Correspondence

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CORRESPONDENCE.

EXHIBITION OF ITALIAN ETHNOGRAPHY AT ROME IN 1911.

The attention of students of folklore should be drawn to the project set on foot last year for holding, in the year 1911, at Rome, an exhibition of Italian ethnography. An influential committee has been formed, and has issued a pamphlet describing the aims of the exhibition and containing minute instructions as to the collection of the various objects to be exhibited. When the exhibition closes, it is intended to remove the collection to the permanent Museum of Italian Ethnography at Florence.

The subjects to be illustrated in the exhibition include everything related to the life of the people in the different provinces of the peninsula and the adjacent islands: personal matters like the style of hairdressing, artificial deformations, tattooing, clothing, ornaments, and objects of personal use; dwellings, both permanent and for temporary use, such as for watching the herds or hunting, and granaries and other stores whether above ground or below; furniture, hearths and chimneys, special modes of kindling or maintaining fire, and culinary and other domestic utensils; food and its preparation; agriculture (including vintage), pastoral life, hunting, and fishing, with the amulets and superstitious practices in connection with these ancient occupations as well as the appliances of more material utility; individual and domestic industries, and rustic trade and other transactions of contract regulated by traditional custom; tallies and other mnemonic records of various classes; signals at a distance; means of transport and locomotion; traditional etiquette, hospitality, ceremonial customs, and social relations of the different classes and between employers of various kinds and employed; ritual gifts and payments; survivals, traces,

or records of communal property or the collective organization of labour; popular morality, including brigandage and the vendetta; civic ceremonies and customs when traditional and purely local; domestic ceremonies and customs, prominent among which are those in use on the occasions of marriage, birth, and death, the education and status of children, the government of the family, family festivals and anniversaries, and so forth; nursery rhymes and games of children and adults; popular festivals and dances, including ritual and ceremonial dances; popular art, both graphic and glyptic; folk-music and folk-songs, with the musical instruments of the various localities; the *snatches* of verse which under various names are so characteristic an expression of the mood of the Italian peasant, as well as longer forms of folk-poetry; legends, nursery tales, and other traditional narratives; and religion, superstition, and folk-medicine in all their popular forms, too numerous and too well known to be repeated here.

It will be seen that the programme is ambitious. Nothing has been forgotten. If fully realized,—if only half realized,—it will be the best representation of the life of the folk that any European nation has been able to achieve. The Italian people, with its long and illustrious history, and its comparative seclusion for centuries from the currents of thought that have *changed* the ideals, the aspirations, the very life of some of the more northern nations, offers an incomparable field for such a harvest as is here contemplated. Annexed to the exhibition will be a library containing all sorts of publications relative to the objects exhibited, the customs and beliefs illustrated, and of course the tales, poetry, proverbs, dialects, and other manifestations of Italian folk-life. It is needless to say that much of the work of collection of the traditions (using that term in its widest sense) has already been done. The names of Pitre, De Nino, Finamore, Nigra, De Gubernatis, and others will occur at once to every student. Their books will of course find a place in the library, and appeal is made to the authors of ethnographical, historical, and literary works and works on folklore to enrich this portion of the exhibition with copies of their publications.

The pamphlet which embodies the proposals of the committee is illustrated by figures representing among other things the

similarity of type and ornament in objects made by rustic peasants in Italy and savages in New Guinea and the South Sea Islands, the persistence of the type of rustic lamps through many centuries, though now made of tin instead of terra-cotta, and some very charming statuettes of peasants, showing details of costume. An eloquent address by Sig. Pasquale Villari, delivered in September, 1907, forms an appropriate introduction. The project will have the heartiest good wishes of all British students of folklore.

E. SIDNEY HARTLAND.

BURIAL OF AMPUTATED LIMBS.

(Vol. xi., p. 346; xviii., pp. 32, 216; xix., p. 234.)

In the parish of Washfield, in North Devon, a few miles from Tiverton, John Venner lost his hand in June, 1908, as the result of a gun accident followed by blood-poisoning. The hand was wrapped up and given to a neighbour whose cottage abuts on the churchyard. This man, Snell, buried it that evening in the ground alongside the grave of Venner's uncle, where Venner wishes to be buried, and urgently desired that his hand should be also.

Beauchamp.

D. H. MOUTRAY READ.

Matthew Charlton, the clerk of Humshaugh Church (Northumberland), tells me that about thirty years ago he buried a hand in the churchyard. Sarah Latimer was helping to thrash corn, and her hand was caught and cut off by the machine. Matthew says "The poor thing herself would never have thought of it. Mr. Crawford gave me the hand in a little box, and told me to bury it in the churchyard." The woman is dead now, and is buried with the other Latimers in the churchyard, but not in the same place as where her hand is buried. The farm where the accident happened belonged at that time to Mr. Crawford.

