Correspondence.

Alfred Nutt , H. Colley March , N. W. Thomas , A. Lang , A. Nutt , T. W. E. Higgins , W. Percy Merrick , Jessie L. Weston , W. H. D. Rouse , Florence Grove , J. G. Frazer , M. F. Johnston , Alice A. Keary & F. A. Milne

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CORRESPONDENCE.

HISTORY, TRADITION, AND HISTORIC MYTHS.

PROFESSOR RIDGEWAY'S recently published *Early Age of Greece* raises questions the correct answer of which is of much interest to folklorists, and which admit of discussion apart from any special reference to the author's thesis and to the arguments by which he supports it. Stated generally, this thesis is that the present Greek-speaking area has been inhabited as far back as we know, by populations speaking varieties of that form of Aryan designated Greek; that these populations, called Pelasgian in the earliest times to which we have access, developed the civilisation known as Mycenæan, a civilisation which owed little to the older cultures of the Euphrates and Nile Valleys or to the cultures influenced by them; that this civilisation was, in the period 1500-1300 B.C., influenced by the incursions of a tall, fair-haired, blue-eyed race, speaking a variety of Aryan akin to Celtic, and possessing a culture substantially similar to that revealed by the Hallstadt cemeteries, a culture which had for its distinctive sign the use of iron, by which the far ruder invaders were enabled to overcome the more highly civilised Pelasgians, who only used bronze weapons. These invaders, the Achæans of the Homeric poems, adopted the language of the Pelasgians, upon which, however, they imposed phonetic changes, and they ultimately became entirely fused with the earlier populations. The Homeric poems are the work of a Pelasgian court bard, attached to descendants of the invading Achæan chiefs, and the civilisation he describes is that of the Achæan Celts, partly modified by that of the older Pelasgians they had subdued. Historic Greece derives its culture, blood, and speech substantially from the pre-Achæan Pelasgians, but with modifications due to the Achæans.

Professor Ridgeway's arguments are chiefly archæological; with these I have nothing to do. But he also relies largely upon the traditions concerning their origin and early history found among Greek writers from the time of Hesiod (*circa* 800 B.C.) onwards. He practically assumes the substantial value and accuracy of

these traditions ; and his work marks the high water of a period of reaction from the critical scepticism, inaugurated by Niebuhr, which dominated scholarly research throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century. I say "practically *assumes*" because the author makes no attempt to discuss the nature and import of such traditions. The test he applies is, whether they accord with the theories he bases upon archæological, anthropological, and general historic evidence. Is this sufficient?

Let me put a case. If Western Europe had been overwhelmed in the fifteenth century by a Turkish invasion, if the monuments of its culture had been largely destroyed, if the chief representatives of that culture (the priestly and warrior classes) had been driven into holes and corners but not extirpated, if after a lapse of centuries the wave of barbarism had receded, leaving West European culture sadly mutilated, wofully diminished, but still persisting, what account would the intelligent Aztec or New Zealander have found concerning its earliest origins? Alike in the British Isles as in France, in Italy as in the remotest north, he would come across stories of wanderers from the Far East to whom the chieftain classes were proud to trace their descent, and concerning whom the priestly antiquary class had traditions based upon writings which had disappeared, but which were asserted to have been universally accepted as true. Here the eponymous hero-founder would be called Francus, there Brutus, nor could our Aztec *savant* fail to note that traces still remained of national and tribal designations obviously related to the names of these heroes. Assuming that fragments of any historical works of the pre-invasion period were discovered, say fourteenth-century compilations based upon Geoffrey or Fredegarius, or an Icelandic chronicle on the lines of the Prologue to Snorre's Edda, they would definitely confirm what had been recovered from oral tradition.

Now *we* know that the *Troy Saga*, the legend which places a fugitive from Ilium at the outset of some of the chief nations of modern Europe, is destitute of any and every kind of basis, historical, racial, archæological, or linguistic. We know it to be sheer, absolute fiction. Yet for centuries it was regarded as gospel truth ; it was embodied in every national chronicle, in every princely genealogy ; it was relied upon by statesmen and monarchs ; it was accepted by the learned cleric and by the wandering minstrel. The profoundest acquaintance with the facts disclosed by archæological

or anthropological research could furnish our hypothetical Aztec *savant* with no reasons for disregarding traditions so widely spread and supported, apparently, by so many concurrent strands of evidence.

