Wiltshire Folklore

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LANCASHIRE FOLKLORE.

The Kirkby Moor Circle.—On Kirkby Moor (Kirkby-in-Furness) is a low ringwork of loose earth and stones. "It goes by the name of 'The Kirk,' and a 'venerable inhabitant' (*Archæologia*, liii.) could recollect that it had once borne a peristalith. The natives assert that the spot was traditionally 'a place where their fathers worshipped,' and, as a matter of fact, games used, until recent times, to be held on the spot by the Lord of the Manor at Eastertide" (Allcroft, *Earthworks of England*, 1908, p. 139). The annual Fair held at "Four Acres" or "Acrefield" (Manchester), represented, it is clear, an interference with ancient rights of commonfield agriculture and common pasture (P. and B. Webb, *The Manor and the Borough*, vol. i., p. 107). This Fair was proclaimed by the Manor Court; Acrefield (enclosed, 1708), was common pasture from Fair time till February. At the Fair (which was just outside where St. Ann's Church now stands) "an ancient custom obtained of pelting the first animal driven into the Fair with acorns, and striking it with whips. This has been very conjecturally explained as a survival of an original protest of the inhabitants against the interference with their grazing rights by the establishment of the Fair" (Tate, *Mediæval Manchester*, 1904, p. 45, quoted by Webb, *loc. cit.*).

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WILTSHIRE FOLKLORE.

Thread the Needle.—"Thread the Needle" is played on Shrove Tuesday all down the street at Longbridge Deverell. This is the only day in the year when boys and girls play together.¹

Hill Sliding.—Martinsell Hill, on the top of which is an ancient encampment, formerly used to be the scene of a great fair on Palm Sunday. Boys used to slide down the hill on the jawbones of horses; men from the neighbouring villages used to settle their

¹ For this game, with the words of the songs sung, see Lady Gomme, *Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, vol. ii., p. 228 *et seqq.*

disputes on this day by fighting; oranges were thrown down the slope and lads used to rush headlong after them.² At the present day only a few children stroll about the hill on Palm Sunday.

Boundary Custom.—On Bidcombe Hill “gathering together of people did continue some few years ago on Palm Sunday; it was in some way connected with the maintaining of bounds.”³

Furmety Eating.—On Palm Sunday an annual excursion is, or was until quite recently, made to Bidcome Hill, where there is an excavation, known as Furmety Hole, round which the people used to sit and eat furmety.⁴

Silbury Hill.—“Silbury Hill is to this day thronged every Palm Sunday afternoon by hundreds from Avebury, Kennet, Overton, and the adjoining villages.”⁵

A Sacred Spring.—It was formerly the custom to make merry with cakes, figs, and sugar mixed with water from the Swallow Head, the sacred spring of the district, and the principal source of the river Kennet.⁶

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FOLKLORE FROM DURHAM.

New Year's Day.—In Sunderland every one, however poor, buys a cake for New Year's Day, and the streets are crowded to see the New Year in.

Passion Sunday.—Passion Sunday is known as Carling Sunday, when, in the poorer parts of the town, everyone eats pease pudding, and the children are provided with pea-shooters.⁷

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² Cf. the “Cheese-bowling” at Cooper's Hill, Gloucestershire, *Folk-Lore*, vol. xxiii., p. 351.

³ *Wilts Archaeological Magazine*, March, 1878, vol. vii., p. 290.

⁴ *Notes and Queries*, 5th Ser., vol. v., p. 273.

⁵ *Wilts Archaeological Magazine*, December, 1861, p. 181.

⁶ W. Long, *Abury Illustrated*, 1858, p. 34.

⁷ Cf. J. Bland, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, 1848, vol. i., p. 113 et seqq.