* braes fou,  
Gather ye a' the day, ye'll no gather your neives† fou.

A STAR.

The metaphorical character and melodiousness of the following never fail to delight children :—

I had a little sister, they called her Peep-Peep,  
She waded the waters so deep, deep, deep ;  
She climbed up the mountains so high, high, high ;  
And, poor little thing, she had but one eye !

THE MOON.

The following is in a less elegant, but not less fanciful style. It alludes to the Man in the Moon, who, according to a half-jesting fiction, founded upon a fact mentioned in Exodus, is said to have been placed there by way of punishment, for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. The allusion to Jerusalem pipes is curious : Jerusalem is often applied, in Scottish popular fiction, to things of a nature above this world :—

I sat upon my houtie croutie,‡  
I lookit owre my rumple routie,§  
And saw John Heezlum Peezlum,  
Playing on Jerusalem pipes.

\* Full.

† Hands.

‡ Hams.

§ The haunch.

## THE CAT'S SONG.

A nursery gloss upon the purring of the cat—

Dirdum drum,  
Three threads and a thrum,  
Thrum gray, thrum gray !\*

## THE MOUSE.

A nursery invitation to the mouse, not always quite honest—

Mousie, mousie, come to me,  
The cat's awa frae hame ;  
Mousie, mousie, come to me,  
I'll use you kind, and mak you tame.

## THE BAT.

To this animal, as it flits about in the evening, the boys throw up their caps, crying, as if in expectation of their wish being realised—

Bloody, bloody bat,  
Come into my hat !

## THE ADDER.

The inability of the adder to bite through woollen cloth seems to be what has given rise to the following, called *The Adder's Aith* :—

I've made a vow, and I'll keep it true,  
That I'll never stang man through guid sheep's woo'.

## THE WREN.

Some of the rhymes on birds are the most poetical of all those that refer to animate objects. The minds of young people, and of a nation in its earlier stages, are apt to be interested, to an unusual degree, in this beautiful class of created beings. Accordingly, we find more verses, and those in many cases much more pleasing, upon birds, than upon any other department of the animal kingdom. What, for instance, could be more poetical than the puerile malediction upon those who rob the nest of the wren—a bird

\* There is an English rhyme on the plant Marum to the following effect :—

If you set it,  
The cats will eat it ;  
If you sow it,  
The cats will know it.

considered sacred, apparently on account of its smallness, its beauty, and its innocence?

Malisons, malisons, mair than ten,  
That harry the Ladye of Heaven's hen!

For such is the title given to the wren by boys—even when engaged in the unhallowed sport of bird-nesting; on which occasions they may be heard singing this rhyme at the top of their voices. There is another popular notion respecting the wren—namely, that it is the wife of the robin redbreast, but at the same time the paramour of the ox-e'e or tom-tit. Upon this idea is grounded a curious allegorical song in Herd's Collection, to the tune of Lennox' Love to Blantyre:—

' The Wren she lyes in care's bed,  
In care's bed, in care's bed;  
The Wren she lyes in care's bed,  
In meikle dule and pyne, O.  
When in cam Robin Redbreist,  
Redbreist, Redbreist,  
When in cam Robin Redbreist,  
Wi' succar-saps and wine, O.  
" Now, maiden, will ye taste o' this,  
Taste o' this, taste o' this;  
Now, maiden, will ye taste o' this?  
'Tis succar-saps and wine, O."  
" Na, ne'er a drap, Robin,  
Robin, Robin;  
Na, ne'er a drap, Robin,  
Though it were ne'er so fine, O."  
" And where's the ring that I gied ye,  
That I gied ye, that I gied ye;  
And where's the ring that I gied ye,  
Ye little cutty quean, O?"  
" I gied it till an ox-e'e,  
An ox-e'e, an ox-e'e;  
I gied it till an ox-e'e,  
A true sweitheart o' mine, O."\*  
\*

In reference to this matrimonial alliance between the robin and wren, and also to their sacred character, the boys have the following distich:—

The robin and the wren  
Are God's cock and hen.†

\* In Herd, 'a sodger' is given instead of 'an ox-e'e.'

