



Correspondence

T. Fairman Ordish , Sidney O. Addy , Charlotte S. Burne , William Crooke ,
Walter Skeat , C. G. Seligmann & John Roscoe

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CORRESPONDENCE.

THE MUMMING-PLAY AND OTHER VESTIGES OF FOLK-DRAMA IN THE BRITISH ISLES.

THE Council of the Folk-Lore Society have decided that it is desirable to bring together the scattered material bearing on this subject without further delay, and I have undertaken to edit the collection, which will form one of the issues of the Society. Members who have collected notes and versions are invited to send them either to the Secretary or to me direct, and they may rest assured that their contributions will receive careful attention, and in every case will be suitably acknowledged in the work which is now in active preparation.

Contributors will oblige by taking note of the great importance of locality, action, and dress in these traditions. Of mere versions of the words of the mumming-play we already possess a considerable number; but no version which includes a note of the place where collected, or anything descriptive of the action of the piece, or of the dress of the players, will be either superfluous or valueless. Another point of great importance is the date of collection. The earlier the date the greater the value of the record. If careful inquiry be made by the collector, it may be found that there exists an old MS., or possibly a printed copy, from which the current version has been adapted. Transcripts of both should be obtained, but the old copy is the most important; and a consultation with the most ancient inhabitants of the place may result in valuable descriptive notes.

Lastly, pictorial illustration. Local magazines may contain illustrations, and these will mostly refer to bygone observances of our old dramatic customs, and will be very useful. But for current purposes the camera is a valuable ally. Let the time

chosen for exposure be some point of action or grouping of characters; photographs of detail can be taken afterwards. In the absence of a camera, I have known a quick-sketching pencil, with notes for subsequent completion of the picture or pictures, to achieve an excellent pictorial record.

T. FAIRMAN ORDISH.

H.M. Patent Office,
Southampton Buildings, London.

THE COLLECTION OF FOLKLORE.

(*Supra*, p. 226.)

I cannot help expressing my surprise at the little attention which is paid to the collection of the folklore of our own country. It appears to be assumed by everybody that there is nothing to collect. Mr. Craigie writes to that effect in his admirable paper on the Danish collector, Kristensen.¹ My experience is entirely opposed to this view. It is not the want of material, but the want of collectors that we have to contend with. It is so much easier, and so much pleasanter, to theorise than to collect! I felt at Castleton last summer that I was merely on the fringe of a great subject, and that with more time and opportunities I might have done much. I believe that ballads, even in a fragmentary form, are rare. Folktales are much commoner, but as a rule very much worn down. That is probably owing to the spread of popular education, and to the diffusion of cheap newspapers. But when you come to the customs and beliefs which form the stock-in-trade, as it were, of the collector, the material is yet abundant. For instance, there is a great variety of Christmas mumming-customs which nobody has ever attended to.² I am trying to do something in the way of collecting them myself, but I feel that it is a big undertaking for one man. To do it as it ought to be done, I should have to go into a hundred villages, and write down all that the mummers do and say. But this kind of work, even when imperfect, seems to me to be more useful, and more likely

¹ *Folk-Lore*, ix., 194.

² [But see preceding Letter.—ED.]

to advance the cause of science, than printing extracts from county histories and guide-books.

I rather doubt whether anybody can be taught how to collect. Obviously a man must not go round in a carriage and pair, and give himself airs. The collector should not discuss the subject, if he can help it, with an absolute stranger, unless he happens to hear that the stranger is interested in the subject of custom and antiquities. Many people in quite humble life, who live in villages, are interested in these things, especially the old, who love to talk of the things done in their childhood. If a man is determined to get the information, he can overcome all difficulties by perseverance. He must not go about in the expectation that the information will come to him. The collector is in the position of a man who is about to get up evidence in a pedigree case. If in such a matter he expects the plums to fall into his mouth, he will be very much mistaken. His conversation must lead up to the subject on which he desires information, and he should not begin by asking direct questions. You can begin by talking about the weather, and make the conversation lead up to anything you like. But in order to lead the conversation in the right direction, the collector must know what he wants ; in other words, he must know what evidence is worthless, and what is valuable. At the same time he should write down everything that is likely to be of the least use.

