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The Taboo of Iron in Childbirth

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Onofrio. Here a priest was obliged, much against his will, to satisfy the superstitions of the crowd and to celebrate a kind of ceremony to nullify the evil effect of the old woman's witchery. The priest had to extract the forty-three nails one by one, while the people prayed in the church. After this had been done, the lamb's head was taken outside the church and burnt.

The Observer, 15th May, 1921.

THE TABOO OF IRON IN CHILDBIRTH.

With reference to the taboo of iron discussed by Sir James Frazer (*The Golden Bough*, "Taboo and the Perils of the Soul," 225 seqq.) it may be worth recording that my grandmother was not allowed by her midwife to touch knives, scissors, etc. I remember hearing my grandmother say how much annoyed she was, sixty-four years ago, at having all her food cut up for her, and when later she objected, she had to have the handles of the knives and scissors tied up in flannel bags.

Referring to a pregnant woman being prohibited from certain actions for fear of the unborn child being affected by them, I was told by a woman living near here that if she turned the handle of a sewing machine, each turn of the handle would twist the umbilical cord round the child's neck. The same woman told me that when hanging up the washing on the line a charm must be employed to avert a "breech presentation."

M. C. PADDON.

FOLK-TALES FROM THE PANJAB.

The following is one of a collection of folk-tales recorded by Sir Lucas W. King, C.S.I., when he was Deputy Commissioner of the Dera Ghazi Khan District, about thirty years ago :

I.

The Sultana of Ghazni.

A certain Sultan of Ghazni suspected his wife of unfaithfulness and so he determined to watch her. He went out one day