I do not for one moment assert that the Greek traditions are to be placed on the same level as the mediæval fables concerning Brutus and Francus. That would be begging the question which has to be answered. What I do assert is that any scholar who intends to rely upon tradition should as an indispensable preliminary make clear to himself and to his readers what opinion he really holds concerning its nature. Especially when, as is the case with Professor Ridgeway, the tradition is sometimes accepted, sometimes disregarded. He argues strongly for the original, non-derivative character of early Greek (pre-Achæan) civilisation. But most undoubtedly the historic Greek had very strong and very definite traditions to the contrary. If these are to be disregarded as completely as they are by our author, I, for one, should require better warrant for the acceptance of other traditions than their accord with theories based upon archæological evidence. Again, Professor Ridgeway treats the Achæan invasion as a mere episode in the evolution of Greek culture. The Achæans, he tells us, were probably few in number, they do not seem to have brought their women with them to any extent; they merged with comparative rapidity into the conquered population. Large portions of Greece (e.g. Arcadia) remained unaffected by them, their own language died out utterly, their funereal rites and conception of life after death (after finding a record in the Homeric poems) died out also, their influence upon Greek art was transitory and unessential. All this may be true, but it would most assuredly have astounded a contemporary, whether of Hesiod or of Herodotus; *he* would have stoutly protested that it ran counter to all his traditional views, and indeed we, Professor Ridgeway's readers, are left wondering why on earth the Hellenic world should have accepted a set of stories about alien barbarians as an almost sacred record of its most famous past. There is a valid psychological justification for the fabrication and belief in the *Troy Saga* and similar mediæval fictions: namely, the tendency which leads the Mullins family to swallow the ingenious fables of Garter King at Arms concerning that doughty companion of the Conqueror, De Moleyns, from whom he traces their descent; the natural desire, that is, to

believe that one is connected with a person or society of higher standing than oneself. But *ex hypothesi Ridgewayii*, the Achæans were the low-class parvenus.

Professor Ridgeway, I have said, accepts such Greek traditions as fit in with his thesis as being substantially valuable and accurate. I do not mean that he necessarily pledges himself to the actual existence of the heroes or to their sequence. Sometimes he appears to do so, but sometimes he seems to treat the traditions as historic myths. By this I mean that a story is regarded not as the actual record of the adventures of a hero named A or B, but as summing up in concrete form the relations of groups of men represented, for the sake of convenience and picturesqueness, by A and B. Here, I venture to raise a question which I raised nine years ago at the Second International Congress of Folklore: Is there such a thing as historic myth at all? Do men commemorate tribal wanderings, settlements, conquests, subjugations, acquisitions of new forms of culture, or any of the other incidents in the collective life of a people in the form of stories about individual men and women? I do not for one moment deny the possibility of their so doing; all I ask for is evidence of the fact. Obviously this evidence cannot be furnished by any examination of the legendary traditions of bygone peoples, Greeks or Celts, or Teutons, or Aztecs, or even Maoris; it can only be furnished by the examination of the legends of such barbaric peoples as are still living in an oral-traditional mythopœic stage of culture. I ask again, do such peoples, apart from stories about actual men and women and their achievements, yield examples of "historic myth"—of an historic process, that is, involving the fortunes of a collective group translated into the terms of individual lives? I believe in naturalistic myths, that is in natural processes translated into the terms of human life, because I find barbarian and savage races all over the world, not only relating and accepting such myths, but still engaged in their fabrication. I am quite willing to accept historic myths on the same evidence.

To any folklore student eager for a fruitful line of research I would recommend, firstly, a methodical examination of the nature and value of tradition, especially of historic or pseudo-historic tradition; secondly, an endeavour to determine whether "historic myth" is a substantial fact or a mere figment of mythologists.