Perhaps it need hardly be said that the collector should try to get on easy and familiar terms with his informants. He should go in his oldest and plainest suit. If the informant keeps a shop, he should deal with that shop. He should give toys and little presents to the children. He should interest himself in the lives of his informants, talk as they talk, and try to think as they think. That may be rather difficult at first, but the student of folklore should be acquainted with old-fashioned ways of thinking. He should know how to project himself into habits of thought to which he is strange himself. In doing this he need not be a humbug. He need not pretend to believe, but he must show sympathy with his informants, and must not laugh at them. If they see that he is genuinely interested in old beliefs and practices, they will not be slow in the end to tell him what they know.

I always use a small note-book myself and write everything down in pencil. But I do not begin to write until I have obtained leave to do so, and until I have obtained some little acquaintance

with my informant. We must first of all get on terms of easy conversation. It is much better not to press questions, but to pause and wait for answers, as the best things are generally volunteered. A good deal depends on the humour in which the collector happens to be for the time being. If he finds that he is not able to smile, joke, and make himself agreeable, he will not make much progress. The thing must be done easily, naturally, and without importunity.

I think it is impossible to lay down any rule as to what class of people best preserve folklore. The people who preserve it worst are the voluble busybodies who think they have read something and know something. I should say that the people who seldom or never read know most. It is a good thing to employ a maid-servant whom one can trust to make inquiries about beliefs and magical charms, as those are the matters on which people are most reticent. What she reports can then be written down and afterwards verified. I find that people are much more ready to talk to one of their own class, for the educated can never be quite in touch with the uneducated.

In writing a thing down it is best to use the very words and dialect, if possible, of the narrator, and one should try to avoid translating into conventional or literary form.

The whole art consists in perseverance, and setting people at their ease. These are things which cannot be taught. I have sometimes failed in setting people at their ease, because I have been in too great a hurry. In small country villages people are never in a hurry, and the habits of precision and of getting at once to the root of things, which are practised in taking evidence in courts of justice, would be out of place in dealing with such a tender plant as folklore.

I have sometimes made presents of books dealing with folklore to show people that I am in earnest, and that what they are going to tell me is by no means a matter for ridicule, but a subject for serious inquiry. I have got some of my best things in that way. The book reminds people of other things which they cannot think of all at once.

SIDNEY O. ADDY.

My own (purely English) experience of collecting leads me to draw a great distinction between the collection of the different

kinds of folklore. Folktales in England are few, except in the form of anecdotes (generally told as true), in which shape I confess they do not greatly attract me, and I cannot therefore say much about collecting them. But localised legends are plentiful, and quite easy to collect. How came those mounds and stones on yonder moorland? Why is that hill called Hangman? Why does the figure on that monument rest his feet upon a dog? The rustic has little fear or shyness in answering such questions, courteously put, if time be given him to collect his ideas. Unless some dread of pronouncing the names of supernatural beings restrains him, he is rather proud to show his knowledge of local history, as he deems it. With care in introducing the subject, and with a due show of seriousness, you may get even local ghost-stories without much difficulty. Local customs, again, are matters which may naturally come under the observation of new-comers or temporary sojourners; and old inhabitants, *when once you have established friendly relations with them*, like to talk of these things, to describe the ways of their own youth, and to descant with endless variations on the theme that "times were different *then*," to any sympathetic listener. People who from official position or other reasons cannot easily put themselves on really confidential terms with the villagers, may still do a great deal of good work in these departments; but they should be careful to remember that they are not really "behind the scenes," and should not indulge any instinctive disbelief when some one with better opportunity or greater personal gifts discovers veins of "superstition" of which they are ignorant.

