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Folklore from Essex

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edge of a woman's skirt has become turned up so as to form a kind of pocket, some good fortune, such as a present of a new dress, will come to the owner.

T. E. LONES.

BUBBLING WELLS IN SOMERSET.

On the first three Sundays in May people visited, and perhaps do still, three wells at Taunton. When the water bubbled patients stood in the wells and were cured of "any humours." On these days after twelve o'clock young men used to play "birn ball" in the streets.

J. B. PARTRIDGE.

EPIPHANY AND EASTER OBSERVANCES IN WESTMORELAND.

On the Eve of the Epiphany, at Brough-under-Stainmore, there is an annual procession called "The Carrying of the Holling" or Holy tree (see *Parliamentary Gazette*, 1843, vol. i., p. 297). In this and the neighbouring counties young folk or mummers used to perform a sort of play, and begged for pace eggs. At Kendal children still gather in the Castle Fields for "Jerring of Pace Eggs" on Easter Tuesday. The eggs which were unbroken were hailed as "conquerors." The game of "Grandy Needles" consisted of a line of young men on one side and young women on the other, forming an arch, under which they all passed in succession. This game, which took place on Easter Tuesday, ceased about 1860. (Mr. G. Rushforth, parish clerk, Kendal, in 1906.)

J. B. PARTRIDGE.

FOLKLORE FROM ESSEX.

Watching the Wardstaffe.—At Ongar and Harlow, lands were held by the service of watching the Wardstaffe, which was cut

yearly on Low Sunday, by the Bailiff of the Hundred, from some willow bough growing in Abbotte-Rothing Wood.¹

Inhabitants of the Manor of Loughton had the right of lopping trees for firewood in Epping Forest from St. Martin's Day to St. George's Day. It was said to be due to a grant from Queen Elizabeth, and to be "conditional on their commencing to lop the trees as the clock struck midnight on the preceding night. They were wont to meet for that purpose at Staples Hill, within the Forest, where, after lighting a fire, and celebrating the occasion with draughts of beer, they lopped from twelve o'clock till two o'clock, and then returned to their homes. The branches, according to the custom, could not be faggoted in the Forest, but were made into heaps, six feet high, and were then drawn out of the Forest on sledges. In olden times the first load was drawn out by white horses."

The wood could only be cut for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish. It was done for the last time in 1879.²

J. B. PARTRIDGE.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE LEGENDS.

Legend of the Cleeve Hill Stone.—Between Marl Cleeve and Offenham, on the left bank of the Avon, is a long, and almost straight ridge, which slopes down abruptly to the river and its meadows. Along its brow runs an old (reputedly Roman) road; and where this is crossed by a way leading from the village of Prior's Cleeve to Cleeve Mill, is a prehistoric barrow, upon which is a heavy mass of stone, evidently the base of a fourteenth century wayside cross. The presence of this stone is accounted for by a legend.

Once upon a time, the Devil perched on Meon Hill (in Quinton, Co. Gloucester), and looking towards Evesham, was annoyed by the sight of its Abbey, then in great prosperity. There being a big stone at hand, he kicked it at the Abbey with malicious

¹ See Morant's *History of Essex*, i. 126.

² Eversley, *Commons, Forests, and Footpaths*, 1910, p. 67.