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CORRESPONDENCE.

"THE BITTER WITHY" BALLAD.

(Vol. xix., p. 190.)

In connection with this ballad a correspondent in Vancouver wrote to me that he remembered a child's sing-song in Edinburgh about "Jolly Jorden." It will be remembered that in "The Bitter Withy" "three jolly jordans" are drowned in following our Lord over a bridge built of the beams of the sun. Hoping to find an Edinburgh version of "The Bitter Withy," I asked in a letter to the *Scotsman* for information. I received the rhymes which follow (*Scotsman*, December 17 and 19, 1908):

Edinburgh, December 15, 1908.

Sir,—As a child I have often joined in singing a rhyme which is probably what Mr. Andrew Lang refers to as "The Jolly Jordens." The words were:

"Johnnie Johnston's ta'en a notion
For to go and sail the sea;
He has left his own true lover
Weeping by the greenwood tree."

This was in Edinburgh sixty years since.—I am, etc.,

"AULD LANG SYNE."

P.S.—The same words, to the same old tune, are still sung by children.

A. L. S.

Edinburgh, December 15, 1908.

Sir,—The children still sing on the street a rhyme as follows:

"Johnnie Johnston's ta'en a notion
For to sail across the sea;
He has left his own true lover
Weepin' 'neath the greenwood tree."

"I will buy thee beads and ear-rings,
I will buy thee diamond stones :
I will buy thee beads and ear-rings,
When thy baby's dead and gone.

"What care I for beads and ear-rings?
What care I for diamond stones?
What care I for beads and ear-rings,
When my baby's dead and gone?"

"Johnnie Johnston" may be a variant of "Jolly Jorden," just as, not long ago, I heard the line—"O where ha'e ye been, Lord Randal, my son?" sung—"O where ha'e ye been, Lord Roberts, my son?"

But I fear Mr. Lang's correspondent has mistaken the words which the children sing.—I am, etc., D. F.

Berwick-upon-Tweed, December 17, 1908.

Sir,—The quaint lines quoted by "D. F." in to-day's *Scotsman* are substantially identical with those sung in their leisure hours by the children in the West of Scotland.

Apart from its subject, which is the old story of the man who has "fyld his faythe," and of the hapless maiden that has proved once more that "love is bonnie, a little time while it is new," the song captures us by the sweet simplicity of its notes, and the perfect rhythm of its movement.

This Johnny Johnston is probably the same individual to whom a reproachful reference is made in another west country rhyme-song, which a summer hailstorm never fails to suggest—

"Rainy, rainy rattle-stanes,
Don't tain on me;
Rain on Johnny Johnstone,
Far across the sea."

I am inclined to think that this fervid imprecation is intended for the perfidious Johnny who promised "beads and ear-rings" and other gewgaws as a salve to a broken heart.

He appears again in his ancient character in the seventeenth century song, "O Johnny Johnston was my Luve." But Nemesis overtakes him in the "tochered lass" for whom he jilted the not too amiable heroine of the song, for, ere the bridal day was at an end, we find that Johnny "sighed and rued his bargain."—I am, etc.,

SCOTUS IN ANGLIA.

P.S.—The following version is well known in Northumberland :

Jacky Johnson took a notion
For to go away to sea,
And he left his dearest Mary
Weeping on the Ballast Quay.

"Do not weep, my dearest Mary,
Take your baby on your knee;
I'll be back to-morrow morning,
And a sailor I shall be.

"I will buy you beads and ear-rings,
I will buy you diamond stones,
I will buy you a horse to ride on,
When your baby's dead and gone."

Mary says she'll wear black ribbons,
Mary says she'll put them on,
Mary says she'll wear black ribbons,
When her baby's dead and gone.

It appears that the "Jolly Jorden" of my Vancouver correspondent must be an accidental variant of "Johnnie Jardine," the Jardines and Johnstons being neighbour clans on the western border. Meanwhile the verses about Johnnie Johnston and his true love appear to be a fragment of an old ballad otherwise unknown to, or forgotten by, me.

I have not Child's collection here, in St. Andrews, but perhaps some reader of *Folk-Lore* is acquainted with the ballad.¹

A correspondent suggests that "Three Jolly Jordens" may be a corruption of "Three Jolly Lordings."

A. LANG.

BURIAL OF SUICIDES AT CROSS-ROADS.