For the region of belief is naturally much more difficult to explore than those of custom and legend. People do not understand the inquirer's object; and they are suspicious, reticent, afraid of being laughed at, in proportion, I might almost say, to the sincerity of their secret belief in "such things," even when they affect to despise them. I have, it is true, read a list of omens to a peasant woman, checking those she knew and adding others from her information (I think she imagined that I was nervously superstitious); and there are persons of the peasant class, like Mr. Manning's Oxford fossil-gatherer, who can be employed to collect such matters. But for the most part "superstitions" have to be gleaned gradually, as years roll on and opportunity incidentally brings them to light. Anything savouring of magic or witch-

craft, especially, is not readily revealed to new acquaintance, nor to anyone not thoroughly trusted. The people have not yet forgotten the days when witchcraft was a crime of which the law took cognizance, and they are very careful how they avow any knowledge of the subject. I once upset a most promising applecart by asking with too eager interest, "And did you really know —?" (a certain reputed witch who was the subject of conversation). My interlocutor "dried up" on the spot. She recollected that there was such a person. She had heard that she *did things*; but *she* never had no dealings with her, in fact she didn't know that she had ever spoken to her in her life! And I found it would be waste of time to continue the conversation.

In like manner, when some years ago "a trained scientific observer"¹ travelled into Somersetshire to inquire into the history of the "Witch's Ladder" found in the loft of an old house there, he found that the very men whose unguarded exclamation at the time of its discovery had given the clue to the nature of the implement, would only say that they had never seen the ladder in use, that they did not know to whom it had belonged, that they had never seen another specimen, nor could they explain how they knew what it was. Probably they would have said that there were no witches in the county of Somerset, and that they had never heard of the subject outside the Bible, had the strange gentleman's inquiries been pushed so far!

As to the credibility of witnesses: if they are annoyed by what seems to them impertinent curiosity ("prying into other folks' business"), or puzzled by their visitor's manner and conscious that they do not comprehend his object, or afraid of exposing themselves to ridicule, of offending an influential neighbour, or in any way getting themselves into trouble with the powers that be, English poor people will feign ignorance, and deny knowledge that they really possess. Otherwise, you may trust their word, negative or affirmative, though not always their accuracy. They will exaggerate their own adventures, the favour expressed to them by their superiors, the number of persons in an assemblage, and so on, but they are not imaginative or ingenious enough to hoax an importunate questioner by inventions, as it seems the Scots of the western islands are capable of doing.

¹ *F. L. J.*, I quote the story, of necessity, from memory only.

Lastly, I want to urge the importance of collecting folklore *historically*. Tough as popular tradition is, it yet undergoes modification from age to age. Every item of folklore, as we see it and know it now, has a "life-history" and a past—usually an unrecorded past. Only in European countries, where present-day evidence can be compared with historical records, can this process of modification now and then be studied, and some light thrown thereby upon that unrecorded past. Only in Europe, and not often there, can we learn what external events, what economic changes, what local personalities, have contributed to shape the folklore of the present day; and thence, reasoning by analogy, form some tentative hypothesis of the probable life-history of the folklore of uncivilised races. This to my mind is one of the strongest arguments for pressing forward with the collection of English folklore. The Society's series of *County Folklore* reprints forms a basis for the collector's inquiries. Present-day notes of (*e.g.*) the Plough Stots and Sword-dancers of Egton Bridge would be rendered doubly useful by comparing them with the performance in 1817, as recorded in Young's *History of Whitby* (Gutch's *County Folklore*, p. 232), and endeavouring to trace the reasons of any changes. If the qualifications of the folklore collector and the local historian cannot be united in one person, let two join in collaboration. Especially should attention be paid to the local history of that most important of all historical centuries for our purpose, the seventeenth. I write strongly, because I feel strongly. History is far too much neglected among us. Even Mr. Addy's otherwise exhaustive monograph on the Castleton 29th of May festival, tells nothing that can throw light on popular opinion in Castleton in 1660 or 1662: and the absence of an historical method of treatment of the ritual of Nemi is to me a regrettable flaw in the majestic fabric of the *Golden Bough* itself.

CHARLOTTE S. BURNE.

My experience in the collection of folklore is almost entirely confined to India.