† Mr Hone gives a Warwickshire rhyme to the same effect:—

' The robin and the wren  
Are God Almighty's cock and hen:  
The martin and the swallow  
Are God Almighty's bow and arrow.'

They are also included in a list of birds whose nests it is deemed unlucky to molest—

The laverock\* and the lintie,†  
 The robin and the wren ;  
 If ye harry their nests,  
 Ye'll never thrive again.

In England, where one of the above rhymes is varied thus—

Robinets and Jenny Wrens  
 Are God Almighty's cocks and hens—

the tradition is, that if the nests of these birds are robbed, the cows will give bloody milk.

There is, after all, in Scotland, a quatrain in which the robin and the wren are treated, in their conjugal character, very much as other mortals are among satirical writers. As a description of a squabble between man and wife, in a small way, it is not amiss—

The robin redbreast and the wran,  
 Coost out about the parritch-pan ;  
 And ere the robin got a spune,  
 The wran she had the parritch dune.

#### THE STONE-CHAT.

The stone-chat, which is commonly called in Scotland the *stane-chacker*, is exempted from the woes and pains of harrying, but only in consequence of a malediction which the bird itself is supposed to be always pronouncing. The Galloway version of this malison is subjoined :—

Stane-chack !  
 Deevil tak !  
 They wha harry my nest  
 Will never rest,  
 Will meet the pest !  
 De'il brack their lang back  
 Wha my eggs wad tak, tak !

In some districts of Scotland, there is an aversion to the stone-chat, on account of a superstitious notion that it contains a drop of the devil's blood, and that its eggs are hatched by the toad.

#### THE LAPWING.

The dolorous cry of the lapwing, called in Scotland the

\* Lark.

† Linnet.

*peese-weep*, has attracted the attention of children, and been signified in one of their rhymes—

Peese-weep—peese-weep !  
Harry my nest, and gar me greet !

In the north, where the lapwing is called the *teuchit*, the boys' rhyme is—

Thieves geit—thieves geit !  
Harry my nest, and awa' wi't !

These rhymes have at least the merit of being very appropriate to the character of the bird. The lapwing makes its nest upon the ground, in lonely and desolate situations; and when any human being approaches, it comes flying near, with its wailing peevish cry, resembling the words, *Who are you?* and endeavours, by fluttering hither and thither, to lead the intruder away from its lowly home. In certain parts of Scotland, there is a traditionary antipathy to the bird, and it is held as unlucky, on account of its having sometimes served, during the *persecuting times*, to point out the retreats of the unfortunate Presbyterians, who had, for conscience' sake, made themselves its companions on the wild.

Quick they disperse, to moors and woodlands fly,  
And fens that hid in misty vapours lie ;  
But though the pitying sun withdraws his light,  
The lapwing's clamorous whoop attends their flight :  
Pursues their steps where'er the wanderers go,  
Till the shrill scream betrays them to the foe.

Poor bird ! where'er the roaming swain intrudes  
On thy bleak heaths and desert solitudes,  
He curses still thy scream, thy clamorous tongue,  
And crushes with his foot thy moulting young :  
In stern vindictive mood, he still recalls  
The days, when, by thy mountain waterfalls,  
Beside the streams with ancient willows gray,  
Or narrow dells, where drifted snow-wreaths lay,  
And rocks that shone, with fretted ice-work hung,  
The prayer was heard, and Sabbath psalms were sung.

*Leyden's Scenes of Infancy.*

*Mean* THE SEA-GULL.

Sea-gull, sea-gull, sit on the sand,  
It's never good weather when you're on the land.

THE CHAFFINCH.

The plaintive note of the *sheelfa* or *sheely* (chaffinch) is

interpreted as a sign of rain. When, therefore, the boys hear it, they first imitate it, and then rhymingly refer to the expected consequences—

Weet—weet !  
Dreep—dreep !

