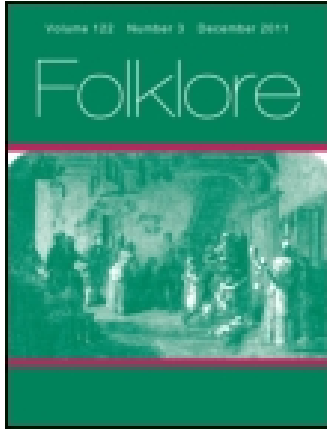


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Miscellanea

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MISCELLANEA.

May Day in Greece.—May-day in Greece is a festival of flowers. During a recent stay in Greece I had an opportunity of observing some of the customs which are practised on that day, and I ascertained others by inquiry. On the 12th of last May I slept at the great monastery of Megaspelaëum in Achaea. Next morning was, according to the Greek reckoning, the first of May; and, as we descended the steep path which winds down from the monastery into the valley, a pretty little girl was standing by the wayside, who presented us with nosegays of wild-flowers. My dragoman told me that this was a May-day custom, and that the people on this day go out into the fields to gather flowers. In the course of the day we saw numerous traces of the custom. At the Khan of Mamousia the outside of the house where we lunched was adorned with a bunch of flowers, and in the town of Aegium, on the Gulf of Corinth, we saw flowers fastened to the doors or windows of many houses and shops. Moreover, on the road to Aegium some boys passed us, wearing gay crowns of roses, poppies, and wheat. In Aegium itself we observed a band of boys going through the streets, their heads crowned with wreaths of flowers. I was told that they had been going from house to house singing May songs. Some days later, at Palæo-Koundura, in the wooded pass which leads over Mount Cithaëran from Bœotia into Attica, we noticed a wreath of flowers and a bunch of ripe wheat-stalks, with their roots, hanging over the door of the house where we baited. The flowers and wheat-stalks had been hung up on the Greek first of May, and would be allowed to stay there as long as they could. It is the custom to pick out the longest stalks to form the bunch.

My dragoman, Mr. John F. Weale, a native of Corfu, informed me that in Corfu the children go about singing May songs on the first of May. The boys carry small cypresses, decorated with ribbons, flowers, and the fruits of the season. They receive a glass of wine at each house. The girls go about carrying bouquets of flowers. One of them is dressed up like an angel, with gilt wings, and scatters flowers. The following is one of the songs sung by the children in Corfu on this occasion. The Greek text was procured for me by Mr. J. F. Weale, from his brother-in-law, who is a schoolmaster in Corfu.

The translation was kindly furnished by Mr. E. A. Gardner, Director of the British School at Athens :—

Τραγοῦδι ᾄδομενον ἐν Κερκύρα κατὰ τὴν πρωτομαγιά (1)

Song sung in Corfu on the first of May,

Κι' εἴναι μὲ τὸν ὀρισμὸν νὰ 'ποῦμε καὶ τὸ Μάη.

If it is with your leave let us sing (of) the May.

