

scene that followed baffles description. They shrieked and screamed and clapped their hands; and, rushing out to the lanes like so many mad creatures, were only unhinged the more to find the calamity so universal. Down came the women of the place, to make inquiries and give advices; some recommending them to have recourse to the minister, some to procure baskets and suspend the changelings over the fire, — some one thing, some another; but the poor mothers were regardless of them all. They tossed their arms and shrieked and hallooed; and the children, who were well-nigh as ill at ease as themselves, added, by their cries, to the confusion and the uproar. A thought struck one of the townswomen. "I suspect, neighbors," she said, "that the loons are at the bottom of this. Let's bring all the little ones into one place, and see whether every mother cannot find her own among them." No sooner said than done; and peace was restored in a few minutes. Mischievous as the trick was, it had this one effect, that the fairies were in less repute in Cromarty ever after, and were never more charged with the stealing of children. A popular belief is in no small danger when those who cherished learn to laugh at it, be the laugh raised as it may.