



The Cagots

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- From the AUTHOR.—Address of Prof. Augustus R. Grote, Vice-President, Section B, before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at the St. Louis Meeting, August, 1878.
- From the SOCIETY.—Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen. Deel. XL. Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde. D. XXV. Af. 3. Notulen van de Algemeene en Bestuurs-vergaderingen. Deel. 17 Af. 1.
- From the AUTHOR.—Ueber die Höhlenfunde in der Wildscheuer und dem Wildhaus bei Steeten an der Lahn. von Dr. H. Schaaffhausen.
- From the EDITOR.—Correspondenz Blatt. Nos. 9-11, 1879.
- From the SOCIETY.—Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society. Vol. II, No. 1.
- From Messrs. R. CLARKE and Co.—The Mound Builders. By J. P. McLean.
- From the AUTHOR.—Der Steisshaarwirbel (vertex coccygeus), die Steissbeinglaze (glabella coccygea) und das Steissbeingrübchen (foveola coccygea), wahrscheinliche Ueberbleibsel embryonaler Formen, in der Steissbeingegend beim ungeborenen, neugeborenen und erwachsenen Menschen. Von A. Ecker.
- From the AUTHOR.—Kraniologische Untersuchungen. Von Dr. Emil Schmidt in Essen a.d. Ruhr.
- From the SOCIETY.—Bulletin de la Société de Borda à Dax, Part 4, 1879.
- From Prof. F. V. HAYDEN.—Bulletin of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey. Vol. V. Nos. 2 and 3.
- From the AUTHOR.—On the Classification of Languages. By Gustav Oppert, Ph.Dr.

The following paper was read :—

THE CAGOTS. By D. HACK TUKE, M.D., F.R.C.P.

SCATTERED through the French and Spanish provinces, bordering on the Pyrenees, as also in Brittany, certain unfortunate people have attracted attention as a scientific problem since the 16th century, at which period they passed under various names, Cagots, Gahets, Gafets, and Agotacs in France; Agotes or Gafos in Spain; and Cacous in Brittany.

Having last year visited the French border of the Pyrenees and made some inquiry and investigation into the various hypotheses regarding the origin of the Cagots, I shall endeavour to state that which appears to me to be the most probable, glancing first at their history.

The earliest date at which they are mentioned, though under a different term, namely, Christians or Christianos, is 1288. For reasons into which it is the chief object of this paper to inquire, they were shunned and hated. In 1460 the States of Bearn demanded some restrictive legislation of the King of France respecting them. There were consigned to a separate quarter in any town where they lived—a *cagoterie*—and dwelt in wretched huts in the country distinct from the neighbouring village. They entered the church by a side door when they lived, and when they died they were buried apart from others. In church a rail separated them from the rest of the congregation, a receptacle for holy water was reserved for their exclusive use, and the wafer was either not permitted them, or it was placed at the end of a stick. It was not until the time of the French Revolution that their unhappy lot was greatly ameliorated, and even now I have found their descendants regarded with a certain amount of contempt. The side door in the church can still be recognised by the traveller who, like myself, visits the districts to which I have referred; a separate basin for holy water may still be seen, and other indications survive, pointing to the isolation—the ostracism—they laboured under, and the disgust they excited.

If any one desirous of obtaining information about these people were to consult Larousse's "Grand Dictionnaire Universel du Dix-Neuvième Siècle," published in Paris a few years ago, he would find it stated that "we still find in the midst of the Pyrenees, as a remnant of the old stigma which rested on the Cagots, a certain number of families belonging to the race, hitherto regarded as infamous and accursed, who are still living under the stroke of a kind of blight, imposed not by law, but by public opinion, the nature of which seems to be complex. In short, the members of these families are still the subject of a physical degeneration, the result of long ages of oppression and of marriages always contracted among themselves. Goitre is their distinctive mark, and so to speak, the seal of their reprobation; and cretinism is the most frequent result thereof."

Again, two physicians on the Continent, MM. Ozanam and Fabre de Meironnes, have represented cagotism and cretinism as identical; while M. Littré, in 1872, defines the Cagots as "a people of the Pyrenees affected with a kind of cretinism"; and in our own country Drs. Guy and Ferrier, in their "Forensic Medicine," published in 1875, describe the Cagots as "afflicted with extreme bodily deformity and degeneracy, and with deficiency of intellect."

How far these statements are borne out by the facts will be seen as we proceed.