1. Μπρέ ἐμπῆκε ὁ Μάης—ἐμπῆκε ὁ Μάης—ἐμπῆκε ὁ Μάης καὶ ὁ μῆνας.
Lo, May has come—May has come—May has come, and the month.
2. Ὁ Μάης μὲ τὰ τριαντάφυλλα καὶ ὁ Ἀπρίλης μὲ τὰ ῥόδα
May with the roses and April with the roses.
3. Ἀπρίλ—Ἀπρίλ ἀφόρετε, Μάη μου κανακάρη
April—April fresh and fair, May my darling,
4. Ὅλο τὸ κόσμον γιόμισες τ' εὐθὴ καὶ τὸ λουλουῖδι
All over the world thou givest abundance of flowers and blossoms,
5. Κ' ἐμένα περικύκλωσες τσῆ κόρης τῆς ἀγκάλας
And me thou enfoldest in the arms of my maiden.
6. Λουλουδισέ μου λιγυρή, λουλουδισέ μου κόρη,
My slender girl has blossomed forth, has blossomed,
7. Νὰ 'παναδώσω τὸ φιλὶ μπρὶν βρεξὴ, μπρὶν χιονίστη,
Let me give back her kiss before it rains, before it snows,
8. Μπρὶν κατεβάσῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ σβροῦν τὰ ποτάμια.
Before the heavens are opened and the rivers come down.
9. Καὶ δὴ ποῦ τραγουδήσαμε πέτρα νὰ μὴ ραῖσῃ,
And where we have sung may the rock not split,
Καὶ ὁ νοικοκύρης τοῦ σπητιοῦ πολλοὺς χρόνους νὰ ζήσῃ.
And may the master of the house live many years.
10. Νὰ ζήσῃ χροῖους ἑκατὸ καὶ νὰ τοὺς ἀπεράσῃ.
May he live a hundred years and pass them,
Καὶ τῶν παιδιῶν τσῆ χαράς κουφέτα νὰ μοιράσῃ,
And may he scatter sweatmeats for the pleasure of his children,
11. Ὅχι κουφέτα μοναχὰ μονὲ καὶ λεφτο κάρνα.
Not only sweatmeats, but also (hazel) nuts.
12. Κι' ἀνοιξε τὸ μπουκάκι σου τὸ μαργαριτρέγγιο
Open your pearly box
13. Καὶ βάλε τὸ χεράκι σου ὡς τὸ 'χεις μαθημένο
And put your hand, as you have learnt,
14. Κι' εἴναι γρόσσια δὸς μας τα, κι' εἴναι ἑχρὸς καὶ παρδὸς
If you have pennies give us them, and if you have farthings,
15. Κι' εἴναι ἑχρὸς καὶ γλυκὸ κρασί, βγάλε νὰ μᾶς κερᾶσῃ.
And if you have sweet wine, bring it forth and pour it out for us.
16. Πολλὰ 'παμε τοῦ ἀφέστη μας, νὰ 'ποιμ' καὶ τῆς κυρᾶς μας
We have said much to milord, let us say something to milady also.
17. Κυρὰ χρυσὴ κυρὰ ἀργυρὴ—κυρὰ μαλαματέγνια,
Golden lady, silver lady—lady (all) golden,
18. Ποῦ σὲ χτενίζει ὁ ξρωτὰς μὲ τὰ χρυσὰ τὰ χτέγνια,
Whom love combs with his golden comb,

19. Μὲ τὰ χρυσὰ μὲ τ' ἀργυρὰ μὲ τὰ μαλαμα τέγνια.
With his golden, his silver, his (all) golden comb.
20. Κυρά μου σύντα βούλεσαι νὰ πᾶς 'στὴν Ἐκκλησίαν,
Milady, if it please you, go to the church,
21. Ὅλος ὁ κόσμος χαίρεται καὶ τὰ μικρὰ παιδία,
Everybody is rejoicing, and (as for) your little children,
22. Κυρά μου τὰ παιδάκια σου ὁ Θεὸς νὰ στὰ χαρίη,
Milady, your little ones, may God bless them,
23. Κι' ὁ Μέγας Ἀθανάσιος (2) νὰ στὰ πολοχρονίη
And the great Athanasius prolong their years,
24. Κι' ἐδῶ ποῦ τραγουθήσαμε καὶ τώρα καὶ τοῦ χρόνου
And may we who have sung here now sing also next year,
25. Καὶ τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς λαμπρᾶς μὲ τὸ Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη.
And on Easter-day with (the song) "Christ is risen."

On the foregoing song Mr. Weale's informant adds the following notes :—

(1) "The festival of the first of May originated in Corcyra during the time of the Venetian domination. It was then splendidly celebrated by the vassals (ὑπὸ τῶν δουλοπαροίκων) (see Ἱστορικὴ ἔκθεσις καὶ ἔγγραφα περὶ τιμαρίων Κερκύρας λ. 19-20 ὑπὸ Π. Χιώτου), who brought a tree with flowers, red eggs, birds, fruit, etc. ; and to the sound of drums and fifes and joyous cries set it up on the square, opposite the house of some Baron, while they sang the above song, and there they feasted all day long at the expense of the Baron.