ALFRED NUTT.

CUSTOMS RELATING TO IRON.

(Vol. x., p. 457. Vol. xi., p. 105.)

THE late Miss Florence Peacock had observed that a nurse sometimes heated the water in which a newly-born child is washed by plunging into it a red-hot poker, and supposed that the virtue of this act resided in the iron. I, who had observed midwives heat water for a like purpose by casting into it red-hot cinders, suggested that these customs were a survival of the use of "pot-boilers," viz. the practice of raising the temperature of water by putting hot stones into it.

I have recently come upon a passage in the Saxon Leechdoms, (Rolls ed., ii. 218-219), which confirms the latter view:—

"**Ʒ**ac hylpð gif mōn
mid ea stanum
onbærnedum, oþpe mid
hatene isene, þa meolúc
geþyrð 7 self drincan."

"Also it helpeth if one
with water-stones¹
fired, or with
heated iron, the milk
turneth and giveth to drink."

¹ Understand such stones as would bear to be heated and plunged in water.—[*Editor's note, op. cit.*]

Here the iron is to be used simply as an alternative to "pot-boilers" for the purpose of heating milk, and not because it possessed any magical virtue. But it affords an illustration of the influence of ferric metallurgy on the early customs of mankind, and makes it probable that the method of tempering iron by heating it and plunging it into water had long before been discovered.

On the other hand the Leechdoms (vol. i., pp. 244-245) furnish a pretty example of the superstitious use of iron; especially when a necessary correction has been made of a mis-writing by the scribe and a corresponding mistake of the editor and translator. "This wort which is named *μανδραγόρας* is large and noble of aspect, and it is beneficial. Thou shalt in this manner take it when thou comest to it. Then thou understandest it by this that at night it seemeth all like a light-vessel (lamp)."

“ þonne þu hyre heaford
 ærest geseo
 þonne beþrit [beprið]
 þu hy þel hraþe
 mid iserne
 þy læs heo þe æt fleo.”

“When thou its head
 first seest
 then inscribe [encircle]
 thou it instantly
 with iron
 lest it flee from thee.”

“Its might is so great and so marvellous that from an unclean man, when he cometh to it, it will instantly flee. So therefore

þu hy beþrit [beprið]   do thou it inscribe [encircle]

as we before said, with iron; and thou shalt so about it dig that thou *touch it not with iron*. But thou shalt carefully dig the earth with an ivory staff (spade).”

This last injunction, that the mandrake must not be touched with iron, shows that the instruction to inscribe it with iron must be erroneous. The change of a single letter, *th* for *t*, *bewriþ* for *bewrit*, makes everything clear. The iron was to be used for surrounding the wort with a magic circle. This is evident from Pliny's account (*Hist. Nat.*, xxv., 13), which relates that persons about to obtain the mandrake first of all draw three circles round it with a sword, “*tribus circulis ante gladio circumscribunt, portea fodiunt ad occasum*,” and afterwards dig it up at sunset.

Here, too, we perhaps reach the origin of the Saxon writer's confusion; he may have taken *circumscribunt* for *inscribunt*.

H. COLLEY MARCH.

THE TRANSITION FROM TOTEMISM TO ANCESTOR WORSHIP.

(*Ante*, p. 36.)

Facts are in ethnology very apt to upset theories. It does not always fall to the lot of the ethnologist to find that a hypothetical stage of development postulated by his theory actually exists. Mr. Hartland is, however, in this happy position. In his Presidential Address he suggested, but without being able to cite any actual case, that from the additional emphasis laid on the clan

name in the case of the chief it would result that he would longest preserve the totem form after death. The following facts seem to supply the missing link in his chain of evidence. The Betsileos and other tribes of Madagascar seem to be, like the Bantu people, emerging from a stage of totemism. It is, or was, universally believed that the souls of members of certain clans passed after death into the bodies of animals. Each person seems to have known beforehand into what animal he would pass, the nobles into a snake, the middle-class into a crocodile, and the lower classes into an eel. It was not, however, the privilege of every noble to occupy a separate snake. The chief of the clan afforded accommodation in his totem-animal to the souls of his nobles, to the women, to the children, &c. (*Les Missions catholiques*, 1880, p. 550.)

