

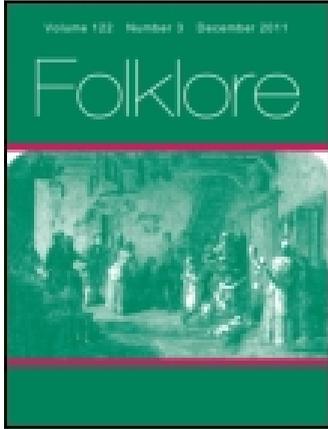
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Miscellanea

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MISCELLANEA.

Easter in Greece.—The Greek Easter fell this year (1890) on April 13th, and was celebrated with the usual rites at Athens. Easter candles and coloured Easter eggs were exhibited for sale in large quantities in the streets on Good Friday; and live lambs were to be seen, which the peasants had brought in from the country to sell. Each family, as a rule, buys a lamb, kills it, and eats it on Easter Sunday. On Saturday, in various parts of Athens, I observed the gutters running with the blood of the lambs which had been thus killed to furnish the family meal on Sunday. I am told that in some country districts the blood of the lamb is sometimes smeared on the threshold of the house. On the night of Good Friday the *sikones* or holy pictures representing the dead Christ were carried in solemn procession through the streets, great crowds joining in the processions with lighted candles, or watching the processions pass. Military bands marched in the processions, playing solemn music. During Easter Saturday and Easter Sunday firing went on almost continuously all over Athens. The cartridges used were not always blank ones, for I heard the whistle of bullets, and am informed that fatal accidents on such occasions are not uncommon. The object of the firing is said to be to kill Judas. Formerly effigies of Judas used to be burned at this season, but in Athens the custom is now forbidden by the Government.

The chief ceremony of the festival takes place at midnight on Easter Saturday, that is, at the commencement of Easter Sunday, the moment when the Resurrection is believed to have taken place. In Athens a religious service, presided over by the Archbishop, is held at midnight in the square in front of the cathedral, and at the presumed moment of the Resurrection the bells ring out and the multitude who fill the square kindle the candles which they had hitherto held unlighted in their hands. The theory is that these candles are all lighted from the sacred new Easter fire in the cathedral, but, considering the suddenness with which the square, all dark a moment before, bursts into a blaze of light, it seems hardly possible that all the candles should be lit from one source.

In the more remote districts of Greece it seems that the Easter ceremonies are of a more primitive kind than at Athens. Mr. Ernest Gardner, Director of the British School of Archæology at Athens, witnessed the celebration of Easter at Thebes in Bœotia, and he has

kindly furnished me with the following particulars:—"On Good Friday the sacred picture of the dead Christ was laid on a sort of bier, or structure resembling a four-posted bed. The picture itself, the four posts, and the overhanging canopy were covered with flowers and green leaves. Every person came up to the bier, kissed the sacred picture, and carried away a flower or a leaf from it, with the intention of keeping it until the Easter of the following year. Beside the bier stood baskets of flowers and leaves, with which the bier was decked as fast as it was stripped by the worshippers. Then the bier, adorned with lighted candles, was carried in procession through the town. Similar processions started from the various churches and met at central points. While the processions were passing fireworks were let off and guns fired." J. G. FRAZER.

Highland Superstitions in Inverness-shire.—The following notes on this subject were communicated in writing by Isabella Ross, formerly a servant in our family.

"At old Christmas, commonly called 'Auld Eil', a pot of sowans is made in every house, a wedding-ring put into it, whoever finds the ring is blindfolded and goes to the hen-house door and knocks; if the cock crows, for every time he crows there is a year or years before they are married; if he just flaps his wings, they are to be an old maid.

"A child's hands are never washed until he opens them himself, or the luck is washed away; the longer he keeps them closed the more money he will have. If his nails are pared before he is a year old, he will live to be a thief; and if they speak before they walk, they will be noted for telling untruths.

"It's very unlucky to hear a cock crow in the afternoon, a sure omen of bad news.

"A child born at the hour of or between 12 and 1, is supposed to see all ghosts and goblins.

"The fairies in the Highlands are all supposed to be drowned in a place called the Ferry. They wanted to cross, and they asked an old woman if the water was deep; she replied in Gaelic, 'Although it's black, it is not deep.'" JAMES G. FRAZER.