(2) "Saint Athanasius is here mentioned, because on the second of May the Greek Church celebrates the recovery of the body of this saint."

I may here add a few jottings on some other Greek popular customs. In the room of the house where I slept at Tsipiana, in Arcadia, a laurel branch was fastened to a rafter. I was told that it had been placed there on Palm Sunday, and would be kept there for a year. In a corner of the room, before the two holy pictures, was another laurel branch, which also had been placed there on Palm Sunday. Moreover, from the little shrine hung the wedding crown of the woman of the house. I observed similar crowns similarly attached in other parts of Greece, and was informed that the custom is universal. The crown is left hanging as long as the woman lives.

I was told that on St. John's Eve the people light bonfires and jump over them ; and that the custom, in time of drought, of dressing a girl in leaves and drenching her with water, is still practised as a rain-charm in the country districts of Greece.

J. G. FRAZER.

Folk-lore from Cairo.—Last year I communicated to the *Folk-Lore Journal* some Cairene stories which had been told me by my servant, Mustafa 'Ali, and promised that I would collect some more. During the past winter, accordingly, I obtained some fresh stories from Mustafa; who seems to have an inexhaustible supply of them. Unfortunately, circumstances prevented me from writing down more than one of them, and that the shortest. Such as it is, however, I give it here :—

“Wáhhid yôm es-Sultân kallim l'Âbu-Nowás: Qâlet es-sitt', bil-lêl yitla' minnâh ríhhah. Âbu-Nowás kallim l'es-Sultân: na'mil wáhhid shai híya tekûn tâni illa ríhhah, wenhotteh barra. Bâdên Abu-Nowás gab mäsûra, wërâhh el-askár el'lâzim tigu bil-lêl 'and' es-serayeh betá' 's-Sultân: lamma tisma'u el-rhafir min fôq, lâzim ta'milu teshrifeh. Ubâdên bil-lêl es-Sultân nâim; es-sitt' qâlet: yitla' minnâ ríhhah; úbâdên el-askár 'amal teshrifeh, u's-Sultân qâl: khabar é? El-askár qâl: Abu-Nowás 'amal kideh. Fîs-subh' es-Sultân Kallim lil-wezîr: mûsh a'iz ashûf Abu-Nowás ebeden. El-wezîr qâl lis-Sultân: izakan mûsh a'iz tashûf Abu-Nowas, nirmîh fil-bîr elli fîh el-qird yakûloh. Lamma yígy Abu-Nowás fîs-súbh', el-wezîr kallim l'Âbu-Nowás: es-Sultân yîrmik fil-bîr en-nehardeh. Abu-Nowás kallim bâ'd etnên telâteh sá'ah yígy. Bâdên ráhh ishtéri wáhhid kharûf; ishtéri wáhhid darabúkkah, ishtéri wáhhid zommâra; hatto fil-khorg weráhh 'and' es-Sultân. Bâdên el-wezîr qâl: khabar é, yabu-Nowás? Qalloh: akl, 'alashân en-nâs elli mât makalsh. Abu-Nowás el-akl betá'o wayyâh, úbâdên misikûh 'and' el-bîr. Bâdên Abu-Nowás kallim el-qird yimauwwetsh lamma yenzil fil-bîr shwoyeh-shwoyeh. Ubâdên en-nâs yekallim: tayyib. Lamma nazal fil-bîr shwoyeh-shwoyeh, bâdên howa sháf el-qird fil-bîr. Abu-Nowás yiddîloh hhattet el-lahhm, úbâdên yiddîloh hhattétâh wáhhid wáhhid, wel-qird yígy shab'ân. Ubâdên en-nâs yekallim: khalás! Abu-Nowás nazal fil-bîr wel-qird akaloh. Lákin Abu-Nowás misik el-darabúkkah, wekullimâ el-qird yígy gy'ân Abu-Nowás yiddîloh hhattet el-lahhm. En-nâs yígy yeshûf Abu-Nowás; bâdên yeshûfoh fîz-zétah fil-bîr. Bâdên en-nâs yekallim lis-Sultân: daiman lamma tîrmi wáhhid râgil fil-bîr el-qird yak'loh qawâm; lákin dilwaqti Abu-Nowás beyidrob fi-tablo' wey'zommer fil-bîr: 's-Sultân ráhh 'and' el-bîr wekallim: Abu-Nowás! Abu-Nowás yekallim: a'iz é? Yekallim: ta'âla. Abu-Nowás yekallim: lâ, mûsh a'iz; ana mabsût. Bâdên en-nâs yenazzil hhabl wetalla' Abu-Nowás min el-bîr; wekallim: ana kontë mabsût fil-bîr; 'alashân é tîgy 'andi?”