As regards the Cagots being a distinct race, the most prevalent

idea has been that they were originally Goths, the word Cagot being supposed to mean "Dog of a Goth" (*Canis* or *Caas*, dog). Plausible as is this opinion, there appears to be no foundation for it beyond tradition, and the etymology can be replaced, according to M. de Rochas, by one to which I will refer presently, and which certainly seems to me to receive much support from a medical point of view. Assuredly I have been unable to obtain any evidence which marks the Cagots out as a people distinct from the surrounding inhabitants.

As to the assertion that the Cagots are distinguished by *goître*, and that cretinism is their general condition, I have looked in vain for evidences of it, unless, of course, they have been subjected to the same maleficent influences as those are who present these deformities, and many have no doubt suffered in this way. The goitrous and cretinous persons whom I have examined in the valleys of the Pyrenees are absolutely distinct from the Cagots. In short, Cagots and Cretins have been, in a most remarkable manner, completely confounded together, and this, as we have seen, even by continental physicians.

When in the Hautes-Pyrenées, I made from Buguères de Bigorre an excursion to Aste and to Campan, in both of which places there were formerly *cagoteries*. In the former I saw in the church a distinct portion, formerly entered by a separate door, near which was a *bénitier*, all of which are, the curé informed me, regarded by the inhabitants as having been set apart for the Cagots. In the other town, Campan, I found more certain evidence of a *cagoterie*, for at the foot of the mountain, and separated from the town by the river Adour, there remains what is known as the "Quartier des Cagots," in which very shortly before I visited it, the last of the Cagots in this district died. She was a woman, and had attained the age of 92. The bridge over which I passed to reach this *cagoterie* is called the Pont des Cagots. Only a few miserable cottages remain. Some were in ruins. On a stone, which had once been over the door, was the date 1665. In one house into which we entered was a deserted room. I was told by the notary who accompanied me that the dwellers had gradually died out; that they had been chiefly engaged in weaving, and that they were looked down upon by the inhabitants on the other side of the river. We saw some half dozen people in the houses, but the notary said they were not Cagots. They were dark.

I should say that my companion stated that the former dwellers were light-complexioned, with blue eyes and light hair—an exception to the general fact that the Cagots do not differ from the neighbouring population.

In the town itself, he showed me the church, pointing out a

separate portion of the building formerly set apart for the Cagots, also a separate door and an isolated *bénitier*. In the churchyard there is a part railed off from the rest of the ground, and my informant said he had no doubt it had been used by the Cagots.

Neither the notary, nor any one with whom I conversed, had any idea of these people having been goïtrous or cretinous. Conversely, I saw in the same day numerous Cretins in other districts, but no one on the spot dreamed of confounding them with the Cagots.

The notary no doubt well expressed the feeling which still lingers in Campan, when he said there was just a *soupçon* of Cagotism remaining.

Perhaps the best opportunity of testing the truth of some of the statements made about the Cagots occurs at Chubitoa, near St. Jean Pied de Port, in the Basses Pyrenées, where I found some two hundred persons living in a small village, separated from Auhaux by a stream, and quite isolated from the general community. The Basque word (not in the dictionary) by which they are called is Agotac, a term of reproach, not adopted by themselves, and they are exceedingly angry if so called. When I asked the driver of the mail-cart from St. Jean to Bayonne what he thought of them, he shrugged his shoulders and called them *Canaille de gens*. Accompanied by Dr. Darrieux, of St. Jean Pied de Port, I was able to enter freely into their houses and examine them. They are chiefly weavers, blacksmiths, and joiners, and own no land. I could find no indication that they were a different race from the surrounding Basque population. They speak the same language, and they are equally strict Roman Catholics. They go to church at Anhaux, but as recently as 1842 they occupied a separate place during the service. I may add that once a year, on Rogation-day, the inhabitants of these two villages join in a procession on a neighbouring hill. Until recently disputes arose between them, which have been only terminated by the gendarmerie adopting the wise precaution of joining the procession.

I did not find a single inhabitant of Chubitoa affected with goïtre, and none of them were Cretins.

Most have heard the expression "a Cagot ear"—one attached directly to the cheek inferiorly and without a pendulous lobule. I only observed one or two, and such a form of ear is by no means uncommon in France or England in persons whom no one suspects of being Cagots.