The process of transmigration is too long to describe in detail, but an interesting point in connection with the metempsychosis of the lower classes may be noted. The soul passed into the first eel which took a bite at the corpse after it was thrown into the sacred lake.

How far the facts I have quoted may be taken to support Mr. Hartland's theory is of course another question. There may have been an earlier stage, but totemism in South Africa, as we know it at present, is, I submit, a form of ancestor-worship. If I have not misunderstood Mr. Hartland, his initial assumption is that the souls of the clan pass into some species of animal, which is respected on that account. This may not be ancestor-worship pure and simple, but still it *is* ancestor-worship, I submit; and if this is so, does not Mr. Hartland's theory begin where it should have ended? Surely, in tracing the development of ancestor-worship from totemism, we must not assume the belief that the souls of the dead pass into animals which are therefore respected.

If, on the other hand, Mr. Hartland's theory is intended to show how South African ancestor-worship may have lost its totemistic features, it is not clear why we should lay stress on the totem-form being confined to the chief. The germ of ancestor-worship is already present in the respect paid to the animals. When the social side of totemism fell into the background in the manner described by Mr. Hartland, the religious idea would hardly remain unchanged. It may well have happened that the sojourn of the soul in the body of the animal came in process of time to be

regarded as temporary, and for the period of the animal's life only. After the death of the animal the soul reached its final resting-place and received the honours and offerings characteristic of a cult of ancestors. If the social side of totemism had fallen into the background, the intermediate stage might well drop out. Whether this was the case, or whether the dead were believed to return in the form of any animal at will, it does not seem necessary to lay stress on the part played by the authority of the chief. The Madagascar facts show us, as I have said, the stage postulated by Mr. Hartland, but I suggest a different interpretation of them from his. To me they seem rather to point to the way in which totemism may have been transformed into the cult of animals.

N. W. THOMAS.

SPECTRAL LIGHTS.

(*Ante*, p. 105.)

It is not necessary to look abroad for "spectral lights." In the sea loch which severs Appin from Mamore, and between Ballachulish Hotel and Glencoe, the lights abound. There they are seen (by educated Lowlanders, too) on the Isle of St. Mun, an old place of burial, and on the opposite side of the loch, on the road to Callert. When I was at Carnoch House last year, opposite Invercoe, an English friend of mine observed the light closely, and about 10.30 p.m. in late August, the Ballachulish villagers turned out to stare and wonder. The lights moved rapidly down the road to Callert, then climbed the hill side, then went down to the shore of the loch. My friend could form no theory to account for their nature and movements, which are rapid. The country people have various hypotheses, all supernatural. No doubt there is a natural explanation, but, so far, conjecture has been baffled. They are *not* corpse lights, for they are visible to all, not merely to the second-sighted.

The late Dr. Stewart (Nether Lochaber), who lived near Onich, on the further side of the loch, told me that a woman called him out one night to see a bright light on a rock on the shore.

"Phosphorescence from decaying seaweed," said the doctor.

"There will be a corpse there to-morrow," said the woman. And a corpse *was* landed under the rock, from a boat.

The doctor looked for the decaying sea-weed of his explanation. He found none.

The local second-sighted man, a most interesting person, is wont to find the bodies of the drowned by the lights above them. He kindly gave me an account of the beginning of his powers. The whole story was "weird" enough, but I fear this is not folklore, is it?

A. LANG.

MISS WESTON'S "GUINGAMOR."

(*Ante*, p. 116.)

May I point out in reference to Miss Hull's review of Miss Weston's *Guingamor* that, as the title plainly states, the *lais* are "rendered," not "adapted." Miss Weston's rendering is in fact exceedingly close, and represents the twelfth-century French as faithfully as is possible save in an avowed crib.

A. NUTT.

BLACKSMITHS' FESTIVAL.

(*Ante*, p. 217.)

The following appeared in the *Church Times* on November 23rd, 1894, in "Peter Lombard's" notes.