E. B. PITMAN.

THE BURRY-MAN.

(Vol. xix., p. 379; *ante*, p. 89.)

I have come across a parallel, and moreover a Scottish parallel, to the custom Miss Dickson notes at Queensferry. A correspondent of *Notes and Queries* quoted the following from the *Banff Journal* (no date):

"The herring-fishing being very backward, some of the fishermen of Buckie, on Wednesday last, dressed a cooper in a flannel shirt, with burs stuck all over it, and in this condition he was carried in procession through the town in a hand-barrow. This was done to 'bring better luck' to the fishing . . ." *N. and Q.*, vol. xi., p. 142.

I should be inclined to think that the burs were used as a piece of sympathetic magic, importing that the fish may be as numerous as the burs, and may adhere to the nets as the burs adhere to whatever they touch.

CHARLOTTE S. BURNE.

DIFFICULTIES OF A FOLKLORE COLLECTOR.

The collector in search of folk-beliefs and articles connected with them meets with far more difficulties than the collector of old china or other merely material objects. The objections to giving him information arise from a double set of motives, those of the ardent believer who will not expose sacred things to an outsider, and those of the unbeliever who refuses information about what he considers to be degrading superstitions or discreditable survivals. As illustrating this point it may perhaps be worth recording in *Folk-Lore* the following letters which I have received from two Roman Catholic priests, one in Brittany and one in Ireland.

Two or three years ago, one of my friends, while on a visit to Brittany, saw in the market of a certain town an old woman selling, for a few *sous* each, double or cross-shaped crystals of black tourmaline, which were found in the neighbourhood. Upon enquiring, he learnt that these crystals were valued as amulets by the peasants, not only as a protection against lightning, but also as a charm against accidents, and were often put in sacks of corn as

amulets against fairies. Being anxious to obtain specimens of these amulets, I wrote a letter to the *curé* of the town in question, sending him a small sum and asking him to procure for me a few of the objects (which, as I was writing to a *curé*, I described as used for superstitious purposes), and to put the balance in his "poor fund." In reply to my request I received a long and remarkable letter, which I regret to say cannot be given verbatim, as it is, (I hope only temporarily), mislaid, but which an abstract made on its receipt shows to be a very indignant repudiation of my suggestion of superstition, informing me that the crosses were not examples of the amulets or charms I was seeking, but that they were symbols of the Redemption placed in the ground by God, to be found and used by His people for their protection.

The second letter was the only result of a number of letters of enquiry, enclosing stamps for reply, which I sent with a view of ascertaining whether certain old-world appliances still existed in a locality in the West of Ireland. The one enquiry answered was addressed to the parish priest of a certain town, and explained what I wanted, offering to pay the expenses of obtaining the objects and to contribute also to the "poor box." The reply was as follows :

"SIR,

An English officer came here last year in search of a box which some old English woman told him, in a *séance*, was hidden in the grave of an old Irish chieftain, and was said to contain certain proof that a brother officer was the real Earl of ——. This officer was apparently quite sane, and, except that he broke the law by opening graves, was quite harmless. I hope you are not the victim of some similar kink in the mind. At all events the idea that I should institute a search in this district for amulets and charms (superstitions) and tallies and children's dolls is quite on all fours with your superstitious countryman's search in the graves of chieftains for papers that had no existence except in the mind of an old English woman who was either very mad or very "clever."

I would strongly advise you to consult your friends, and see some good doctor. If you follow his advice, all may yet be well with you.

Yours, etc.,

—————."

E. LOVETT.

OPENING WINDOWS, ETC., FOR THE DEAD.

(Vol. xviii., p. 215; vol. xix., pp. 108, 336-7.)

In August, 1908, a woman died at a small farm near Washfield, in North Devon. I passed the house a few minutes after the funeral party had left it, and noticed that, quite contrary to custom, every door and window was wide open. On enquiry I was told that this was very frequently done in the neighbourhood, not for sanitary purposes, but because it is "done everywhere." However, at the next funeral I saw in that parish, not a single door or window was opened.

D. H. MOUTRAY READ.

THE PUZZLE OF ARUNTA LOCAL TOTEM-GROUPS.

(Ante, p. 126.)