Players' Superstitions.—In the *Folk-Lore Record*, 1879, vol. ii, p. 203, I quoted some passages illustrative of the superstitions of actors from *The Theatre* of September 1879, p. 106. To these let me add the following:—(1) From the *Rialto*, January 4, 1890: "A black cat is the theatrical emblem of good-luck, and when a new piece is produced the proper thing to do to secure success is to entice a black cat to come on behind. At the Haymarket they apparently take fortune by the

forelock by keeping a black cat in front. The other night, when I went to the Haymarket to see how *A Man's Shadow* stood a second visit, the black cat came and sat down beside me. Such an admirable cat is the Haymarket pussy that it took its place so unobtrusively that I did not notice its presence till an attendant came and said, 'I think we'll take the cat away.' Then I discovered the harbinger of fortune sitting at my elbow. Needless to say that after such an incident I was fortunate enough to enjoy *A Man's Shadow* quite as much as on a first visit." (2) From the *Glasgow Evening Citizen*, January 6, 1890 (but probably quoted from a theatrical paper), regarding the pantomime at Drury Lane: "Some surprise has been expressed at the appearance of Juno in the Olympian procession at Drury Lane Theatre without anything in her dress to associate her with the peacock, the bird dedicated to 'the Queen of Heaven'. The omission is not accidental, but designed, theatrical people having a superstitious aversion to the peacock in any form appearing on the stage. Mr. Harris was spoken to on the subject, but declined to interfere with a cherished superstition."

WILLIAM GEORGE BLACK.

Rabbinic Parallel to a Story of Grimm.—In preparing my edition of the Great Midrash on the Pentateuch, the largest collection of Jewish legendary lore in existence, I came across the following, which my friend Mr. Jacobs thinks would be of interest to students of folk-lore. I may add that all the MSS. of the *Midrash Haggadol* come from Yemen in Arabia, where an isolated colony of Jews has existed since the beginning of the Christian era. The collection is probably not later than the fourteenth century, but it is impossible to state how much earlier the particular passage may be. So far as I know, no parallel exists in any other part of Rabbinic literature.

ANOTHER STORY.—A Gentile and a Jew were walking along a road. Then the Gentile said to the Jew, "My religion is better than thine." Now the Jew said, "It is not true; my religion is better than thine, for it is written, Deut. iv, 8." Then said the Gentile, "Let us ask; if they say my religion is better I will take all your money; if they say thine, you will take mine." Then said the Jew to him, "'Tis well; I accept the wager." Now they continued their walk, and Satan came in the shape of an old man. They asked him whose religion is the better, and he said the Gentile's. Afterwards they continued their walk, and the same Satan took the shape of a young man, and they asked him again, and he gave the same answer. Thereupon the Gentile took away the whole money of the Jew. The Jew departed in great trouble, and he passed the night in a ruin. Now, when there came the third part of the night he heard three persons talking.

They said to one, "Where have you been to-day?" And he said, "I found a Jew and a Gentile, and I had my joke with them, and I gave false evidence in favour of the Gentile." And they said to the second, "Where have you been to-day?" And he said, "I have been preventing the daughter of the emperor and king from giving birth to a child; it is already seven days that she has been in labour; if they only took some grass, and put it on her nose, she would instantly give birth." They asked the third demon where he had been? He said, "I have stopped the spring of a certain country, and all the animals there are perishing from thirst. If they would take a black ox and kill him on the well, the water would come again." Now the Jew kept the matter in his heart, got up in the morning, and went to the emperor's country. He found his daughter still in labour. They asked him if he had any medicine. He showed them the root of the tree, and they pressed it on her nose, and she gave birth. The king gave him much money, for this was his only child. Afterwards he went to the country where the waters were stopped. They asked him if he could do something. He said, "Take a black ox and sacrifice it on the well, and the water will come up." They did so, and the water did come up, and they gave him a lot of money. On the following day, the Gentile who had taken away all his money found the Jew, and wondered how he had got so much money. He asked him: "I have taken all your money, whence have you got such riches?" And he told him the whole story. He also did likewise, and passed the night in the ruin. But the three demons came and killed him. In order that Prov. xi, 8, may be fulfilled.

S. SCHECHTER.

[This is evidently a variant of Grimm's "The Two Travellers" (No. 107), parallels to which have been enumerated by R. Köhler in his notes to the first of Widter and Wolf's Venetian folk-tales in *Jahrb. d. rom. und eng. Philologie*, vii, pp. 6-11, to which add those by E. Cosquin in his *Contes de Lorraine*, i, 87 seq.—J. J.]

FOLK-LORE EXTRACTS.

Snake with Jewelled Head.—"Among others" [stones possessed and prized by the Cherokees, and used in their conjuring ceremonies], "there is one in the possession of a conjurer, remarkable for its brilliancy and beauty, but more so for the extraordinary manner in which it was found. It grew, if we may credit the Indians, on the head of a monstrous serpent, whose retreat was by its brilliancy discovered; but a great number of snakes attending him, he being, as I suppose by his diadem, of a superior rank among serpents, made it dangerous to attack him. Many were the attempts made by the

Indians, but all frustrated, till a fellow more bold than the rest, casing himself in leather, impenetrable to the bite of the serpent or his guards, and watching a convenient opportunity, surprised and killed him, tearing the jewel from his head, which the conjurer has kept hid for many years in some place unknown to all but two women." (1765, *Timberlake's Memoirs*, p. 48.)