"St. Clement is held to be the patron saint of blacksmiths. . . . Readers of Dickens will remember how Joe Gargery and his assistants hammered away at their forge to the musical accompaniment of 'Old Clem.' A year ago, *apropos* of St. Clement's Day (23rd inst.), a correspondent sent me the following, which he says used to be read, with accompanying song, in some Hampshire villages, *e.g.* Twyford and Hursley, on this day:—

"It came to pass when Solomon, the son of David, had finished the Temple of Jerusalem that he called unto him the

chief architects, the head architects, the head artificers, and cunning workers in silver and gold, in wood and ivory, and in stone, yea, all who had aided in rearing the Temple of the Lord, and he said unto them, 'Sit ye down at my table. I have prepared a feast for all the cunning artificers and chief workers. Stretch forth your hands, therefore, and eat and drink and be merry. Is not the labourer worthy of his hire? Is not the skilful artificer worthy of his honour? Muzzle not the ox that treadeth out the corn.' And when Solomon and the chief workers were seated, and the fatness of the land and the wine and oil thereof were set upon the table, there came one who knocked loudly at the door and thrust himself into the festal chamber. Then Solomon the King was wroth, and the stranger said, 'When men wish to honour me they call me the Son of the Forge, but when they desire to mock me they call me the blacksmith; and seeing that the toil of working in the fire covers me with sweat and smut, the latter name, O King, is not inapt, and in that thy servant desires no better.' 'But,' said Solomon, 'why come ye thus rudely and unbidden to the feast where none but the chief workers of the Temple are invited?' 'Please you, my Lord, I came rudely,' replied the man, 'because thy servants obliged me to force my way, but I came not unbidden. Was it not proclaimed that the chief workmen of the Temple were invited with the King of Israel?' Then he who carved the cherubim said, 'This fellow is no sculptor.' And he who inlaid the roof with pure gold said, 'Neither is he a worker in fine metals.' And he who raised the walls said, 'He is no cutter in stone.' And he who made the roof cried out, 'He is not cunning in cedar wood, neither knoweth he the mystery of knitting strange pieces of timber together.' Then said Solomon, 'What hast thou to say, Son of the Forge, why I should not order thee to be plucked by the beard, scourged by the scourge, and stoned to death with stones?' And when the Son of the Forge heard this, he was in no sort dismayed, but advancing to the table snatched up and swallowed a cup of wine and said, 'O King, live for ever! The chief workers in wood and gold and stone have said I am not of them, and they have said truly. I am their superior. Before they lived I was created. I am their master and they are my servants.' And he turned him round, and said to the chief carver in stone, 'Who made the tools with which you carve?' And he said,

'The blacksmith.' And he said to the chief mason, 'Who made the chisel with which the stones of the temple were squared?' And he said, 'The blacksmith.' And he said to the chief worker in wood, 'Who made the tools with which you felled the trees of Lebanon and made into the pillars and roof of the temple?' And he answered, 'The blacksmith.' 'Enough, enough, good fellow,' said Solomon, 'thou hast proved that I invited thee, and thou art all men's father. Go and wash the smut of the forge from thy face and come and sit at my right hand. The chief of workmen are but men, thou art more.' So it happened that the feast of Solomon and the blacksmiths has been honoured ever since."

T. W. E. HIGGENS.

A Sussex version of the story is given in a paper entitled "Sussex Songs and Music," by Mr. F. E. Sawyer, printed in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, vol. xlii., pp. 306-327 (1886), besides other notes relating to the blacksmiths' festival. Mr. Sawyer prints two or three special toasts that were used at the annual dinner held in honour of "Old Clem."¹ I wonder if anybody has ever made a collection of toasts that were formerly used in connection with trades, &c.

Perhaps the following rhyme, if unrecorded, may be interesting.

" 'Little Billy Shortcoat, can you make a nail?'
 'Yes, master, that I can, as well as any other man.
 Smite, Jack; hit, Tom;
 Blow the bellows, old man.' "²

It was repeated to me by an old farmer, a native of West Sussex, from whom I have recently noted a good many folk-songs.