In the first place, I venture to think that it is necessary to distinguish between the quest of folktales and of folklore pure and simple. By the latter I mean popular beliefs and superstitions. Information on such matters comes usually, I think, not from

direct inquiry, but often in a casual, unexpected way. For instance, some reference to a quaint custom or belief will often occur in the course of a trial in court, and any one interested in such things will do well to keep a notebook at hand in which a point may be noted for future inquiry. But most will be learnt in the course of the annual tour in camp which forms an important part of the life of the Indian civil officer. Walking through the fields attended by the village greybeards, you will often come across a rural shrine containing curious fetishes, images, or offerings, about which any one who knows the people and their language and displays a sympathetic interest in their customs and beliefs, can usually without much difficulty obtain information. It is quite different in the grander shrines, like those of Benares or Mathura, for instance, where the officiants have a much higher idea of their purity and importance, look on all Europeans with more or less suspicion, and are decidedly disinclined to say much about their gods or their worship.

I need hardly say that the best chance of learning anything is to chat quietly with the people in their own villages, without the company of native officials, and particularly under circumstances, shooting for instance, where the gulf that lies between the "Sahib" and the native is temporarily bridged over.

It is fatal to success to lean exclusively on the educated native gentleman or on the higher native official. The former is usually puffed up with a belief in his own importance, despises the rustic and his ways, and considers it a sign of refinement to feign ignorance of "superstitions" which his women-folk may believe, but from which he would fain dissociate himself. The class, again, of educated or semi-educated natives, such as those engaged in the lower grades of official work, are as a rule untrustworthy informants on matters of popular belief. They do not perhaps always desire to deceive; but they are generally so obsequious and anxious to gain the favour of a superior that they try to follow his lead, to say "of course" or "without doubt" in answer to any assertion he makes. This pliability of temper is in Northern India most marked among the Bengâlis, and is less common among manlier races such as the Rājput, Jât, or Sikh.

Inquiries of this kind can seldom be carried on side by side with official work. If the "Sahib" comes into a village to inquire into the assessment of the income tax, for instance, or to fix the

revenue on a piece of alluvial land thrown up by the river, the sight of his note-book puts a sudden check on conversation, and he will observe that any questions he asks are met with coldness or distrust, or will suddenly find himself unable to make himself intelligible in the local dialect.

It is also a great help to know something about the matter beforehand and to bring it out in a casual way. The rustic with the natural suspiciousness of his nature thinks you know a great deal more than you would have him suspect, that if he lies he is very likely to be detected. So he becomes much less shy and reticent. Above all things the searcher after folklore must know the people and their ways; he must speak the village patois well; he must not seem to be too eager for an answer; he must not cross-examine; he must not ostentatiously take notes. He must simply store away in a corner of his mind whatever the people choose to tell him, let the matter rest there, and later on a judicious question will elicit further information. He must seem to have a kindly but not patronising interest in their ways; he must remember that they are not "savages," but people possessing a well-developed form of culture much more ancient than his own; in particular he must never laugh at them, or show that he despises their ways of life and thought.

Collecting folktales is quite another matter. To begin with, the best tellers are women, and in the East women are taboo to the male foreigner. It is impolite to recognise their existence, so much so that it is not etiquette to ask about a visitor's family unless the gentleman of the house be more than a mere acquaintance; even then it is rash to make more than a casual reference to the "house-folk," which include all the female belongings. Hence it is practically impossible for the European officer to approach those who would be best able to assist him. There are very few English ladies who know the women's patois well. The Eurasian lady does of course know it, but she has a hearty contempt for such things as folklore. If we had more ladies as well versed in the native ways and language as Mrs. Steel, no doubt much might be learned from the women, who are the main depositaries of knowledge of this kind.

When I first began to be interested in the collection of folktales I sent for the best professional story-tellers, the *Qissa-khwān*, to use the Hindustani word, who are to be found in every large

town. I have listened to them for hours telling long stories of a type like those of the "Arabian Nights" or the "Bāgh-o-Bahār," about Rājas and Shāhzādīs, fairies and demons. But such tales are seldom worth much. They are of too literary a type; many of them, it is true, are good traditional stories, of which most of the incidents are genuine folklore, but these are worked up again and again in a myriad fresh combinations according to the fancy of the narrator.