Of these glosses upon bird cries, there are some English examples not familiar in Scotland. The hooting of the owl elicits—

To-whoo—to-whoo !  
Cold toe—toe !

The cooing of the wood-pigeon produces—

Take two-o coo, Taffy !  
Take two-o coo, Taffy !

Alluding, it appears, to a story of a Welshman, who thus interpreted the note, and acted upon the recommendation by stealing two of his neighbours' cows.

Montagu, in his *Ornithological Dictionary*, gives a Suffolk *myth* on the cry of the pigeon—whose nest, it may be remarked, is merely a layer of cross twigs, through which the eggs can be seen from below. 'The magpie, it is said, once undertook to teach the pigeon how to build a more substantial and commodious dwelling; but instead of being a docile pupil, the pigeon kept on her old cry of "Take two, Taffy! take two!" The magpie insisted that this was a very unworkmanlike manner of proceeding, one stick at a time being as much as could be managed to advantage; but the pigeon reiterated her "two, take two," till mag, in a violent passion, gave up the task, exclaiming, "I say that one at a time's enough; and if you think otherwise, you may set about the work yourself, for I will have no more to do with it." Since that time, the wood-pigeon has built her slight platform of sticks, which certainly suffers much in comparison with the strong substantial [and covered in] structure of the magpie.'

#### THE YELLOW HAMMER.

This beautiful little bird (*Emberiza citrinella*), which has the further merit of being very familiar in its bearing towards man, is the subject of an unaccountable superstitious notion on the part of the peasantry (in England as well as in Scotland), who believe that it drinks a drop, some say three drops, of the devil's blood each May morning,

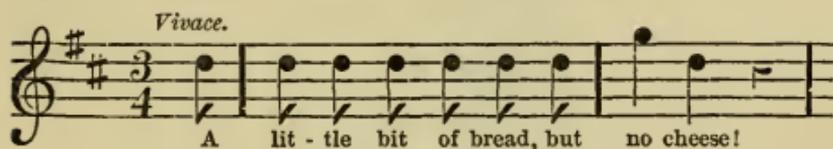
some say each Monday morning. Its nest, therefore, receives less mercy than that of almost any other bird. Its somewhat extraordinary appearance, all of one colour, and that an unusual one in birds, is the only imaginable cause of the antipathy with which it is regarded. The boys of our own northern region, who call it the yellow yorling or yite, address it in the following rhyme of reproach:—

Half a paddock, half a toad,  
 Half a yellow yorling;  
 Drinks a drap o' the deil's bluid  
 Every May morning.

The boys give the following as an imitation of the whistle of the yellow yorling:—

Whetil-te, whetil-te, whee!  
 Herry my nest, and the deil 'll tak ye!

In England, the following is given by the cowboys as its song, no doubt, says Mr Main,\* from their own feelings:—



THE LARK.

Larikie, Larikie, lee!  
 Wha'll gang up to heaven wi' me?  
 No the lout that lies in his bed,  
 No the doolfu' that dreeps his head.

The country people have a pretty fancy, that if you wish to know what the lark says, you must lie down on your back in the field and listen, and you will then hear him say—

Up in the lift go we,  
 Te-hee, te-hee, te-hee, te-hee!  
 There's not a shoemaker on the earth,  
 Can make a shoe to me, to me!  
 Why so, why so, why so?  
 Because my heel is as long as my toe!

\* Loudon's Magazine of Natural History, iv.

## THE CUCKOO.

The cuckoo's a bonny bird,  
 He sings as he flies ;  
 He brings us good tidings ;  
 He tells us no lies.

He drinks the cold water,  
 To keep his voice clear ;  
 And he'll come again  
 In the spring of the year.