W. PERCY MERRICK.

¹ See also *Folk-Lore Journal*, ii., p. 321.

² Cf. *F. L. J.*, iv., p. 146, and *Shropshire Folklore*, p. 571.

"THE GOLDEN BOUGH": MOAB OR EDMOM?

(Ante, p. 219.)

In vol. ii., p. 50, of *The Golden Bough*, Mr. Frazer, discussing the supposed Semitic practice of sacrificing the first-born son as substitute for the father, refers to the incident recorded in 2 Kings iii. 27 as a definite instance of such a sacrifice. Some years ago this passage attracted my attention, and, studying it in connection with Amos ii. 1, I came to the conclusion that the interpretation which, on a casual reading of the verse, one would most readily assign to it was not the correct interpretation, *i.e.* it was the son *not* of the King of Moab, but of the King of Edom, who was sacrificed.

The grammatical construction of the passage in Kings admits of the pronoun *his* being applied to either king, while Amos directly states that Moab "burned the bones of the King of Edom into lime." As I understand the passages, the position was this: the King of Edom, Moab's old ally, had taken part against this latter; Moab endeavoured to reach him directly, but failed to do so; he therefore adopted an indirect means of breaking off the alliance with Israel by slaying the King of Edom's son, who by some unexplained means was in his power. The result was exactly what was aimed at, "there was great wrath against Israel" (not, as we might have expected, against Moab), and the siege was raised, *i.e.* the King of Edom saw he had gained nothing by changing sides; the loss of his son was more to him than that of a tribute of sheep to Israel, and he broke off the alliance.

If these two passages are really connected with each other, it follows that the incident is not one which can fairly be quoted in support of Mr. Frazer's argument; yet it is the only definite case of such sacrifice which he produces; otherwise the practice is only a matter of inference.

JESSIE L. WESTON.

THE LUCK OF MYCENÆ.

It may interest readers to quote a curious passage from Accius. In a fragment of his *Atræus*, he speaks of a "golden lamb, the

mainstay of my rule," preserved in the palace, which Thyestes stole away :

Adde huc quod mihi portento cælestum pater
Prodigium misit regni stabilimen mei,
Agnum inter pecudes aurea clarum coma,
Quondam Thyestem clepere aurum ex regia.

W. H. D. ROUSE.

HORSES' HEADS.

(Vol. xi., p. 322.)

I do not know if the following cutting from the *Pembroke County Echo* is worth anything, but I enclose it on the chance.

FLORENCE GROVE.

" *A Strange Discovery at Jordanston.*

"To the Editor of the *County Echo*.

"Sir,—Some time last year a paragraph appeared in your paper to the effect that a horse's head had been found under the flooring of a room at Poyston, near Haverfordwest, and it was suggested—whether by an archæologist or a reporter I do not know—that as Poyston was the birthplace of the late Lieutenant-General Picton, G.C.B., who fell at Waterloo in 1815, that the find was the head of his 'favourite' charger. I very much question this theory myself. In laying down a new floor here last week twenty horses' heads were found. I believe it was customary very many years ago (I may say this house dates back to the Elizabethan era, over 300 years ago) to put horses' head under the flooring to cause an echo in the room. At any rate I do not think anyone would have the temerity to say that Colonel Vaughan, who died here in 1798, caused the heads of twenty 'favourite' chargers to be interred under the flooring of a room—with all due solemnity of course. I have had all the heads put back, not from any fear of a visit from the colonel for disturbing the resting place of his 'favourite' chargers' heads, but to cause an echo, and I have no

doubt that should the flooring be taken up in any very old houses that like discoveries would be made.—I am, &c., H. W. THOMAS.