The question of suicide has been elaborately discussed by Dr. Westermarck (*The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, vol. ii., chap. xxxv.). He incidentally considers the question why suicides were buried at cross-roads. He remarks that, from time immemorial, the cross-road "was a favourite place to divest oneself of diseases or other evil influences," and he appears to suggest that the burial of suicides in such places was connected with the cross symbol, "which is regarded as a conductor of the baneful energy emanating from the eye, dispersing it in

¹ The ballad does not appear in Child's *English and Scottish Ballads*, edit. 1882-98.

all quarters of the wind, and thus preventing it from injuring the person or object looked at." He mentions cases in which it was the habit to bury the dead at the cross-roads, and he asks whether this custom may not have given rise to the belief that such places were haunted (vol. ii., p. 256, note 2). I should like to ask for further information as to the custom of burying the dead at such places, and for some further evidence as to the reason why the cross-roads were used for the removal of disease and the like. In India, at any rate, the reason is well known. A man, in the hope of passing on a disease like smallpox, places the exfoliated skin of the patient at the cross-roads, because if he puts it anywhere else, say before the door of a neighbour, he would be accused of special malignity, but, when it is laid at the cross-roads, the charm is aimed at no one in particular. The disease clings to that luckless person who happens to be the first to pass by and touch the charm. Is it possible that suicides were buried at the cross-roads with the same intention? A man might reasonably object to having a dangerous ghost planted upon him, if the corpse of a person dying by violence was buried close to his house. But, when burial was done at the cross-roads, the ghost would attack only those whom it was pleased to select. In short, it would be a matter of *kismet*. I have heard it suggested that the traffic over the head of the suicide kept down the ghost; or that, with a kindly intention, the unhappy wretch was placed under the protection of the cross which in Christian times usually stood at such places. These explanations seem to be hardly adequate; and I should be glad if any one can suggest a better explanation of the practice than that which I have proposed.

W. CROOKE.

THE BURRY-MAN.

(Vol. xix., p. 379.)

I was at Queensferry twelve years ago, on August 8, but by mischance did not see the Burry-man. His costume is

described, by my wife, as much less elaborate than that shown in *Folk-Lore*, vol. xix., Plates viii. and ix., and he had no flowers, unless this be an error of memory. However, he had flowers in the description published by Fyfe in 1851. At the moment I thought "Burry-man," and the burrs, came from a folk etymology of Burghman, and was analogous to "Burlymen," the men who "ride the Burly" at Selkirk Common-riding, that is, ride round the bounds of the town's lands. "Riding the Burly" is, really, riding the Burgh, territorially. But Jamieson does not note this use of Burly and Burlymen.

The use of burry or burrie as an epithet of a dog, meaning "rough," "shaggy," is only a guess of Jamieson's to explain the employment of the term by the old poet Henryson. He gives no other example of this use of the word, and prefers another guess;—that "burry" is *bourreau*, executioner. At Eton, I think a *bureau* is called a "burry," and *bourreau* might as easily become "burry" in old Scots. If so, the nameless Burry-man was once the hangman of Queensferry!

This does not help our quest. It would be desirable to learn why August 9 is the day of the Queensferry fair. Is it a local Saint's day? How old is the fair? Across the Forth, as at Cupar and St. Andrews, fairs fall in August; Miss Dickson might make researches into the dates and origins of these fairs. The Burry-man business is now a *quête*, as was Robin Hood's business in the sixteenth century, and probably earlier. But a *quête*, "asking money from door to door," is not necessarily "a modern form of sacrifice." (Miss Dickson, vol. xix., p. 387.) M. Henri Gaidoz, in *Mémoires*, published a minute inquiry into *quêtes*: I have not the book here, but Miss Dickson might examine it, in search for a connection, if any exists, between sacrifices and *quêtes*. The old Greek *quête* of the Swallow song, corresponding, at the close, almost verbally with the song of the Scottish *quête* of Hogmanay, was not a sacrificial hymn. Is the idea that the Burry-man was the decorated victim? I have no theory on the subject; Robin Hood and Maid Marion, who also had their *quête*, may also represent the victims in a rather remote human sacrifice at May Day.

A. LANG.

On August 12th, 1897, the writer went round with the Burry-man of that year, and notes were made and photographs procured.

The author of the communication in the last number of *Folk-Lore* quotes with some variation an article which appeared in the *Glasgow Herald*, and which was reprinted in the *Scottish Antiquary* of 1900 (vol. xiv., p. 109). The photograph given and description of the man of 1908 correspond in every way with the 1897 representative of the "burgh" as the writer in the *Herald* considered him, a guess at the significance of his name criticised in the *Scottish Antiquary*, doubt being expressed of the ancient existence of the custom. There being no reference to the Burry-man in old documents, the theory of origin here advanced must be regarded as a guess.

