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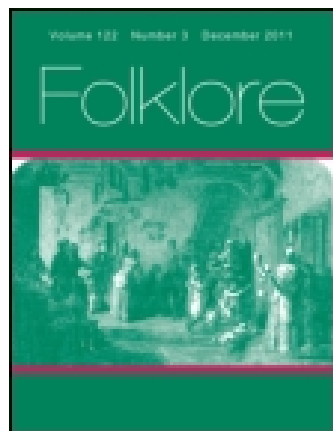
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CORRESPONDENCE.

WHAT 'S IN A NAME?

To the Editor of FOLK-LORE.

SIR,—In his second Avatar (would that these were more frequent amongst us), our President expressed himself as not in full agreement with the conclusion at which I arrived after comparison of what seemed most common and essential to the "Rumpelstiltskin" group of stories.¹ Mr. Lang thinks that these need not have so archaic an origin as that exclusion appears to him to imply, and that instead of holding any barbaric philosophy in them, they may be but the vehicles of the harmless jest that the fairy relies upon having an out-of-the-way name which none is likely to guess.

Now, whether the stories are "archaic" or not seems to me to be of quite secondary importance. Whatever be their age they may hold many old philosophies of things, as do much more serious vehicles than fairy tales to this day. And however fantastic or out-of-the-way the elfish names may be, it invariably happens that when the name is guessed, the elf becomes powerless to work the ill which is threatened if the name is not found out. Therefore, however grotesque the term given to the story, there abides the fact of discomfiture and defeat through discovery of name; and this fact seems to me linked to that world-wide crude philosophy which confuses names and persons, things living and things not living, making them alike instruments of good or of evil, as the case may be.

Since my paper was published, my friend Mr. William Simpson, the well-known artist-traveller, has sent me the

¹ *Folk-Lore Journal*, vol. vii, pp. 135 *seq.*

following interesting confirmation of my view as to the more serious aspect of the subject.

"At p. 160 you refer to the Abyssinian custom of concealing the baptismal name. I presume that the authority from which you derived this did not explain the reason for which it is done.

"I have just been reading Mansfield Parkyn's *Life in Abyssinia*, one of the most delightful books of travel. He was some years in Abyssinia, lived as one of the natives, dressed as they did, wore no shoes, had his hair plaited, and the toilet finished with a pot of butter on the crown of his head. Well, he thus explains why the baptismal name is kept a secret. 'It is a custom in Abyssinia to conceal the real name by which a person is baptised, and to call him only by a sort of nickname, which his mother gives on leaving the church. The baptismal names in Abyssinia are those of saints, such as Son of St. George, Slave of the Virgin, Daughter of Moses, etc. Those given by the mother are generally expressive of maternal vanity regarding the appearance or anticipated merits of her child, such as Gold, Silver, Joy, Sweetness, etc. The reason for the concealment of the Christian name is that *the Bouda cannot act upon a person whose real name he does not know.*' The italics are mine. The Bouda refers to a blacksmith. All of that trade are looked upon in Abyssinia as sorcerers, or a kind of male witches, and are opprobriously called Bouda. They can turn themselves into hyenas and other quadrupeds. The concealing of the name, as here explained, agrees perfectly with your explanation in the 'Philosophy of Rumpelstiltskin'. You also include in your explanation, and have given many illustrations of it, that all seem to gather round the Great Creative Name, the unpronounceable name of God. This is, I should say, the most probable theory. It was this name, whether Yah or Om, that created all things, and became on that account a symbol of Supreme power, and consequent sanctity. The 'Open Sesame' of Ali Baba, and similar words in other

tales, down to the 'Presto' of our modern conjurers, all are survivals of the same ancient idea."

EDWARD CLODD.

FASCINATION AND HYPNOTISM.

To the Editor of FOLK-LORE.

SIR,—In reading M. Tuchmann's exhaustive papers in *Méluſine* on Fascination (the Evil Eye, etc.), an idea has occurred to me, which I have no time to work out, but which may possibly be of use to folk-lore students. Were the old folk so entirely in the wrong in attributing special influence to particular persons? Do we not see the same thing at every hypnotic *séance*? In short, may not the whole subject be summed up in the formula, *La fascination c'est l'hypnotisme*?

ALFRED NUTT.