“Jordanston, *May, 8th, 1901.*”

[The above possesses a melancholy interest as the last communication we shall receive from Miss Florence Grove. But a few days after despatching it, Miss Grove died very suddenly in her rooms at Chelsea, on the 14th June last. The main work of her life lay in philanthropic labours, in connection with the Board of Guardians and otherwise, for the benefit of the poor of Chelsea, where she had lived since her father's death some eight years ago. She only joined the Folk-Lore Society in 1895, but she took up the subject with her accustomed energy, and her work in connection with the Lecture Committee, the idea of which she originated, and of which she was always the leading spirit, soon won for her a place on the Society's Council. She was one of the most regular and business-like attendants at the Council meetings, and the gap she leaves there will be sensibly felt by all who were her fellow-workers in the Society.—ED.]

NEW YEAR CUSTOMS IN HEREFORDSHIRE.

The enclosed cutting from the *Daily Graphic* of 1st January, 1898, has been sent me by a correspondent. The custom described is new to me, and I hope you will give it a place in *Folk-Lore*.

J. G. FRAZER.

“A strange custom still lingers in out-of-the-way country places in Herefordshire. On New Year's Day, very early in the morning, the farm boys go out and cut branches of the blackthorn, which they weave into a kind of globe of thorns. Then a large fire of straw is made in the farmyard, in which the globe of thorns is slightly burnt, while all the inmates of the farm stand, hand in hand, in a circle round the fire, shouting, in a monotonous voice, the words “Old Cider,” prolonging each syllable to its utmost

extent. When the globe of thorns is slightly charred, it is taken indoors and hung up in the kitchen, when it brings good luck for the rest of the year. Old people say that in their youth the practice was general in all country places in Herefordshire, and it was a pretty sight on New Year's morning to see the fires burning all over the neighbourhood. Another custom still in use is, to take a particular kind of cake, and on New Year's morning to bring a cow into the farmyard and place the cake on her head. The cow walks forward, tosses her head, and the cake falls, and the prosperity of the New Year is foretold from the direction of its fall."

[The above passage was alluded to by Miss Mabel Peacock in *Folk-Lore*, x., 489 ("A Crown of Thorns"), referring to the *Anti-quary*, February, 1898, where it is quoted in full, with a reproduction of the cut depicting the "globe." The latter appears to consist of two transverse circles placed perpendicularly, and another placed horizontally across them, like a hollow globe formed of four lines of longitude and the equator. This, with or without the "equator," is a common form of decorative "garland" in the Western Midlands, where it may be seen on festive occasions made in flowers and leaves, and hanging from the cross-staves of maypoles, the centres of triumphal arches, and the ceilings of farm-kitchens.

We are indebted to Miss M. C. Fennell for unearthing the following additional particulars from the *Daily Graphic* of January 8th, 1898. Two other letters appeared on the same date, but need not be reprinted. In one, the cry "Old Cider!" is derived from Osiris!—Ed.]

"Will you allow me to suggest that your correspondent's account of the 'strange custom which still lingers in out-of-the-way places in Herefordshire' scarcely represents the actual facts? In the first place, the blackthorn 'bush' is more like a crown than a globe, and the fire is not made in the farmyard, where it would endanger the buildings, but on the 'headland' of one of the wheatfields; and the bush to be burnt is not a newly-cut one, but an old one which has been hanging in the farm kitchen for the past twelve months, its place being supplied by a new one every year. The bush when well lighted is usually carried across several ridges of newly planted wheat; the number which can be traversed while the bush still remains alight being considered an

omen or forecast of the number of successful (farming) months in the year . . . —E. L. CAVE."

"Bromyard [Herefordshire], 1st January, 1898."

WHITSUNTIDE FATE AND MOCK BURIALS.

As I understand that some interest has been excited by a paragraph on "Whitsuntide Superstitions" which I contributed to the *Daily Chronicle* of the 27th May last, I write to say that the belief that a prayer offered at sunrise on Whitsunday morning cannot fail to be granted, will be found in Arise Evans's *Echo to the Voice from Heaven, or a Narrative of his Life*, 1652, p. 9, quoted in Ellis's *Brand*, i., 283. My authority for the rest of the paragraph is the following passage from the autobiographical reminiscences of Mary Leadbeater, a Quaker lady of Ballitore, county Kildare, 1758-1826 :—

[1821.] "On Whit-Sunday a child was born to Pat Mitchell, a labourer. It is said that the child born on that day is fated to kill or be killed. To avert this doom a little grave was made, the infant laid therein, with clay lightly sprinkled on it and sods supported by twigs covering the whole. Thus was the child buried, and at its resurrection deemed to be freed from the malediction." (*The Leadbeater Papers*, 1862, vol. i., 403.)

