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Correspondence.

A. Lang , Alice B. Gomme , W. Henry Jewitt , A.

Macdonald ^a , Charlotte S. Burne & W. H. D. Rouse

^a Durris School , Aberdeen

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CORRESPONDENCE.

DR. DURKHEIM ON "SOCIAL ORIGINS."

(Vol. xiv., p. 421.)

1. A FULL reply to Dr. Durkheim's review of *Social Origins* would occupy many pages of *Folk-Lore*. It must suffice to say that all Dr. Durkheim's objections to my system are rebutted by anticipation, and all the questions which he asks are answered by anticipation, in *Social Origins* itself. Any one may convince himself of this by reading (as a specimen), in company with the review, *Social Origins*, p. 56, Note 1.

2. Dr. Durkheim remarks (*Folk-Lore*, December, 1903, p. 423), that I object to the theory he has proposed (*L'Année Sociologique*, vol. i., p. 6), namely, to see in the phratries the result of the subdivision of a primary horde, whereas, according to him, they were, as he has just remarked, two groups at first autonomous and distinct. He adds that my method "is indeed exposed to criticism when it consists in rejecting an explanation because it is irreconcilable with a preliminary postulate of one's own. A theory must be discussed on its merits."

3. In this passage Dr. Durkheim appears to confuse his own theory of the origin of "phratries in the coalescence of two primary exogamous totem clans" (a theory which is much akin to my own), with his theory of the origin of the totem "clans" in the phratries. The latter theory I rejected, after criticism, in *Social Origins* (pp. 83, 84). I did not reject it because it clashed with a postulate of my own, and, as I shall show (par. 5, below), Dr. Durkheim has himself proved that his theory of the origin of totem "clans" is inconceivable and impossible,—according to his own system.

4. I did not, therefore, accept that theory, and when I came to Dr. Durkheim's hypothesis as to the origin of the non-totemic "Matrimonial Classes," I found that it asserted the existence of these classes before, on his theory of totem kins, these kins deserted their totem and arbitrarily took new totems.¹ As I had rejected *that* opinion, I did not discuss a theory which involved its acceptance (namely Dr. Durkheim's hypothesis as to the matrimonial classes), but (*Social Origins*, p. 119) I referred the reader to pp. 81-83, where I gave reasons for not accepting Dr. Durkheim's hypothesis. I did not add that Dr. Durkheim had inadvertently declared his own hypothesis as to the origin of the totem kins to be, as it is, impossible.

5. Any student who wishes to see Dr. Durkheim refute his own theory of the origin of the totem kins within the phratries, may read him in *L'Année Sociologique*, volume i., p. 6, p. 52, and in the same periodical, volume v., pp. 110, 111. In the latter passages (i. 52, v. 110, 111) Dr. Durkheim demonstrates that his own theory (as given in volume i., p. 6) is impossible, and even unthinkable. His theory of the origin of the totem kins, in volume i., p. 6, is, that they were swarms or colonies thrown off from "a primary totem clan" (compare, for a fuller statement, volume v., pp. 91, 92), *which changed their totems*. In volume i., pp. 52, 53, and in volume v., pp. 110, 111, he asserts, and demonstrates, that this change was impossible. "*One can no more change one's totem, than one can change one's soul*" (volume v., p. 111). Yet his totem kins (volume i., p. 6) began their career, he says, by changing their totems, and taking new totems. How utterly impossible this performance was, Dr. Durkheim had demonstrated in volume i., p. 52. "The totem is incarnate in every individual member of the clan: he dwells in their blood; he is their blood . . . he is a god present in each individual organism, for all of *him* is in each of *them*, and it is in their blood that this deity dwells."

6. But, in volume i., p. 6, we are told that the members of the original "totem clans" who swarmed off from these communities, deserted their totems. Yet these men were *in* these totems, which they deserted, and these totems were *in* them; were their "gods," their "blood," their "souls," according to Dr. Durkheim (vol. i., p. 52). None the less (vol. i., p. 6) the seceders from the original

¹ *L'Année Sociologique*, vol. i., p. 16.

totem groups chose unto themselves new totems, new gods, new souls, new blood, thus accomplishing what Dr. Durkheim (vol. v., pp. 110, 111) declares to be impossible. And impossible it was if Dr. Durkheim's theory of what a totem then was, be his theory still. The change was possible, however, if the animal names of groups were, as yet, no more than mere names.

A. LANG.

THE CORP CREAGH.

(Vol. xiv., p. 373.)