Next I turned for assistance to a native Christian clerk in my own office, who, of course, knew the vernacular Hindustani, but little or no English. In selecting such aid as this it is essential that the recorder should know no tales in a literary form; if he does he may make up "Cinderellas" and "Ali Babas" by the yard. This man had the excellent quality of being too great a fool and possessed of too little imagination to render it possible for him to do much harm. He got me a number of tales from an old cook-woman who officiated in the Mission Compound. She was by way of being a Christian, but I fancy that her belief was little more than skin deep. At any rate she had not reached the stage of despising "pagan" beliefs and traditions.

After a while I discovered by sheer accident that one of my own orderlies was a mine of stories. This I learned by casually hearing him holding forth to my other servants one night round the camp fire. When I asked him about tales he was quite ready to help, only venturing to express a mild degree of wonder that a "Sahib" should interest himself in such things. But then "you never know what strange thing a Sahib may do." He of course knew Sahibs and their ways, had no nervousness or shyness, and knew that he could come to no harm by telling any tales he knew. He could neither read nor write, so I had to get a native clerk to sit beside us and take down what he said word for word. My orderly seemed to regard this as a sort of semi-legal process, and it was amusing to see how anxious he was to have his "deposition" read over, and how careful he was to see that the record was drawn up correctly.

Later, again, when I came in contact with the wild hill people of Mirzapur, I found the difficulty of communicating directly with these ignorant and timid tribes almost insurmountable. But I was fortunate enough to find a village accountant who knew their particular kind of Hindi, and who having lived for years among

them had gained their confidence and respect. He collected a number of curious Beast Tales, and soon after unearthed a quaint old blind man, Akbar Shāh Mānjhi, who used to support himself by going about to marriage and other feasts and amusing the people by his tales. This old man came readily to my camp, and was quite pleased to stay there indefinitely so long as the camp sutler had an order to provide him with food. He would sit at my tent-door at night and reel off tales *ad libitum*. The difficulty of understanding his curious patois was successfully overcome, and a large number of tales was taken down in the usual way and translated as opportunity occurred.

If I were asked : "What are the essential qualifications for the work of a collector of folklore?" I would say that, to begin with, you must know more than a little of the people and their ways, you must speak the usually crabbed patois with reasonable facility, you must not show over-anxiety in the quest of information, you must not ask too many questions, you must not carry on the inquiry too long, because the rustic easily gets tired, loses the power of attention, and his memory fails if the session be protracted. You must have infinite patience, and the power of listening to a heap of rubbish before you find anything worth recording. It is better to put down, or pretend to put down, all or most of what you are told if the people are found to be communicative, and leave the task of selection to be done at another time.

As to whether the people are intentionally deceiving you or not.—The villager where his immediate interests are involved is a master-liar, and will do his best to mislead you. But this is not so much the case, I am inclined to believe, where his immediate interests are not involved, and when no special eagerness for information tends to make him suspicious. I doubt whether there is any real test to prove whether he is lying or not. People will tell that a rustic always twitches his toes when he is lying. But this is hardly a universal habit. His general demeanour when under examination will usually be significant to one who knows him well, and who is gifted with the not very common power of minute observation. But it is always safe to assume that he will try to mislead you if he thinks he has anything to gain by deceiving you.