M. F. JOHNSTON.

A district visitor in Newton Abbot, Devonshire, on visiting an old man who suffered from rheumatism, found him unusually spry and cheerful. "Oh, yes'm," he said, "I be better, sure. I knew I should be if I took the right remedy, though 'tain't a pleasant one." The lady asked him what the remedy was, and after some pressing he said that he had "made it all right with sexton," and had gone up at night to Woolborough churchyard, and had laid himself down in a new-made grave, "and of course if I did *that*, I knew my rheumatis would be cured, and *so it be*."

This happened two years ago. The only point on which my memory fails me is that I cannot be certain whether anything was said about "the full of the moon," but I think not.

The district visitor told the incident to my sister-in-law, who came back from Newton Abbot and told it to me.

Torquay.

CHRISTABEL COLERIDGE.

I know personally a man, now, I think, between thirty-five and forty years of age, who as a very little child was buried up to the neck in the ground to cure him of small-pox. He was then living in Gloucestershire, where, by his mother's account, this method of medical treatment was frequently resorted to. She did not state with what percentage of fatal results!

Stoke-on-Trent.

ALICE A. KEARY.

[See a Persian instance, *ante* p. 271. Mr. Black gives two examples, *Folk-Medicine*, p. 101.—ED.]

BORDER MARRIAGES.

It may not be generally known how recently Lamberton Toll-bar, Berwickshire, "the Gretna Green of the eastern Borders," (*Denham Tracts*, i., 289), has been resorted to for irregular marriages.

A friend of mine, who lately had to investigate a claim under the Workmen's Compensation Act, on behalf of the widow of a man who had lost his life in an accident in the neighbourhood of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, discovered that the parties had been married at Lamberton Toll; and on pursuing his inquiries upon the spot, he was informed that so lately as the middle of the nineteenth century there were eight or nine "toll priests" who took acknowledgments at the toll, which up to that date operated in Scotch law as valid marriages. As the result of his investigations, however, he was forced to the conclusion that the lady had no legal claim to compensation, as her marriage had been celebrated since the Marriage Act of 1856, and both she and her husband were domiciled in England, and neither of them had been resident in Scotland for twenty-one days previous to the date of the ceremony. The "toll priest" before taking the acknowledgment had inter-

rogated the husband pretty closely as to his domicile, but he appears to have given answers which, if not absolutely untruthful, were at any rate evasive.

F. A. MILNE.

THE POWER OF SPEECH.

(Translation.)

There are in many places wells, springs, chapels, tombs, dolmens, woods, trees, &c., to which the people have resorted from time immemorial to be either cured of, or preserved from, some sickness or infirmity.

The Director of the Institution for Stammerers at Paris would be grateful for detailed information about the rites, ceremonies, and offerings customary at such places as are visited specially for the cure of dumb or stammering children, or of those who are backward in speaking; and, in fact, for any popular traditions relating to the power of speech. Address

M. LE DR. CHERVIN,
Institut des Bègues de Paris,
82, Avenue Victor Hugo, Paris.

[A few examples from Great Britain may be given as specimens. If a woman hears her banns of marriage proclaimed, her children will be deaf-and-dumb (England), *Common*. An aspen leaf under the tongue cures dumbness, *C. Mery Talys*, quoted in Black's *Folk Medicine*, 203. Infant's mouth must touch the earth to ensure well-chosen language (Hebrides), *Folk-Lore*, xi., 445. Deaf-and-dumb fortune-teller infallible (Greenock), *Choice Notes*, p. 247. Legend of Caedmon, in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Legend of True Thomas, in *Border Minstrelsy*, iii., 125. Communications on this interesting subject will gladly be inserted in *Folk-Lore*, but any further references to accessible printed books had better be sent direct to Dr. Chervin.—ED.]