The following instances of belief in the *Corp Creagh* were narrated by the Rev. Stopford Brooke in a lecture at which I was present at the end of 1901. I wrote to him immediately afterwards asking for particulars, and received the kind reply subjoined:—

“DEAR MADAM,

“I have little more to communicate than I said in the lecture.

“1. When I was a curate in Kensington in 1861 or 1862, I used to visit a girl in consumption who lived in one of the mews. She was a Devon girl, and had come to London on a visit or to service. She was convinced that another girl in Devonshire, who had taken her lover from her as she thought, hated her because he had loved her first, and had made a waxen image of her, into which, and especially into her breast, the girl drove pins every night; ‘and these,’ she said, ‘are killing me. She is a witch; will you send down and have her punished and forbidden? I shall then get well.’ And this she talked of with full conviction every time I saw her. I did not worry the dying girl with contradiction.

“2. A lady told me that, dining with a friend of hers in London (the story was told me about twenty years ago), her friend, after dinner, went to a cupboard in the room, out of which she brought a figure moulded in wax into the likeness of the woman who had seduced her husband from her. And she placed the figure inside

the fender and stirred the fire into greater heat. Then she said, again and again, 'Burn, you white witch! burn!' She was a well-educated person in good middle-class society.

"Very faithfully yours,

"STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

"December 22nd, 1901."

To the above instances, I may add the following note, which I got from an old man at Cambridge some three or four years ago. He told me that when he was a boy his uncle used to prepare pigeons' hearts by drying them before a hot fire and sticking red-hot pins into them while saying a charm. He then sold them to girls or young men who wished to be revenged on a faithless lover or seducer. The old man told me his uncle had to leave Cambridge in consequence of his making these, as the police were after him. He said his uncle had made clay figures also. He never saw these, but he remembered the hearts well.

ALICE B. GOMME.

A WAGER LOST.

(Vol. xiv., p. 413.)

I know what appear to me to be two versions of Mr. Manning's story of the malefactor Price. One, which I heard from my grandfather fifty years ago, came certainly from the neighbourhood of Sheffield. Two cutlers, I believe they were, who had been spending the evening not wisely but too well, just as the witching hour drew nigh were passing the spot where a former boon companion hung in chains. "There hangs poor owd Tom," says one. "I'll bet tha drinks, Sammy," returns the other, "tha durstna go and ask him how he is." "Done!" says No. 1, turning back, while No. 2 slipped behind the wall and ran quietly back to the foot of the gibbet. "Well, Tommy, owd chap, how'rt gettin' on?" says the first one, approaching. "Ay!" replies his comrade from behind the wall. "Aw'm cowl'd, weat, and hungry, lad." At this the inquirer took to his heels and never stopped till he reached his own house, perfectly sobered.

The other variant I could not assign to any particular place. It was told me in the North, but I am bound to say it came from a man who knew "the road" well in coaching days from London to Manchester and Liverpool, and who moreover had spent his youth in Windsor. A company were one night drinking at a wayside inn, when, the conversation turning on a man who was gibbeted near, a bet was made that one of the company dared not go at midnight and offer him a glass of something to keep the cold out. The drink being prepared the man set out with it, bearing in his other hand a chair on which to stand while making his offering, and followed by the rest of the company, while his opponent slipped along behind the wall or hedge, as in the other stories. Climbing on the chair he held up the glass, remarking that he had brought the unfortunate something to warm him. "It's *too* h-o-t," was growled out in sepulchral tones. "Then, d—n yer, blow it!" he rejoined, and won his wager.

Is not this a good sample of how wandering tales get localised? As the poor boy and cat myth has been attached, among us, to Sir Richard Whittington, as Boccaccio localised old Indian tales in the city of Florence, and as Chaucer following assigned Boccaccio's stories to English localities (e.g. "The Reeve's Tale"), so the Queen of Navarre tells, as occurring in her own knowledge, a story in the *Gesta Romanorum* and *Petrus Alfonsus*.

W. HENRY JEWITT.

[The first version of this story is localised also in Shropshire, where it has given birth to a proverbial phrase, "Cold and chilly, like old Bolas" (*Shropshire Folklore*, p. 592).—ED.]

BRAEMAR SAYING.

The folks of Braemar, when annoyed by the noisy play of children, threaten them by shouting, "If you don't keep quiet I'll put ma fit (foot) i' the fire." This is the very vigour of scolding, and usually has the desired effect. Will someone kindly give an explanation?

A. MACDONALD.

Durris School, by Aberdeen.

MIDSUMMER BONFIRES.

(Vol. xii., p. 315.)