One thing is quite certain, there are many facts which no native will disclose even to a countryman, or even to his own tribesman or dearest friend. He lives in a world of reticence

and mystery, and this though under his normal conditions of social life there are no people who have more "solidarity" between members of the same caste and clan. The "bed-rock" idea in the mind of the rustic is that he is surrounded by demoniacal influences against which he knows no mode of protecting himself except by the use of sundry spells and talismans which he must keep to himself if they are to retain any efficacy. Even his own name, and that of his wife or child, he often does not care to disclose, and he usually has a second name in reserve which no one but his *Guru*, or spiritual adviser, quite another person than his officiant Brahman priest, knows. When you reach a higher grade than that of the mere rustic, the tendency to this kind of reticence is still more clearly marked. This is especially the case with the officiant Brahman and the Jogis, Gusāins, Sannyāsīs, and other mendicant friars whom we class under the general and inaccurate name of Fakir. These people possess all sorts of secret beliefs, spells, and mystical observances, to which no European has ever secured the key, and it is hardly likely that, in our time at least, any Englishman ever will do so.

Lastly, I would say that, as far as Northern India is concerned, we have, I believe, as yet only very superficially examined the upper strata of the vast accumulations of folk-belief current among the people. The number of unrecorded tales, songs and ballads, proverbs and popular beliefs current among the rural population is immense, and will provide ample fields for inquiry for many a long year to come.

WILLIAM CROOKE.

As far as I can judge from my own experience, the art of collecting folklore is very much the same, and needs very much the same qualifications, whether the scene be an English county, a West Indian island, or a Malay or Siamese village.

The first requisite of a collector is that he should be in the highest degree sympathetic, and able instinctively to put himself on the right footing with his informant. Not an *inferior* footing; that would be to make himself despised; on the other hand, the smallest assumption of the inferiority of his informant will lead to certain failure. The second requisite is that he should have some knowledge of strategy, sufficient at least for him to know by instinct when to make a "flank," and when a "frontal," attack.

The "savage idea," as Mary Kingsley used to say, has to be stalked, and that warily, if any real success is to be obtained. The third, and the most important requisite, is that the collector should be ready, as Huxley said, "to sit down humbly before his facts."

The country people as a rule afford the best field for enquiries: the townsfolk are too often irredeemably self-conscious, sophisticated, ignorant, and ashamed of their old customs. Two cardinal rules should never be lost sight of; viz., 1st: If you want to get information, begin by giving it; 2nd: Get rid of all your preconceived ideas.

I will try to exemplify what I mean. You happen to be travelling, and find an old hunter among your guides. Talk to him in an easy friendly manner, kindly but not over-familiar, as an English squire might to his gamekeeper. The Malay hunter has his "trade secrets," like any European gamekeeper. Say, for example, you want to get hold of a charm for harking on hunting-dogs. If you ask a Malay hunter for it straight out, he will say he "knows nothing" about it. So begin with general conversation, and lead up gradually to the subject of hunting. Tell him about European wild animals, the reindeer, the red deer, the roebuck; then enquire about the different kinds of Malay deer, what sort of toils or snares are used for each; the different kinds of dogs, which is the best, and how to get the best work out of a dog. Is there no kind of charm, such as is used elsewhere, which will enable a dog to work better? He, as a good Mohammedan, of course says he doesn't know any charms, which are works of Iblis. (Here bring up your heavy guns.) "Oh, but old What's-his-name, the deer-wizard in the next district, told me to say so-and-so" (here you repeat or improvise a few lines), "and people say he is very clever." This puts him on his mettle. "That's not true, Tuan," he says: "people have told you wrong." By this speech of course he gives his case away, and with a little more of the lightest pressure applied judiciously according to circumstances, out comes the very charm you are in want of.

This illustration is intended of course rather as a sample of method than of matter. But most races require at first some such diplomatic pressure as I have described. You never get two absolutely identical versions of any charm from two different wizards. If you do not know any charm to begin with, get a

medicine-man to treat you for headache or something of the sort, and ask him what charm he employs, for your own future benefit. Check your information by going to the next man interested in the subject in hand ; tell him (indirectly or otherwise), what you have heard, and ask him if that is right. By collating the various versions you may be able to discover a key to the meaning of any doubtful words. The evidence required to establish a fact of folklore is the same in kind as the evidence required to establish a fact in a court of law. In some cases the testimony of a single witness may be taken, but in most, corroboration is required, and the less direct the better.