Holy Innocents.—"Thus many people in this land" [England] "are afraid to begin a good worke vpon the same day that *Innocents* day fell on the yeare before, because they held the circumstance of time as a necessary concurrent to prosperous proceedings." (1625, J. Jackson, *The Originall of Vnbeliefe, etc.*, c. xv, p. 115.)

St. M. Magdalene's Day.—"And the Scottish nation, . . . would sometimes have fought with the English vpon any festivall day in the yeare sooner than vpon *Magdalene* day, as fearing lest the ill happe, which it brought them, had not been expiated with the reiterated penētentiall sacrifices of many widowes teares." (*Ibid.*, c. xviii, p. 157.)

Swallows' Nests.—"To robbe a swallowes nest, built in a *fire-house*, is from some old bell-dames Catechisms, held as a more fearefull sacrilege, than to steale a chalace out of a church." (*Ibid.*, c. xix, p. 177.)

Ferne Seed.—"It was my happe since I vnderooke the ministerie, to question an ignorant soule, . . . what he saw, or heard, when he watcht the falling of the *Ferne-seed* at an vnseasonable and suspitious houre. Why (quoth he) doe you thinke that the devill hath ought to doe with that good seed? No; it is in the keeping of the *King of Faynes*, and *he*, I know, will doe me no harme, although I should watch agaene; yet had he utterly forgotten this King's name, vpon whose kindness he so presumed, vntil I remembered it vnto him out of my reading in *Huon of Burdeaux*. And having made this answer, he beganne to pose me thus: Sr, you are a schollar, and I am none. Tell me what sai'd the Angell to our Lady? or what conference had our Lady with her cousin *Elisabeth* concerning the birth of *St. John the Baptist*? As if his intention had been to make bystanders belleue, that he knew somewhat more on this point, than was written in such bookes, as I vse to reade. Howbeit the meaning of his riddle I quickly conceived, and he confessed to be this: that the Angell did foretell *John Baptist* should be born at that very instant on which the *Ferne-seede*, at other times invisible, did fall; intimating further (as farre as I could then perceiue) that this saint of God had some extraordinary value from the *time* or *circumstance* of his birth." (*Ibid.*, c. xix, pp. 178-9.)

South-running Water.—"This vpon mine owne knowledge and observation I can relate: of two, sent more than a mile, after sun-

setting, to fetch *South-running water*, with a strict injunction not to salute any either going or coming, no not their dearest friends, if they should chance to meete them (as by chance they did).” (*Ibid.*, c. xix, p. 179.) It is not stated to what use the water, when fetched, was to be put.

GERALDINE GOSSELIN.

Old Harvest Customs in Devon and Cornwall.—(*Extract from a Letter written August 27, 1839, from Truro*).—“Now, when all the corn was cut at Heligan, the farming men and maidens come in front of the house, and bring with them a small sheaf of corn, the last that has been cut, and this is adorned with ribbons and flowers, and one part is tied quite tight, so as to look like a neck. Then they cry out ‘Our } side, my side,’ as loud as they can; then the dairymaid gives ‘My } the neck to the head farming-man. He takes it, and says, very loudly three times, ‘I have him, I have him, I have him.’ Then another farming-man shouts very loudly, ‘What have ye? what have ye? what have ye?’ Then the first says, ‘A neck, a neck, a neck.’ And when he has said this, all the people make a very great shouting. This they do three times, and after one famous shout go away and eat supper, and dance, and sing songs.” The custom passed away with the introduction of machines.

ANOTHER ACCOUNT.—All went out to the field when the last corn was cut, the “neck” was tied with ribbons and plaited, and they danced round it, and carried it to the great kitchen, where by-and-bye the supper was. The words were as given in the previous account, and “Hip, hip, hack, heck, I have ‘ee, I have ‘ee, I have ‘ee.” It was hung up in the hall.

Another account, with few details only, recounts that one of the men rushed from the field with the last sheaf, the others following with vessels of water, which they endeavoured to throw upon the sheaf before it could be taken into the barn; the moral being the difficulties encountered by the farmer in saving his corn from rain, etc.

At Kingsbridge, the following was formerly recited or sung (at the end of the harvest): “We’ve a ploughed, and we’ve a sowed, we’ve a reaped, and we’ve a mowed, we’ve a sheaved, and we’ve a bound, and well a stood upon the ground.” At the end was “Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!”