In an English version of this ditty, 'He sucks little birds' eggs' is the beginning of the second verse. The fact thus alleged has lately been questioned by naturalists. Perhaps it is not altogether unfounded; but certainly insects and larvæ form the staple of the food of this, as of most British birds of the same order.

The boys of South Britain have a rhyme involving the whole summer's history of the cuckoo:—

In April,  
 The cuckoo shows his bill ;  
 In May,  
 He sings all day ;  
 In June,  
 He alters his tune ;  
 In July,  
 He prepares to fly ;  
 Come August,  
 Go he must.

The Germans connect the cuckoo with good weather, and countrymen do not like to hear it before June, because, they say, the sooner he comes, the sooner will he go. Boys in that country, on hearing the cuckoo for the first time, cry, 'Cuckoo, how long am I to live?' They then count the cuckoo's cries, by the number of which they judge of the years yet to be allowed to them.

## SEA BIRDS.

Ray hands down to us a rhyme popular in his day respecting the birds which nestle on the Bass—

The scout, the scart, the cattiwake,  
 The solan goose sits on the laik  
 Yearly in the spring.

WILD GEESE.

On seeing wild geese on the wing, the boys cry at the top of their voices—

Here's a string o' wild geese,  
 How mony for a penny?  
 Ane to my lord,  
 And ane to my lady;  
 Up the gate and down the gate,  
 They're a' flown frae me!

THE SEVEN SLEEPERS.

The bat, the bee, the butterfly,  
 The cuckoo, and the swallow,  
 The heather-bleet and corncraik,\*  
 Sleep a' in a little holic.

This rhyme, and the term Seven Sleepers, applied to the animals enumerated, form a curious memorial of a rustic fallacy respecting the migratory birds—which, strange to say, was not abandoned even by naturalists till a very recent period.

THE ROOK.

On the first of March,  
 The crows begin to search;  
 By the first o' April,  
 They are sitting still;  
 By the first o' May,  
 They're a' flown away;  
 Croupin' greedy back again,  
 Wi' October's wind and rain.

THE CORBIE.

The rapacious and unsocial character of the carrion crow, and the peculiar sounds of its voice, have given rise to curious notions respecting it among the rustic classes. The lonely shepherd who overhears a pair croaking behind a neighbouring hillock or enclosure, amuses his fancy by forming regular dialogues out of their conversation—thus, for instance:—

A hoggie dead! a hoggie dead! a hoggie dead!  
 Oh where? oh where? oh where?

\* The rail.

Down i' 'e park ! down i' 'e park ! down i' 'e park !  
 Is't fat ? is't fat ? is't fat ?  
 Come try ! come try ! come try !

So in Galloway ; but thus in Tweeddale :—

Sekito says, there's a hogg dead !  
 Where ? where ?  
 Up the burn ! up the burn !  
 Is't fat ? is't fat ?  
 'T's a' creesh ! 't's a' creesh !\*

#### THE MUIRHEN.

' A circumstance worth recording occurred in Selkirkshire, when the black grouse became plentiful. It was formerly believed that the muirhen, as the female of the red grouse was called, had in her wild and muirland nature somewhat of the spirit of the " sons of Jonathan the son of Rechab ;" and as she kept her young aloof from the haunts of man, and from all human cultivation, so neither could she approach his dwelling, nor eat his grain herself. That of old this has been the case, I make no doubt, because I well recollect when such a thing was unknown in that district ; and this belief was corroborated by a proverb in ancient rhyme, namely—

The muirhen has sworn by her tough skin,  
 She sal never eat of the carle's win ;

and doubtless she long and unaccountably kept her oath. . . . Now the muirhen makes as light of the oath of her ancestors as the descendants of Jonathan the Rechabite now do ; and any day in October may be seen coveys of them, mixed with the black grouse, on the stubbles, seated on the

\* I am not aware of any rhyming reference being made in Scotland to the owl. The eccentric naturalist Waterton, in a curious paper on this animal (*Essays on Natural History*), says the only kind thing he has ever heard proceeding from the peasantry respecting it is the following, to the tune of ' Cease, rude Boreas :'—

Once I was a monarch's daughter,  
 And sat on a lady's knee ;  
 But am now a nightly rover,  
 Banished to the ivy tree.  
 Crying hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo,  
 Hoo, hoo, hoo, my feet are cold.  
 Pity me ; for here you see me,  
 Persecuted, poor, and old.