The people in authority in any district are not those to go to for unbiassed information. Expressions of opinion by a chief or a Raja are usually tinged by political or social considerations. A Raja or Sultan will often think it *infra dig.* to admit that he knows anything about magic ; a peasant has no position to lose, and his information will be ten times more trustworthy. Again, the religious authorities are fairly certain to try to conceal from a stranger the existence of any form of magic or superstition *not countenanced by their professed religion*, even though they may practise it themselves continually.

Country people are more truthful than townfolk, whose evidence is not nearly so worthy of consideration. Ninety per cent. of my best information came from country people. Up-country people in savage lands will not as a rule tell lies, if you only know how to get hold of them and approach them gradually in the way I have tried to indicate above. Undue and undeserved suspicion of their statements will destroy confidence and defeat its own ends by drying up the flow of conversation. I should like, too, to endorse what Mr. Addy says about the importance of being able to laugh and joke with them (not, by the way, *at* them !) to set them at their ease. Again, it must be remembered that if the natives are approached in the wrong way, they will get puzzled, suspicious, frightened, and will take refuge in point-blank denials *to protect themselves*, as they imagine. And a European cannot always tell what mistake he has made. I remember a case in point. I once went up river to a district inhabited by a wild jungle tribe who had been little visited by white men. On going ashore, I visited the chief at his house, and later on began to question him about his tribe, their language, and so on ; and among other things I asked

him what was their name for "wild pig." He gave the Malay word. "Not that," I said: "that is Malay. I want *your* word." He asserted positively that they had no other word, that they always called wild pig by the Malay name (which I knew to be in the last degree unlikely), and I could get nothing more out of him than, "Don't know." A little later on, when going down river again, we met two men of the same village in a "dug-out," and began bargaining with them for a blow-pipe they had. As they were about to leave us after being paid, I said casually, "By the way, what do you call wild pig in your village?" They gave me the word without hesitation, and expressed great surprise at having heard the chief deny its existence. I had probably been too abrupt with the old man, and had made him nervous and suspicious. But anyhow I got that pig's name!

Etiquette forbids any serious subject to be entered upon early in an interview. Often the real object for which it is sought is only disclosed on taking leave, perhaps after an ordeal that has lasted for an hour or more.

Some things, as for instance the words of incantations, are often only disclosed to the initiated. If you want to see a secret ceremony, you must procure a friend at court. In other words, you must make it worth the while of some petty chief or other influential man, to introduce you under his wing as a friend of his own. But in some cases you must be initiated first.

There is hardly any one who, if he would cultivate the necessary "sporting" spirit—would "play cricket," as the saying goes—could not collect *something* in the way of folklore as he goes about the country, say on his holiday excursions. But much better results would be attained, I think, if people would collect more systematically, each devoting himself to one special subject: say for instance, wedding or burial customs, any particular class of legends, local rhymes, or stories—always whatever interests him most. Cover as wide a field as possible, but specialise in a particular subject; thus by degrees you accumulate a real body of valuable information, not an ill-considered mass of scrappy details.

WALTER SKEAT.

From the experience gained in accompanying the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits and New Guinea in 1898, I should say that methods of obtaining information vary

according to the kind of information sought and the people under examination. Usually different methods are necessary in investigations among people with whom you have had previous dealings, and who look upon you as a friend, and people in new villages to whom you are a stranger. In the latter case every effort should be made to pay your first visit in the company of a white man,—by preference a government official or a missionary of the best type,—in whom the villagers have confidence. Under these circumstances a very few minutes will often see you and your hosts on friendlier terms than could be reached by your own unaided efforts in a much longer time.

When seeking information about games, arts, and crafts, etc., among people who know you, I believe the best way is to pay the most approved exponents liberally, saying something to the effect that “different folk do these things differently, and I want to see how your method differs from ours.”

With information bearing on secret beliefs or ceremonies more care is necessary, and usually it is only when the enquirer is well known to his informants that open enquiry is likely to succeed, although even without this, showing a general knowledge of the facts you expect to elicit will often produce useful information. Thus I have found the telling of true or spurious variants of stories or ceremonies under investigation a valuable aid, and this will often be sufficient to start a discussion. If this occurs, and a capable interpreter, who will remember without interrupting, is available, many valuable hints may often be picked up.