The inhabitants have mostly dark hair and grey eyes, some dark. They are of medium height. Here I may remark that although dark hair and light eyes are often observed together in

the Basques, there appear to be among the general population two types of this race, one fair, with light or chestnut hair, blue or grey eyes, and with skulls apparently more dolichocephalic than in the other type, and they are on the whole taller; another with dark hair and eyes, but often florid and with brachycephalic skulls. To these may be added a third type, persons with light brown hair and eyes, with smaller features and generally slighter frames, but this type is not so well marked as the other two. Of course the more isolated the locality is the less is the probability of admixture, and in proportion as this isolation occurs, does the first-mentioned type prevail, though probably it is always in a minority in the whole population in a given district. There are postero-dolichocephalic as well as antero-dolichocephalic heads.*

It is rare to find so isolated a community of the descendants of the Cagots as this. I believe there are not more than three or four remaining in France. In other instances they have become mixed with the population. It is so at Urrugne, a village near St. Jean de Luz, where I was fortunate in being accompanied by a physician, Dr. Guilbeau, who has studied the Cagot question and expressed his opinions in print. We went to the fine old church of the 11th, or 12th century, where the service was going on in Basque and Latin, and he pointed out to me the walled-up doorway on the north side, through which the Cagots were formerly obliged to enter. There is not now any distinct *bénitier* in this church, but Dr. Guilbeau (who is a native of Urrugne) remembers one in existence, when he was a boy, which was regarded as that formerly restricted to the use of the Cagots. He says that a prejudice still exists against the Cagots although mixing with others, and that time alone can eradicate so deeply rooted a hatred. He calls them Agoths (another form of Agotac) and regards their origin as still lost in an impenetrable mystery, or to use his own word "chaos," and as likely to be so for long, but he inclines to the opinion that they are the descendants of certain heretics. The Basques, whether Spanish or French, are profoundly Catholic and, urged on by the clergy, who, in spite of royal ordinances have always been opposed to the restoration of their civil rights, would, he believes, have readily, in days gone by, carried out the slightest wish of the Inquisition. Dr. Guilbeau took great pains to show the distinction between the Agoths and the Cast-Agoths, or

* Different types among the Basques no doubt account for the fact that while Retzius said they were brachycephalic, Broca declared he was in error. Achille Foville regards them as dolichocephalic, the occipital region being especially developed; the frontal less spacious than with the Parisians. ("Annales Med. Psych. 1867.")

Gitnacs, or Gitanos (gipsies) who are commonly called in France, Bohemians. The former are peaceable and moulded in the same civilization as the Basques; the latter, for the most part, lead a nomadic life and are repelled by the inhabitants as thieves and vagabonds, though some lead quite an inoffensive one, like some I saw dwelling at Ciboure, a suburb of St. Jean de Luz. These are mostly fishermen. They are called *Cascarrots*, a corruption, Dr. Guilbeau considers, of Cast-Agoth. He regards them as of African origin. Some of them were very dark and handsome, but not so striking as our gipsies.

Here I must remark that nothing can better illustrate the difficulty of solving the question of the origin of this strange prejudice against a class of people who present no external signs of peculiarity, than the following fact. Dr. Guilbeau inclines to regard the Cagots as originally heretics, while the Rev. W. Webster, the English clergyman residing in the same town (St. Jean de Luz), who has also studied the question for years, is of a decidedly different opinion. Mr. Webster believes that the conclusion arrived at by M. de Rochas in his remarkable work on the Cagots, published in 1876, is the true one, and, as I have said, it seems to me that it is extremely probable. This opinion is, as most of you are aware, that the Cagots were persons at one time regarded as tainted with leprosy, and were therefore obliged to live separate from others, the original cause being now long forgotten, but the prejudice outlives the reason. An examination of those who are descended from the Cagots does not, I need hardly say, help to determine the question, except so far as it tends to render other explanations improbable, and leaves us at liberty to adopt one which is supported by their past history and the etymology.

That the Cagots were regarded from a very early period as in some way allied to, if not actually, lepers, is borne out by a large amount of evidence which it would occupy too much time to adduce. It was, there can be little doubt, the dread of contagion which caused every one to shun them, and which obliged them to wear on their dress some distinctive mark, as the foot of a duck. And yet they were to some extent distinguished from lepers; they were not in lazar-houses, and some old authors have attempted to point out wherein their symptoms differed from those of true leprosy.

Happily, we have an actual description of Cagots from the pen of a well-known medical writer in 1561. Ambroise Paré, after describing tubercular leprosy, says: "Some lepers have the face beautiful and the skin polished and smooth, giving no indication of leprosy. Such are the white lepers called Caquots, Capots, and Cagots, who are in Lower Brittany, and near

Bordeaux in Guienne, where they are called Gahets [or Gafets], in whose appearance none or few of the signs of leprosy are found.”