*Boreas  
 hoo hoo*

stooks [sheaves], and ranged in lines on the top of the stone walls that bound the fields; greatly to the offence of the older shepherds, who speak of their corruption by the gray fowl, and repeat the proverbial rhyme.'—*W. L. Notice of the Breeding of Woodcocks in Selkirkshire. Magazine of Natural History*, 1837, p. 120.

DOMESTIC POULTRY.

Buy tobacco, buy tobacco;  
I'll pay a'!

This is the boys' interpretation of the cackle of the hen, being understood as an address from Dame Partlet to the old woman her mistress, encouraging her to partake freely of her favourite indulgence, on the strength of the addition just made to her wealth.

Sir Walter Scott was one day sitting drowsily after dinner at Abbotsford with a rural friend, when the twilight silence of the room was broken by the distant sound of the cackle of a hen. Immediately, to the no small amusement of his companion, the good-humoured host broke out with, '*Buy tobacco, buy tobacco; I'll pay a'!*' making a most ludicrous attempt to rise the octave at the conclusion, in which, it is hardly necessary to say (his musical gift being so slender), he signally failed.

*A Dialogue.*

*Hen.* Every day,  
An egg I lay,  
And yet I aye gang barefit, barefit!

*Cock.* I've been through a' the toun,  
Seeking you a pair o' shoon;  
Wad ye hae my heart out, heart out?

The above is designed to represent the ordinary clucking conversation of our domestic poultry. In each case the words are spoken rapidly upon one note till the last couple of syllables, when the voice must descend, and suddenly rise again, the effect of which is to produce an amusing resemblance to the language of the two birds.

In Galloway, the hen's song is—

The cock gaed to Rome, seeking shoon, seeking shoon,  
The cock gaed to Rome, seeking shoon,  
And yet I aye gang barefit, barefit!

Ardenahou's bon. Said by a  
pigeon to Campbell of Ardenahou when he  
was drunk. He got  
his head  
in at  
his window  
the gash  
caught him  
and the  
dear  
insulted  
him  
uncle to  
David &  
Clyde &  
Steven  
Malsay  
died a  
very old  
man.  
Somewhere  
about 1840  
I think.

## THE THRUSH.

In the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, it is told that a certain drouthy carle, called Gilbert Doak, was one fine spring morning going home not quite sober, when to his amazement he heard a mavis saluting him with—

Gibbie Doak, Gibbie Doak, where hast tu  
been, where hast tu been ?

Ye hae been at the kirk, priein, priein, priein !

'At the kirk priein' is a very different thing in Scotland from 'at the kirk prayin'.' Gilbert had been sacrificing to Bacchus\* with some drouthy neighbours at the clachan, or village where the parish church is situated. The verse admirably expresses the song of the mavis.

## THE SWALLOW.

Boys in the rural parts of Scotland delight in throwing stones at the swallow, as it skims the pool in search of flies, crying—

Swallow, swallow, sail the water ;  
Ye'll get brose, and ye'll get butter.

## ENIGMAS ON ANIMALS.

The merle and the blackbird,  
The laverock and the lark,  
The gouldy and the gowdspink,  
How many birds be that ?

The laverock and the lark,  
The baukie and the bat,  
The heather-bleet, the mire-snipe,  
How many birds be that ?

'Six' would probably be a Southron's answer. In reality, only three in each case, the two words in each line being synonymes.

Infir taris, inoknonis,  
Inmudeelsis, inclaynonis.  
Canamaretots ?

This, being pronounced very fast, is somewhat puzzling. The following is a key :—

\* To prie (properly prieve), is to taste.

