



A PEEP AT THE PIXIES, OR LEGENDS
OF THE WEST

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY HABLOT K. BROWNE

1854

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Pixy Gathon; Or, The Tailor's Needle

The Three Trials; Or, The Story Of Crabby Cross

The Seven Crosses Of Tiverton; Or, The Story Of Pixy Picket

Background Notes

Fontina; Or, The Pixies' Bath

The Lady Of The Silver Bell

The Belfry Rock; Or, The Pixies' Revenge

Appendix

brave behind his stone walls and strong towers; but bring him out of them in such a wind and darkness as this, and see if he would not quake for fear if he heard but the cry of a chough, knowing, as all Cornish men do, that the soul of Prince Arthur is in one of those birds, and comes to give notice of no good luck to the mart who hears its scream in a storm." ⁵

"And to turn us poor folk that be so hungry from his doors," said his son, who was a sturdy youth, of a bold and fearless temper. "I be starving for want of a supper. I would seek it and have it, though I called old Joan to help me to it, if I knew where she now dwelt. I'd seek her through fire and water, if any one of they pixy bodies, which folk say she has at her beck and call, would but show the way."

That's as bold and as dangerous a word, Will Penruffin, as ever I heard," said the old man; "take heed of what thou sayest."

But scarcely had sturdy Will uttered those words, when they both saw a pale glimmering light, somewhat in the shape of a ball, of an emerald hue, not unlike the light which the glow-worm gives from her little lamp on a fine summer's night. It seemed to roll on before them.

"That's very strange," said the old man, "I do not half like it."

"But I like it well," said Will, "and I'll follow and see what comes on 't; for, may be, 't is a Pixy light, and that never burns for nothing. I'll after it."

"Do not, my son," said the old man; "it may lead you into harm, into a bog, to the mouth of a mine, or to an open grave in a churchyard. Do not follow it."

"But I will though," said his son: "and I'll see the worst or the best on 't, or my name is not Will Penruffin."

"Ask it what it be first?" said the father much alarmed. "Holla, ho! you Master Jack-a-lantern, what be you, I pray? Tell us if any man may know your business, and what you be, and where you be going?":

"Crabby Cross,
To make up your loss."

These strange words seemed as if spoken by no one near; the wind appeared to carry them as the blast swept over the wanderers' heads.

⁵ That the soul of Prince Arthur resides in the body of a chough; is the popular belief of many of the peasantry on the coast of Cornwall.