“One day the Sultan said to Abu-Nowás, ‘My wife has declared that during the night a smell rises from her.’ Abu-Nowás replied to the Sultan: ‘We will contrive a plan by means of which she shall

be again free from the smell, and we will expel it.' So Abu-Nowâs brought a pipe, and went to the soldiers who come during the night to the palace of the Sultan [saying to them] : 'When you hear the watchman above, you must make an uproar.'¹ The next night the Sultan was asleep, when his wife said : 'There's a smell rising from me.' Thereupon the soldiers made an uproar, and the Sultan cried : 'What's the matter?' The soldiers answered : 'Abu-Nowâs is the author of this.' In the morning the Sultan said to the Vizier : 'I never want to see Abu-Nowâs again.' The Vizier said to the Sultan : 'If you don't want to see Abu-Nowâs we will throw him into the well, where the ape will eat him.' When Abu-Nowâs comes in the morning the Vizier said to him : 'The Sultan will throw you into the well to-day.' Abu-Nowâs replied that he would come after two or three hours, so he went and bought a sheep ; he bought a drum, (and) he bought some bagpipes ; he put them into a bag and went to the Sultan's palace. Then the Vizier asked : 'What does this mean, Abu-Nowâs?' He answered : 'It's food, because the dead people have not eaten.' Abu-Nowâs took his food with him, and then took it to the well. Then Abu-Nowâs said that the ape would kill him if he descended slowly into the well. The people said : 'Very good.' While he was being let down slowly into the well, he saw the ape in the well. Abu-Nowâs gives it a piece of the meat, and went on giving it piece by piece until the ape was satiated. Then the people above say : 'All is over ; Abu-Nowâs has been let down into the well, and the ape has eaten him !' But Abu-Nowâs took the drum, and while the ape is still hungry, he gives it a piece of the meat. The people come to see Abu-Nowâs, and, moreover, see him making a noise in the well. So the people say to the Sultan : 'Hitherto when you throw a man into the well the ape always eats him at once, but now Abu-Nowâs is playing on his drum and on the bagpipes in the well.' The Sultan went to the well and cried : 'Abu-Nowâs !' Abu-Nowâs answers : 'What do you want?' He says : 'Come !' Abu-Nowâs replies : 'No ! I don't want (to come) ; I'm quite content (here).' Then the people let down a rope, and lift Abu-Nowâs out of the well. And he said : 'I was quite content in the well: why do you come to me ?''

Is there a reminiscence in this story of Daniel in the lions' den ?

