

*When Tweed and Powsail meet at Merlin's grave  
Scotland and England one monarch shall have.*

In 1603 the Powsail burn burst its banks at Drumelzier, legendary site of the death of the Scottish Merlin, and joined the small watercourse with the River Tweed into which it still flows. This same year saw the accession of the son of Mary Queen of Scots to the thrones of England and Scotland, as James I and VI.

In the ballad that commemorates his meeting with the Faery Queen, Thomas is lying on a riverbank by a tree. A common feature of goddess contacts is a site near water (be it lake, fountain, river, well, or millpond) and a tree, particularly the fairy thorn.

*True Thomas lay on Huntlie bank;  
A ferlie [strange thing] he spied with his 'ee;  
And there he saw a lady bright,  
Come riding down by the Eildon Tree.*

*Her skirt was o' the grass-green silk,  
Her mantle o' the velvet fyne,  
And ilka tett [each lock] of her horse's mane  
Hang fifty siller bells and nine.*

This turns out to be the Faery Queen, although at first, being a good Catholic, he mistakes her for the Virgin Mary, but she soon puts him right on this score.

*True Thomas he pull'd aff his cap,  
And louted low down to his knee;  
"All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!  
For thy peer on earth I never did see,"*

*"O no, O no, Thomas," she said,  
"That name does not belang to me;  
I am but the queen of fair Elfland,  
That am hither come to visit thee."*

He kisses the fairy lady, even though this may mean that the human world will never see him again, and they ride off to the parting of three ways—one that leads to heaven, one that leads to hell, and the middle way to Elfland, which in this location is via the interior of the Eildon Hills.