Correspondence

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CORRESPONDENCE.

CORN-MAIDEN IN ARGYLESIRE.

(Vol. vi. p. 148.)

THE Rev. Mr. Campbell, of Kilchrenan, after having shown the paper in vol. vi. to Jane MacInnes or MacCorquodale, residing at Kilchrenan, got the following information as to the Glencoe custom about fifty years ago.

Mrs. MacCorquodale says that the rivalry was for the Maiden, and for the privilege she gave of sending the Cailleach to the next neighbour. The Maiden was represented by the last stalks reaped; the Cailleach by a handful taken at random from the field, perhaps the last of the rig of the reaper last to finish. The Cailleach was not dressed but carried after binding to the neighbour's field. The Maiden was cut in the following manner. All the reapers gathered round her and kept a short distance from her. They then threw their hooks at her. The person successful in cutting her down in this manner was the man whose possession she became.

Mrs. MacCorquodale understood that the man of a township who got the Cailleach finally was supposed to be doomed to poverty for his want of energy. (Galic : *treubhantas*—valour).

A sample of the toast to the Cailleach at the harvest entertainment was as follows: "The Cailleach is with . . . and is now with (me) since I was the last. I drink to her health. Since she assisted me in harvest, it is likely that it is with me she will abide during the winter."

In explaining the above toast Mr. Campbell says that it signifies that the Cailleach is always with agriculturists. She has been with others before and is now with me (the proposer of the toast).

Though I did my best to avoid her I welcome her as my assistant, and am prepared to entertain her during the winter.

Another form of the toast was as follows: "To your health, good wife, who for harvest has come to help us, and if I live I'll try to support you when winter comes."

John MacCorquodale, Kilchrenan, says that at Crianlarich in Strath Fillan, they make a Cailleach of sticks and a turnip, old clothes and a pipe. In this case the effigy passed in succession to seven farms, which he mentioned, and finally settled with an innkeeper. The list suggested that the upper farms stood a bad chance, and perhaps that a prosperous innkeeper could more easily bear up against the reproach and loss (?) of supporting the Cailleach.

Duncan MacIntyre, Kilchrenan, says that in one case where the last field to be reaped was the most fertile land on the farm, the corn first cut in it, which was taken near the edge, was reserved to make a Cailleach, should the owner be so happy as to be able to pass her on to his neighbour. The last blades cut were generally in the middle or best part of the field. These in any event became the Maiden.

Having directed the attention of Miss Kerr, Port Charlotte, Islay, to the practice of having two different bunches on the mainland of Argyle, she informs me that in Islay and Kintyre the last handful is the Cailleach, and they have no Maiden. The same is the custom in Bernara and other parts of the Western Isles, while in Mull the last handful is the Maiden, and they have no Cailleach.

In North Uist the habit still prevails of putting the Cailleach over-night among the standing corn of lazy crofters.

R. C. MACLAGAN.

TOMMY ON THE TUB'S GRAVE.

(Vol. vi. p. 196.)

The children here in the neighbourhood built on the 14th of August the conical heaps mentioned by M. R. C., but not of mud. The outer wall was of cinders (called in the common language clinkers), or, in other instances, of broken brick. The inside was filled with sand and ornamented with branches of greenn, and, where they could be had, with flowers. These little

buildings did not exceed one foot in height. There were a great number, each constructed and owned by different sets of children, the chief of whom, shell in hand, accosted the passers by and said the following verse :

" Please remember the grotto,
It is but once in a year,
Mother is dead, and father's gone to sea,
So will you please remember me."

MARY NIELSEN.

122, Coningham Road, Uxbridge Road, W.

17th September, 1895.

THE GARHWAL.

(Vol. vi. p. 301.)

"RATHER LIKE AN ANGEL."

I feel sure the words will not bear the sense Miss Broadwood gives them. It is just one of those delightful phrases which the Baboo coins by the score. He has a marvellous memory for English idioms, and a marvellous genius for mixing them up. He says : "The house presented a second Babel, or a pretty kettle of fish," and congratulates himself on the eloquence of the expression. If any one will read that most interesting book, *India* in 1983, he will see a perfectly correct representation of Baboo English.

W. H. D. R.

THE LUPERCALIA.

(Vol. vi. p. 280.)

What authority is there for supposing that the women ran about in Nature's garb at the *Lupercalia*? It was the youths, and they wore a goatskin.

W. H. D. R.

GHOSTLY LIGHTS.

(Vol. vi. p. 288.)

After reading Mr. Feilberg's account of the Danish belief in warning lights, published in the September issue of *Folk-Lore*, I was interested to find the same superstition existing in the Rannoch district. A gillie told me of a light which appeared ten years ago during the months of October and November, apparently floating on the loch at night. Two men rowed up to it, but lost sight of it as they approached, though it was still visible from the shore. The natives were much alarmed, and thought it predicted death by drowning. I was also told of two instances of lights appearing in a house previous to a death in the family.

MARY H. DEBENHAM.

Cheshunt Park.

SHOE-THROWING.

(Vol. vi. p. 267.)

I would venture to point out to Mr. Crombie a slight error into which he has fallen in his remarks on the part taken by O'Cahan in the inauguration of O'Neill. The action of the former chief in throwing the shoe cannot possibly have been intended to "mark the superiority of the thrower and symbolise his suzerainty," inasmuch as O'Cahan was subject to O'Neill, paying him tribute and furnishing a contingent to his army. Abundant proof of this statement is to be found in the writings of Moryson and the other historians of the Elizabethan period, both English and Irish. It is evident, therefore, that whatever the meaning of the shoe-throwing was, it did not imply superiority on the part of the thrower.

But, setting this aside, it is interesting to note how prominently the shoe or sandal appears to have figured at the inauguration of an Irish chief. In some clans it was customary to throw the shoe over the chief's head; in others it was placed on his foot; while among the O'Neills both ceremonies were performed, O'Cahan throwing the shoe and O'Hagan putting it on. These offices were always performed by sub-chiefs, whose hereditary right it was.

There was an interesting belief which Spenser has recorded in connection with the inauguration stone on which the chief stood during the ceremony. He says that on some of the stones he has seen "formed and ingraven a foot, which they say was the mesure of their first Captain's foot, whereon hee (the chief-elect) standing, receives an oath to preserve all the ancient former customes of the countrey inviolable . . ." ¹ This seems to point to the existence in ancient Ireland of some belief similar to those described by Mr. Crombie on pp. 278-9 of his most interesting paper. Probably the Irish believed that the new-made chief, by standing in the footprints of the founder of his house, would become endowed with the virtues of his predecessor.

BRYAN J. JONES.

In Mr. Crombie's interesting article he quotes Ben Jonson's lines—

"Would I had Kemp's shoes
To throw after you,"

and his note thereon leaves it evident that he does not see the force and meaning of this quotation. William Kempe, the actor, performed in 1599 the extraordinary feat of dancing a "Morris" from London to Norwich in the space of nine days. He published an account of this entitled, "Kempe's Nine Daies Wonder," in which he tells us that the buskins that he then wore and danced in from London were nailed to the wall of the Guildhall in Norwich. They were no doubt an object of interest, and the fact was so well known that Jonson's reference was obvious.

J. COOKE.

66, Morchampton Road, Dublin.

¹ *View of the State of Ireland*, ed. 1809, p. 11.