The whole history of the town is connected with its convenience as a ferry, and it may be presumed as certain that the "baitward," ("batward" as Wyntoun would have called the "boatkeeper"), must have been an important personage. After the creation of the Ferry as a Royal Burgh by Charles I., if the town's authorities appointed an official, the inquiry for transport by a stranger might be answered by an independent seafarer or by the *burgh(ferry)man*. By those questioned in 1897 it was impressed on me that it was the seafaring portion of the burghers who were responsible for the burry-man. The dress was made by "some old fishermen," and the performer seen had on his hands tattoo marks showing that he was probably a seaman himself. What his age may have been was difficult of diagnosis, as the only other portions of his skin visible were the sides of his nose. The *e* sound in the neighbourhood is just as like *u* as *e*, but one *furryman* of all who might offer their services, would be the *burgh*-man, pronounced burry-man, the man recognised by authority. Here Jamieson's "burry," or "shaggy," comes in as a suggestion to Jack (in the green) going round for his hansel fairing, to prepare himself an "official" dress; and the use made of the *Arctium Bardana*, the burdock.

On referring to Mr. Hutton, whose grandfather had been in communication on this subject with Sir Walter Scott, he gave

the following information regarding the ceremony :—The fishermen on returning from the North Sea fishing, money being plentiful, paraded the town with the Burry-man, but not with any idea of taking coin from anyone. Mr. Hutton admitted that money had been taken for a long time, and we may notice here that the burr-bearer did not himself receive the gratuities, but they were handed to a lad who went with him in character of fiscal. The reason for this arrangement is possibly the same as given by Mr. Hutton for the two supporters of his arms, that he should not knock the burrs off their woollen foundation, apparently a jersey frock, a pair of drawers, and a nightcap with two holes cut in it for him to look through. Mr. Hutton would not say positively that it was necessary to choose a fisherman as Burry-man, but was quite clear that it was a fisherman's ceremony.

Being deaf, I failed to pick up the chant, described as a "shout" in Miss Dickson's paper, by which the householders were summoned to the door, but it was a recognised formula, and, as I understood, repeated annually. Where the previous notice says "the representation of the burgh by the burryman would amount to a whimsical practical *pun*" the *Scottish Antiquary* says, alluding to Malcolm Canmore's supposed erection of the town into a burgh of regality, "the representation of the burgh by the burryman would amount to a whimsical practical *king*." There having been sometimes two Burry-men is at least not antagonistic to the suggestion of the existence of privileged and non-privileged navigators. "The Burry-man starts from the bell stane, that is, the Town Hall," said one of my informants. Was this bell used to summon the ferryman in the more remote past?

There is not the remotest suggestion of "riding the marches," or "walking the bounds" in the modern ceremony. There is a "fisherman's walk" at Cockenzie, further down the Forth, which may commemorate a connection with the Earls-Ferry on the opposite side of the Firth, of which a traditional origin, connected with the escape of Macduff, Earl of Fife (Thane), from Macbeth, is to be found in *Wyntoun's Chronicle*, Bk. vi., chap. 8.

R. C. MACLAGAN.

COPPER ROD CURRENCY OF THE BALEMBA.

(Vol. xix., p. 280.)

On p. 280 of the current volume of *Folk-Lore* the Rev. H. A. Junod mentions the copper rod currency of the Balemba. Two specimens of these *marili* are described and figured by me in *Man* (Aug. 1908, viii., Nos. 65-6), with an additional note by Mr. H. D. Hemsworth.

A. C. HADDON.

THE DEATH CUSTOMS OF THE
ABORIGINES OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, AND THE SPIRITS.

(Vol. xix., p. 388.)

With reference to Mr. N. W. Thomas' article on "The Disposal of the Dead in Australia," may I, as one who has both lived and travelled in Western Australia, be allowed to make a few remarks concerning the death customs of the natives of that part of the Island-Continent.

Fear of the spirits of the dead is a characteristic of the West Australian aborigines, and the reason why they are so careful, in burying, to set the corpse as secure as possible, is to prevent its escape in the form of a ghost, for the spirit is supposed to be very powerful, much more so than the person was when alive.

The natives believe that the spirits of their dead parents and relations appear, and so strong is this superstition of the reappearance of the dead that it is said that, when white people first settled in Western Australia, they were taken to be the spirits of their ancestors who could not keep away from their old hunting grounds.

When a burial takes place, it is very common among them to remove the thumb nail, and tie both thumb and forefinger together crossways, so as to disable the spirit from throwing the spear. The body is also very often tied in the grave in a sitting posture.