I have lit upon what I cannot doubt to be an interesting survival of observing St. John's Eve in the valley of the Aberdeenshire Dee, and as "in Scotland the traces of Midsummer fires are few" (*G. B.* iii., 292), May and November being the general dates of bonfire celebrations there, it seems the more desirable to put it on record.

There died one hundred and fifteen years ago a Mr. Alexander Hogg of London, merchant, leaving among other benefactions to his native parish of Durris, Kincardineshire, ten shillings a year to the herds around the hill of Cairnshee (Fairies' Cairn) for the purpose of making a Midsummer bonfire, in remembrance of the fact that he as a boy herded cattle there. A further sum was left to provide barrels of ale, cheese, and bread for those who assemble to witness the celebration. This curious observance is duly followed every year, and forms one of the attractions of the district. As many as half a dozen musicians resort to the hill, and dancing is kept up till midnight or longer.

Can it be doubted that Mr. Hogg thus gave new life to an old custom which had been known to his boyhood? Let us note some particulars that go to prove its connection with prehistoric times.

The fire must be lit on the twenty-fourth of June just as the last limb of the sun disappears beneath the horizon.

The height on which the fire is lit is the highest eminence in the district from which the beholders come, and thus the sun would be seen at the latest possible moment.

The herds must, according to the conditions of the will, collect the fuel themselves, each bringing as many bundles as possible so that a large fire may result. As there are ten lads on the surrounding farms that now represent the herds of old days, the pile is often of considerable dimensions. Now we find from some of the survivals on the Continent that every one was expected to add his share to the heap of straw or firewood which formed the fire of St. John. Moreover, any one not doing so and omitting to be present at the lighting was doomed to have his barley full of thistles and his oats full of weeds.

The young men are in the habit of pushing each other through the smoke and flames. This may arise from a belief that the person so "passed" would be charmed against disease during the coming year. Some would see in the action an indication of early human sacrifice. I have been at many "herds' fires" (about ten, I think), and have invariably seen it done. It is possible, however, that in this instance it is nothing but a display of animal spirits. But in any case I think there is enough evidence to show that the rite is a relic of pagan times, and that Mr. Hogg, in connecting it with his own name, did but follow, with a difference, the precedent of the early missionaries when they dedicated the Midsummer fires to St. John the Baptist.

A. MACDONALD.

Durris School, by Aberdeen.

FIFTH OF NOVEMBER CUSTOMS.

(Vol. xiv., p. 185, and *ante* p. 1.)

There were I think more Guy Fawkes effigies than usual in London this year; a sign, I fear, of want of work among the casual labourers. One procession, which I saw from my window in Kensington about the middle of the day, deserves notice. The "Guy," an unusually large one, was mounted in a small cart drawn by a pony. It was preceded, first, by a man ringing a bell, and then by two dancers, wearing costumes resembling that of a clown and masks of the common painted kind sold in the shops at this season, who danced up the street in front of the effigy in the real old style, lifting the arms in the air alternately, in time to the motion of the feet. For musicians they had a man playing a shrill long tin whistle or pipe, and another following the cart beating a drum. A man in woman's clothes walked beside the cart, occasionally cutting a clumsy caper, as well as his clinging skirts would allow. The rear of the procession was brought up by the clown, capering and curveting and shaking his money-box.

It was a poor vulgar show, no doubt, but it retained in its debased state several of the principal features of the old morris-

dance. There were the time-honoured figures of the Fool and the Bessy accompanying the dancers; the drum and penny whistle represented the ancient tabor and pipe; while the bell which the Fool formerly wore hung at his back, was now carried in the van to inform the householders of the passing of the show (very possibly the original purpose for which the bell was introduced). As a remarkable specimen of what is daily becoming rarer, genuine London folklore, I think this Guy Fawkes procession is worthy of record.

CHARLOTTE S. BURNE.

5th November, 1903.

MYTH MAKING.

I have found a good example of Myth Making in the *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzalez de Clarijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand*, A.D. 1403-6 (Hakluyt Society, 1859), p. 35. Speaking of the columns of twisted snakes which supported a votive tripod, dedicated at Delphi after Platæa by the Greeks, and removed by Constantine to Constantinople, the writer says:

"There are three copper figures of serpents, they are twisted like a rope, and they have three heads with open mouths. It is said that these figures of serpents were put here on account of an enchantment which was effected. The city used to be infested by many serpents and other evil animals which killed and poisoned man; but an emperor performed an enchantment over these figures, and serpents have never done any harm to the people of the city since that time."

W. H. D. ROUSE.