ΕΛΚΕ ΠΟΛΥΟΓ Τ

Sowete Coblerai sola bootata, entha kai  
entha. Bendete tight strapeten canclependete  
greasete seamas.

In fir tar is, in oak none is,  
In mud eels is, in clay none is.  
Can a mare eat oats ?

## THE FLOUNDER.

Fishes are the only other order of vertebrate animals on which the boys of Scotland have exercised their rhyming powers. The wry mouth of the flounder has given rise to the following, which is popular in Kincardineshire:—

Said the trout to the fluke,  
When did your mou' crook ?  
My mou' was never even,  
Since I cam' by John's Haven.

John's Haven being a fishing-village in that county.

## THE HADDOCK.

A semi-metrical proverb expresses the season at which the haddock and some other articles of aliment are supposed to be at their best—

A Januar haddock,  
A Februar bannock,  
And a March pint o' ale.

This, however, as far as the haddock is concerned, would appear questionable, as there is an almost universal notion that the young of this fish, at least, are best after a little of May has gone. Thus in the Mearns—

A cameral haddock's ne'er guid,  
Till it get three draps o' May flude.

In Northumberland they say—

The herrings are na guid,  
Till they smell the new hay.

## THE EEL.

Boys, finding an eel, will say to it—

Eelie, eelie, ator,  
Cast a knot upon your tail,  
And I'll throw you in the water.

So in Peeblesshire; but in the Mearns—

Eelie, eelie, cast your knot,  
And ye'll get back to your water-pot.

The object, after all, being to cause the animal to wriggle for their amusement.

THE OYSTER.

The herring loves the merry moonlight,  
The mackerel loves the wind ;  
But the oyster loves the dredging-sang,  
For they come of a gentle kind.

Scott puts the above into the mouth of Elspeth Mucklebucket in 'The Antiquary.' A dredging-song, a strange jumble of nonsense, is given in Herd's Collection. One couplet of it presents the reason for the use of such ditties—

The oysters are a gentle kin',  
They winna tak' unless ye sing.

THE MUSSEL.

The fact of the mussel not being in season in summer, is indicated by—

When the pea's in bloom,  
The mussel's toom ;

that is, empty.

THE LADY-BIRD.

This pretty small insect, *Coccinella septem-punctata*, seems to have excited the imagination of the young in all countries where it exists. In Germany, where it is called *Marienwürmchen* (the Virgin Mary's chafer), nearly a translation of our own appellation, there is a beautiful song to it, to be found in the preface to *German Popular Stories*, by the late Edgar Taylor. The Scottish youth are accustomed to throw it into the air, singing at the same time—

Lady, Lady Landers,  
Lady, Lady Landers,  
Take up your coats about your head,  
And fly away to Flanders !

Or, in Kincardineshire—

King, King Gollowa,  
Up your wings and fly awa' ;  
Over land and over sea,  
Tell me where my love can be !

In England, children are accustomed to throw the insect into the air, to make it open its wings and take to flight, singing—

Lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home,  
Your house is afire, your children's at home,  
All but one that ligs under a stone,  
Ply thee home, lady-bird, ere it be gone.

At Vienna, the children do the same thing, crying—

Käferl', käferl', käferl',  
Flieg nach Mariabrunn,  
Und bring uns ä schone sun.

That is as much as to say, in the language of a Scottish youth—

Little birdie, little birdie,  
Fly to Marybrunn,  
And bring us hame a fine sun.

Marybrunn being a place about twelve English miles from the Austrian capital, with a miracle-working image of the Virgin, who often sends good weather to the merry Viennese. The lady-bird is always connected with fine weather in Germany.

THE SNAIL.

The snail is saluted in the following couplet by the boys of Forfarshire :—

Willie, my buck, shoot out your horn,  
And you'll get milk and bread the morn.