There is also a belief among the natives that death comes only from the decay of old age or from assassination by an enemy.

JONATHAN CEREDIG-DAVIES.

DISTRIBUTION OF RACE AND LANGUAGE IN AUSTRALIA.

(Vol. xix., pp. 389-90, 484-5.)

If I understand the ideas of Père Schmidt, as set forth in Mr. Thomas's paper on "The Disposal of the Dead in Australia," "there are linguistic relations between the lower Murray area and the extreme north," while Père Schmidt is inclined to regard the northern group (of languages) as "immigrant Papuan" tongues. If so, it must have taken the immigrant Papuans an enormous time to settle on the Lower Murray, and we don't know how many aeons ago they started. In his review of the Report of the Torres Straits Expedition (pp. 484-5) Mr. Thomas mentions an unpublished article of Père Schmidt, in which the learned linguist suggests that Papuan hero-worship has reached South-East Australia, and that the Euahlayi and Kamilaroi All-Father, Baiame, "bears strong traces of such Papuan influence."

Again, speaking of the Arunta (p. 391), Mr. Thomas writes tentatively of their being immigrants from New Guinea, in which case "there can hardly be any question as to their non-primitive character."

All this is very puzzling. I take little keep of linguistic arguments resting on "the dependent genitive." But how, in the name of the Sphinx, can any man be sure that the Papuans were hero-worshippers and non-primitive, when they set forth on their astonishing march from the north coast to the Lower Murray? Even if they did make this march, how can we tell whether they were in the rather advanced state of the Papuans of to-day or not? But suppose, what is highly improbable, that they were, why did they establish hero-worship on the Lower Murray, and

not in the north, where they are said to have brought their language? Why are the Arunta not hero-worshippers, if they are Papuans?

If, on the Lower Leichardt, Baiame "is a culture hero," under a "god"—"named Gooaree," the case is parallel to that of Daramulun, who is a "god" to the Yuins and a bull-roarer bogey to the Wiradjuri,—under Baiame as "god."

It is clear that, even if we grant that Papuans reached the Lower Murray, we cannot possibly know anything about the nature of their beliefs at that period.

A. LANG.

LUCKY HORSE-SHOES.

(Vol. xix., p. 288.)

On Plate V. of *Folk-Lore* for September last the figure of a horse-shoe is given as a motor mascot, and the writers of the article on "Specimens of Modern Mascots, etc., etc.," say that there seems to be a revival in this country at present of the belief in luck.

May I add that in Wales at the present day a horse-shoe appearing in the teacup—that is, tea grounds or leaves forming themselves into a horse-shoe—is considered extremely lucky. I also noticed in Australia a few years ago a large number of horse-shoes hanging on the wall above the door of the front entrance of a Prime Minister's mansion, though the colonies are upon the whole, perhaps, rather free from superstition.

JONATHAN CEREDIG-DAVIES.

"SYMPATHETIC" MAGIC.

I am anxious to collect instances of *modern* survivals of sympathetic, symbolic, or what I may term "homœopathic" magic among civilised peoples, or others whose customs are not easily accessible through the medium of standard works

such as *The Golden Bough*, *Malay Magic*, etc. Any of the following would be acceptable:—

a. Examples of sympathetic power gained over another by possession of a hair or a strip of clothing, or of vicarious infliction such as by injuring a footstep or a shadow.

b. Examples of symbolic gifts. The prehistoric man who buried his fellow buried with him bowls of food and flint weapons which were obviously by a magic transition to be of service to him in the spirit world. Objects are sometimes left on graves to-day by churchgoing people with some dim survival of the old intention.

c. Examples of "like curing like," as in the phrases "take a hair of the dog that bit you," "the eagle slain by an arrow feathered from an eagle's wing," "to whistle for the wind," etc. In the Dublin Museum is a jewelled object like a caterpillar, once used to touch cattle afflicted with murrain supposed to be caused by a similar creature.

d. Examples of children's "make-believe," resembling any of these magical rites. If I saw a small girl of her own accord using pictures of any objects in a game with her dolls in place of the objects themselves, I should be inclined to think that we had here the germ-origin of this magic. If I saw her voluntarily draw a picture of her governess with whom she was angry, and beat or harm it, expressing a wish that her enemy might be so harmed, I should be almost sure of it. But I have never seen anything so definite.

I shall be grateful for any items which your readers are good enough to send me, either through the pages of *Folk-Lore*, or privately to my address.

W. HANNA (Colonel).

United Service Club,
London, S.W.