I am happy to be able to agree with Mr. N. W. Thomas in thinking that Messrs. Spencer and Gillen and Mr. Strehlow do not differ as to Arunta ideas and customs, but are merely describing "local differences of considerable magnitude," which actually exist in language as well as in belief. Mr. Thomas says, "If we suppose that the personal totem of the Arunta is analogous to the personal totem of other areas in Australia and elsewhere, that the societies" (which work magic for the totems) "have been formed among the Arunta by those who owned the same personal totem, and that these societies have overshadowed the totemism which is hereditary in the female line, we have perhaps the key to much that is mysterious in the totemism of the Arunta." Indeed, among Mr. Strehlow's branch of the Arunta, each man and woman has a hereditary totem, inherited from the mother. In the same way the maternal totem is very highly regarded by several tribes north of the Arunta, who, unlike the Arunta, inherit the *paternal* totem. If we suppose that the Arunta once inherited the totem, as the northern tribes must have done, in the maternal line, then we can see how the rise among them of the doctrine of reincarnation of local totem spirits thrust into the background the maternal totem, which is still inherited by Mr. Strehlow's people, and by them called *altjira* (sacred). It is the combination of the doctrine

that each child is an incarnated pre-existing spiritual entity, with the doctrine of the stone *churinga* as constituting an essential link between persons and their totemic spirits, that produces the social peculiarities of non-hereditary and non-exogamous Arunta totemism. Meanwhile, among Mr. Strehlow's branch of the tribe, the ancient hereditary maternal totem persists, no longer name-giving and no longer connected with exogamy, just as here the All Father survives, but is purely otiose.

As to Mr. Thomas's view about the "personal totems" of the Arunta, *all* their totems in Mr. Spencer's region are "personal." But they are quite unlike the "personal totems" or animal familiars of other areas,—for example, of the Euahlayi,—for these are either *given* by medicine-men or are determined by omens at birth, or by a dream on arriving at manhood, or are selected by each individual. The "personal totems" of Mr. Spencer's Arunta, on the other hand, are automatically determined before birth by the accident of supposed conception in this or that locality haunted by the totemic spirits of Alcheringa folk. This rule, with curious variants described by Mr. Strehlow, also exists in his region, and, as in Mr. Spencer's region, is influenced by the unique *churinga* belief of Central Australia. That belief, of course, is very remote from the primitive. According to the suggestion of Mr. Thomas, men who found that they accidentally possessed the same "personal totem" drew together into the societies of each totem who work magic for their own plant or animal. Now this would explain what is otherwise mysterious, the fact that each locality, in Mr. Spencer's region, is inhabited by persons mainly of one totem. They would flock together for their purposes of working *Intichiuma*. These totemic local aggregates cannot otherwise be explained. With male descent of the totem, each locality is necessarily possessed by persons mainly of the same totem. But the Arunta have local totem groups, though they have not male descent of the totem. How this comes to pass Messrs. Spencer and Gillen do not explain. As the totems are distributed by sheer chance, there ought to be as many various totems in each local group as if female descent of the totem were the rule. Messrs. Spencer and Gillen, meanwhile, give examples of *families*,—mother, husband, children,—in each

of which the members are of four or five different totems. As this is the case, how can local totemism prevail? In ten families in a given region there might be people of at least twenty different totems. Are we to suppose that sires of one totem choose to flock together, for purposes of working magic, and that their totem is the local totem, while those of their wives and children are negligible? We are not told by Mr. Spencer that all this occurs, but, if it does not, how have the Arunta managed to possess local totem groups?

I am not sure that the difficulty of accounting for the existence of local totem groups among a people whose totems come by accident has been remarked upon. The fact has always puzzled me, for how can there be a local wild cat or emu group in a district of which the inhabitants are necessarily of many different totems? If we can suppose that several adult men of the wild cat or emu totem have congregated in the locality as a magic-working society, the problem is solved,—but where is the evidence for this intentional combination? Perhaps I have overlooked some other solution, and I merely draw attention to the difficulty which the situation presents.

A. LANG.

SCOTTISH AMULETS.

(Vol. xix., p. 288.)

As regards present-day survival of amulets for protection against diseases, I may note that I still find them in use, but not commonly. Red silk round the wrist for rheumatism I have seen in Fife,—(although the wearer was a "gangrel" and perhaps had Irish blood in his veins),—and in Aberdeenshire of old days red worsted would be tied round a child's wrist to keep away the "witches." The chief thing, however, for the latter purpose was the little heart-shaped silver "witch-brooch." It was pinned to the child's underclothing at its first dressing. The shape was probably derived from its being originally the mounting of an "elf shot" or "fairy dart," *i.e.* flint arrow head. An old man in Kincardineshire some thirty

years ago had such a "fairy dart," which he kept as a safeguard against warlocks and witches. It would lose all efficacy if allowed to touch the ground, and in showing it he always held his hands below those of the person looking at it, in great anxiety lest it should fall.