In other districts, it is supposed that good weather is prognosticated by the creature appearing to obey the injunction—

Snailie, snailie, shoot out your horn,  
And tell us if it will be a bonnie day the morn.\*

There is a notion prevalent all over Scotland, that an unusually large species of snail—probably the *Helix pomatia*—was kept by the monks in former days about their convents and monasteries, and that it is still rife about the

\* In England, the snail scoops out hollows, little rotund chambers, in limestone, for its residence. This habit of the animal is so important in its effects, as to have attracted the attention of geologists, one of the most distinguished of whom (Dr Buckland) alluded to it at the meeting of the British Association at Plymouth in 1841. The following rhyme is a boy's invocation to the snail to come out of such holes, and other places of retreat resorted to by it :—

Snail, snail, come out of your hole,  
Or else I will beat you as black as a coal.

ruins of religious houses. The vulgar also tell the following story, which, from its universality, seems to have some truth at bottom. In a time of long-enduring famine in a past age, when all people looked attenuated and pale from low diet, it was observed with surprise of two poor old women, that they continued to be fat and fair. They were suspected of witchcraft, as the only conceivable means of their keeping up the system at such a time—were seized, and subjected to examination. With much reluctance, and only to escape a threatened death of torment, they confessed that, in the previous autumn, when the state of the harvest gave token of coming dearth, they had busied themselves in collecting snails, which they salted as provisions; and by dieting on these creatures, which furnished a wholesome, if not an agreeable food, they had lived in comparative comfort all winter. The discovery in their house of two barrels, still containing a large amount of this molluscous provision, confirmed the tale, and they were set at liberty, not without some approbation of their foresight, and the pious wisdom they had shown in not rejecting any healthful fare which Providence had placed at their command.

## ON BEES.

A Forfarshire rhyme—

The todler tyke has a very guid byke,  
 And sae has the gairy bee ;  
 But leese me on the little red-doup,  
 Wha bears awa' the grie.

## TREES AND HERBS.

The rhymes respecting the vegetable kingdom are comparatively few. Reference is supposed to be made to some old law in the following :—

The aik, the ash, the elm-tree,  
 They are hanging a' three.

That is, it was a capital crime to mutilate these trees.

Variation—

The aik, the ash, the elm-tree,  
 Hang a man for a' three,  
 And ae branch will set him free.

Another variation—

The oak, the ash, and the ivy-tree,  
 Flourish best at hame, in the north countrie.

In Fife, children thus address a little plant usually called in Scotland the *curly-doddy*—

Curly-doddy, do my biddin',  
Sooop my house, and shool my middin.

Those of Galloway play at hide-and-seek with a little black-topped flower which they call the *davie-drap*, saying—

Within the bounds of this I hap,  
My black and bonnie davie-drap:  
Wha is here, the cunning ane,  
To me my davie-drap will fin'.

Red brackens  
Bring milk and butter.

In October, the bracken or fern on hill pastures becomes red with the first frosty nights, and about that time the autumnal herbage is very rich, and productive of the good things in question.

Bourtree, bourtree, crookit rung,  
Never straight, and never strong,  
Ever bush, and never tree,  
Since our Lord was nailed t' ye.

Alluding to a tradition that the cross on which Christ was crucified was made of the elder or bourtree, and that ever since, it has borne the curse of a crooked and gnarled bush, unfit for timber. Bour, or bower-tree, is so called in Scotland from its forming the garden-bowers of our forefathers.

Like March gowans—  
Rare, but rich.

The following is a riddle on the nettle:—

Heg-beg adist\* the dike, and Heg-beg ahint the dike,  
If ye touch Heg-beg, Heg-beg will gar ye fyke.†

Another riddle—

Riddle me, riddle me, rot, tot, tot,  
A little wee man in a red, red coat;  
A staff in his hand, and a stane in his throat;  
Riddle me, riddle me, rot, tot, tot.

Explanation—a *cherry*.

\* On this side of.

† Make you very uneasy.

*Gaelic riddles*