One day I asked Mustafa if he had ever seen an "afrit", or ghost. He told me he had not, but that when he was a lad of fifteen he was

¹ Through the pipe, that is to say, which was supposed to be inserted in the wall of the Sultan's bedroom, and so become a channel of sound. I believe that the relater of the story forgot a portion of it at this point.

a waiter in a family at Helwân, where one evening a bottle of wine was wanted. Accordingly he sent the "marmiton", or scullion, who was a grown-up man, into the cellar for the wine, with a lighted candle. As the scullion did not appear he went to see what had happened, and found the cellar in darkness, with the candle and a broken bottle lying on the ground. Presently he discovered the scullion in the kitchen shivering with terror. The scullion informed him that after entering the cellar he put the candle on the floor, and stooped down in order to get the bottle of wine, when suddenly an 'afrit blew out the candle and grasped both his arms. Nothing would induce him to return to the cellar. "I am a lad", said Mustafa, "and you are a man, but I am not afraid to go there"; and accordingly he went, for, he remarked to me, "as long as you are not afraid, you will never see an 'afrit."

On another occasion Mustafa showed me a small "qarn khartit", or rhinoceros horn, which, he told me, was priceless. Water drunk from a glass or cup on the inside of which it has been rubbed is a sure antidote to all poisons.

In connection with this belief I may mention an incident that once occurred to me when examining the ancient city-wall, which still remains on the northern side of the mounds of Memphis. I had picked up a piece of decaying palm-wood, which had served to bind the wall together, and observed that my example was followed by a boy, who had attached himself to me. I asked him what he was going to do with the wood. He replied that he intended to mix it with "mummy", in order to make of it a potent "medicine". It is curious to find the old belief in the medicinal virtues of "mummy" still lingering on the spot from whence so many mummies were formerly exported to the physicians and druggists of Europe.

An older superstition was brought to my notice just before I left Egypt this winter. "If you buy a dahabiah", I was told, "you must kill a sheep, letting the blood flow on the deck or side of the boat, in order that it may be lucky. Your friends will afterwards have to dine on the sheep."

A. H. SAYCE.

Πυθακεία from the Greek Island of Calymnos.—

Pregnancy.—A pregnant woman is not allowed to step over a grave. People who do not give to pregnant women food for which they have a lect (as it is called) are liable to have styes in their eyes.

Birth, etc.—Women are not allowed to remain in a room alone during the forty days after confinement. They take no bath during this period. The bath taken on the fortieth day, and which purifies, is prepared by boiling certain herbs, laurel, thyme, ἀργαυίδ, and others, and must be as hot as the patient can bear. When the

child's skin is too black the midwife makes an incision in the back of the neck, and draws blood. This is supposed to drain off the bad blood which causes the blackness. When the midwife makes the incision, they say that she *μελίζει τὸ βρέφος*.

Menstruation.—A woman during her periods may not go to the well to draw water, nor cross a running stream, nor enter the sea. Her presence in a boat is said to cause storms.

Marriage.—The house is always the wife's. If it is supposed that other suitors have bewitched the bride and bridegroom, so as to prevent the consummation of the marriage, a knife is placed under the pillow by the female relatives or friends of the bride, but without the knowledge of the bride and bridegroom. If bewitched, they are said to be tied, *δεμένοι*. The knife is supposed to cut the charm (*κόπτει τὸ δέσιμον*).

Grand Nowe, Aberdeen.

W. R. PATON.

A "Devil's Bridge" Legend Exploded.—A correspondent writes : "It may interest many of your readers who have doubtless heard of the famous 'Pont du Diable' in what is now the department of the Pyrénées Orientales, but was formerly the province of Rousillon, to learn that the precise origin and exact date of its construction have at length been discovered. The popular legend about this bridge, which spans a mountain torrent called the Tech, near the small town of Céret, was that it had been built during one night by Satan and his myrmidons, and the fact that the particulars as to its construction had never been found in any of the local archives of course gave additional strength to this legend. But the registrar of a neighbouring town, called Prats de Mollo, close to the Spanish frontier, has just unearthed a manuscript, dated 1321, which relates how the notables of that town 'contributed ten golden crowns of Barcelona towards the building of the bridge at Céret upon condition that the inhabitants of Prats de Mollo were exempted from paying toll'. The toll-gate has long since been done away with, and this, no doubt, was how all trace as to the origin of the 'Devil's Bridge' was lost."—*Pall Mall Gazette*, Feb. 18, 1890.