

as a protection from witchcraft, and baptism as a charm against the fairies. Their simplicity, their ignorance, their superstition, laid them open to a thousand petty annoyances from the wags of the town. They had a belief, long since extinct, that if, when setting out for the fishing, one should interrogate them regarding their voyage, there was little chance of their getting on with it without meeting with some disaster; and it was a common trick with the youngsters to run down to the water's edge, just as they were betaking themselves to their oars, and shout out, "Men, men, where are you going?" They used, too, to hover about their houses after dark, and play all manner of tricks, such as blocking up their chimney with turf and stealthily filling their water-stoups with salt-water just as they were about setting on their *brochan*. One of the best jokes of the period seems almost too good to be forgotten.

The fairies were in ill repute at the time, and long before, for an ill practice of kidnapping children and annoying women in the straw; and no class of people could dread them more than fishers. But they were at length cured of their terrors by being laughed at. One evening, when all the men were setting out for sea, and all the women engaged at the water's edge in handing them their tackle or launching their boats, a party of young fellows, who had watched the opportunity, stole into their cottages, and, disfurnishing the cradles of all their little tenants, transposed the children of the entire village, leaving a child in the cradle of every mother, but taking care that it should not be her own child. They then hid themselves, amid the ruins of a deserted hovel, to wait the result. Up came the women from the shore; and, alarmed by the crying of the children and the strangeness of their voices, they went to their cradles and found a changeling in each. The