In investigating native magic and medicine a medical training is a great advantage. A few doses of some simple laxative or tonic, or a little ointment, distributed about the tribe, will often prove useful, even if the drug produces no very marked effect. A curious feature I noted more than once among Papuans was that it was not necessary for treatment to be successful for the patients to appear pleased and satisfied. Again a little midwifery talk immensely pleases some of the older women, and on one occasion enabled me easily to obtain an account of a female puberty ceremony, the very existence of which had been previously denied.

Natives themselves are usually the best judges of whom to question to elicit particular information, and will often, when friendly terms have been established, volunteer information as to

whom to consult, and even fetch the most likely informants. As a general rule you should begin to talk to the young men first ; through them the older men and women can usually be reached. Of course if a " chief " or some one possessing unusual influence can be successfully approached in the first instance, so much the better.

With few exceptions I have not found natives tell lies when judiciously approached ; though they may sham ignorance from laziness, fatigue, shame, or desire to keep their own counsel. I believe it is rare for them to affect knowledge which they have not, to please an enquirer, and rarer for them to be led into telling lies by leading questions, though when they are partially civilized they become more prone to these vices. The most satisfactory method of testing the truth of any statement is to examine a number of other witnesses independently, using minor details to test the completeness of your original account. When this is impossible, cross-examining the original witness after the interval of a day or two is often useful.

C. G. SELIGMANN.

I herewith send you a brief account of the manner and difficulties of obtaining folklore in Uganda.

There are two chief difficulties to surmount, arising from opposite parties of the people. First, from the Christian converts. They are ashamed of their old beliefs and practices, and are either ignorant, or affect ignorance when questioned. Information gathered from them is scrappy, and must be obtained from general conversation. Sometimes a subject can be introduced in a circle of friends who take it up and talk freely about it. In such a case it is advisable to allow them to talk, and not to feel that they are being questioned. Secondly, those who still adhere to the old customs are most reticent, because they are looked down upon by their more enlightened brethren, who laugh at and ridicule the old customs. Then, again, many of the ceremonies are sacred and secret.

The language presents another difficulty. So many travellers rely upon their interpreters, who as a rule have only a smattering of English, and guess at their master's meaning. They seldom know more than a few words of other languages than their own, so that they neither know how to express the imperfectly-grasped

question of their master to the native, nor to understand the reply the native makes.

The ordinary Muganda is given to lying, exaggerating, and telling what he thinks will please, when speaking on indifferent topics, but he is reticent about his religious practices.

JOHN ROSCOE.

GARLAND DAY AT CASTLETON: ADDENDA.

(Vol. xii., p. 421, and *supra*, p. 91.)

A lady, who desires that her name shall not be mentioned, has lately told me that instead of the lines:—

“ If thou'd been wed as long as me
T' pudding would ha' been wanted,”

what she heard some years ago was:—

“ If thou'd been wed as long as me
Thou wouldn't ha' been so wanton.”

This second version makes sense, for it will be remembered that the morris-dancers at Castleton were old men. If correct, it tends to prove, as may already have been guessed from analogy, that Garland Day at Castleton was formerly a day of licence.

On the 29th of May, 1902, I sent my clerk Frank G. Jacobs to Castleton to get a photograph of the nosegay called “the queen,” which, it will be remembered, is fixed into the top of the garland. Mr. Jacobs did not succeed in doing this: he was told that “there was not much time,” and that the men who had charge of the nosegay were “afraid of its being knocked about and spoilt.” One of Mr. Potter's sons told him that they were now going to call the nosegay “the king,” in honour of King Edward VII. But they were not all agreed about changing the name, and there was a dispute about it.

Mr. Jacobs saw the garland hoisted to the top of the church tower. A great number of visitors were present. It is intended to “hold the garland” next year in a more sumptuous way than it has ever been held before.

S. O. ADDY.