The use of sulphur as an amulet for cramp is common in Fife and Aberdeenshire. In the former county I have seen it often as a "sulphur band," *i.e.* a piece of rock sulphur sewn into the garter and worn round the leg. I have seen a piece tied in the armpit, while a piece of it under the pillow would be expected to keep a whole family from the affliction. A homœopathic chemist in Edinburgh had, some years ago, sulphur balls which he sold for cramp.

D. RORIE, M.D.

"SYMPATHETIC" MAGIC.

(*Ante*, p. 95.)

I do not know whether the two following bits of children's magic are sufficiently to the point to interest Colonel Hanna.

1. My brothers and sister and myself, as children, were fond of going to see the process of brick-making at a neighbouring brick-yard, and used to bring back bits of clay with which we made little sun-dried bricks, pots, and so forth. A lady who lived near was very obnoxious to us because she had the bad luck to time her visits just when we wanted my mother's company, or when we were playing in full view of the windows and were not fit to be seen. She was, moreover, we thought, very ugly. To mark our dislike, we made a little clay figure supposed to represent her, and set it up among the branches of a tree where we kept our sun-dried pottery. We certainly meant to hold her up to ridicule and contempt, but I do not think we expected or wished any harm to happen to her in consequence.

2. We were very fond of "make-believe plays," in which we each represented certain characters whose sayings and doings,—invented as we went on,—were as real to us as if they had been living people. If we got tired of any of these plays, or wished to do away with some character or incident in them, we went through

a formal ceremony of abolition. My eldest brother went into a certain dark corner among the laurels, which no one but himself was ever allowed to enter, and returned with a bit of stick, which he held out to us, and solemnly broke, and we all spat upon the broken ends, exclaiming together, "Abolish, abolish, abolish!" an indefinite number of times. He then took the broken stick back into the corner among the shrubs, and I suppose buried it; but that we never knew for certain. After this ceremony the person or thing, so vividly real before, had no longer any existence for us, and we went on with our play, feeling freed from the encumbrance of what had for some reason become a bore and an oppression.

We had read (or at least I had) the Countess d'Aulnoy's *Forty Merry Tales*, and had heard of witches and of magic, but we certainly devised this ceremony entirely ourselves, and it had been in use for a long time before any one else knew anything about it. Its efficacy was very real to us, and I would not on any account have ventured into that corner among the laurels.

CHARLOTTE S. BURNE.

As an example of the symbolic gifts (*δ*) enquired for by Colonel Hanna, I may note that for many years the grave of a young man, aged 22 or 23, in the Scarborough Cemetery has had placed on it once a week a supply of sweets, generally chocolates, of which, when alive, he was very fond. The sweets were at first taken to the grave by the grandmother and mother together, and, since the death of the grandmother, are still supplied by the mother. The sweets are taken away by children who know the practice.

E. WRIGHT.

THE TESTING OF A SACRIFICIAL VICTIM.

The Greeks, like many other races, tested the suitability of an animal destined for sacrificial slaughter by drenching it with libations, and observing whether its body quivered and trembled, (Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, vol. iv., p. 186). Dr. Frazer

(*Golden Bough*², vol. i., p. 135; *Pausanias*, vol. v., p. 237) has collected many instances of the same custom in other parts of the world. Both these authorities are agreed as to the significance of the omen. Dr. Frazer writes:—"Many peoples expect the victim as well as the priest or prophet to give signs of inspiration by convulsive movements of the body," (*Golden Bough*, vol. i., p. 135). Mr. Farnell says: "The idea was fairly prevalent in Greek ritual that the divinity revealed his presence and acceptance of the rite by entering into the sacrificial victim and inspiring its movements; the quivering, naturally due to the cold water, was put down to the divine afflatus." I wish to point out the possibility of another explanation of the omen. Mr. F. C. Cole, in his account of the Tinggian tribe in the Philippine Islands, (*Philippine Journal of Science*, vol. iii., No. 4, Sept. 1908, p. 206), in dealing with birth customs, describes the precautions taken to guard the infant from evil spirits. "About the time a birth is expected, two or three mediums are summoned. A mat is placed in the middle of the floor, and the spirit offerings are placed upon it. Near the door a pig is tied, and over this the mediums make *deam* [? some sort of hocus-pocus]. When they have finished, one of them pours water in the pig's ear, 'so that as it shakes the water out, so may the evil spirits be thrown from the room.'" I assume that in the words last quoted he gives the explanation furnished by the mediums. The test thus becomes a sort of mimetic magic, the shaking of the animal implying that it has freed itself from taboo or spirit influence, and has thus become an acceptable victim. Whether this explanation covers all the cases collected by Dr. Frazer I am unable to say, but the theory in vogue in the Philippine Islands is at any rate suggestive.

W. CROOKE.