I am fortunate in having obtained on this passage the opinion of so good a dermatologist as Mr. Jonathan Hutchinson, who considers that Ambroise Paré is here describing leucoderma. It would seem, then, that some of the Cagots suffered from the simple absence of pigmentation which characterises leucoderma. A physician of Montpellier, M. Joubert, wrote in 1563 a very similar description to that of Paré,* but he adds as a symptom, “swelling of the face,” which is an indication of leprosy, and not of leucoderma; so either this was really a variety of true leprosy, or (what is more probable) he confounded the symptoms he had witnessed in true leprosy and in leucoderma.

If, as is likely, some of the Cagots laboured under a variety of true leprosy as well as under leucoderma, that variety was “white leprosy,” and it is this, the “anæsthetic” form, upon which M. de Rochas dwells. He does not clearly recognise leucoderma as distinct from white leprosy, and it appears that the two affections are frequently confounded together in the East at the present day. It is a striking confirmation of the theory of leprosy, that the Portuguese apply one term *Gaferia* to the anæsthetic variety (elephantiasis anæsthetica) and that one of the names of the Cagots employed by the Spaniards is *Gafos*. And this brings us to the question of etymology, the bearing of which on the origin of the Cagots, M. de Rochas has worked out with so much ingenuity, and as it would seem with complete success.

Taking the word Cagot, he finds that the Celto-Breton word† *Cacodd* signified leprous, and it is easy to see how readily it would assume the form of *Cacous* (as it is in Brittany actually applied to these people), and the French *Cagot*. Cagots were also called *Mézegs*, and as *Mézeau* is French for leprous,

* “There are,” he says, “men who present a general *leucé* (vitiligo) and are commonly called Cagots and white lepers. For their true malady is not elephantiasis, properly so called . . . it is no longer the lepra of the Greeks . . . It is in the lymph that cagotism (capoterie) has its source. Everything indicates it: the uniformly white colour (almost like snow) of the skin; the absence of itching, the smooth and polished surface of the body; lastly, the swelling of the face. The sole thing which denotes that their health is not perfect is the smell of their breath, which is owing to the facility with which the lymph is corrupted. It is not contagious, as elephantiasis is, but is hereditary. . . . It is with reason that they are forbidden to marry with others.”

† M. Bullet, in his “Dict. Celtique” recognises the connection between *Cacodd* and *Cacous*, both signifying leprous. It is not an ingenious idea of M. de Rochas. *Cacoa* signifies a hook. M. Bullet, however, under *Cacou*, refers the reader to *Cacca* (“to send away”), and says, “On chassoit les lepreux de la société.”

there is further evidence of the etymology being as stated by M. de Rochas. He has also found that in the old laws of Navarre, the "Romance of the Cid," and in the "Dictionary of the Spanish Academy," the signification of leprosy is attached to "*gafa*,"* the root of the word being "*gafa*," a hook, which was applied to the contraction of the hand or fingers often witnessed in leprosy, especially the anæsthetic variety.

I think, then, that combining the medical and etymological evidence, the descent of the Cagots from the Goths is much less probable than from those affected in the Middle Ages with a particular form of leprosy, or a condition which resembled it. It is true that we find two physicians, MM. Noques and Perrey, examining a number of these outcasts in 1611, and reporting that they were like other men; but this is explicable on the supposition that leprosy and leucoderma had died out in these cases. How tenaciously the stigma clung to them is shown by the fact that half a century afterwards, when Louis XIV. issued an edict favourable to them, based on another medical examination, the people resolutely refused to associate with them.

That they should have been called "Christians" is accounted for by M. de Rochas by the circumstance that lepers were actually called *Pauperes Christi* (as they were also called *Pauperes St. Lazari*). So Cretins were called Christians, and I do not doubt that this is the reason why Cagots and Cretins have been so often confounded together.

Recurring for a moment to one definition of a Cagot given in the French cyclopædia of Larousse, we may safely assert that it contains no less than three errors, in saying that the Cagots are a distinct race, that goitre is their distinctive mark, and that cretinism is the most frequent result of their isolation. It would probably call to mind the story of Buffon and the Crab. Some one had defined it as a fish; as red in colour; and as walking backwards. Buffon's opinion being asked of the definition, he replied it was correct, with three exceptions: the crab was not a fish; it was not red till boiled; and it did not walk backwards. In all other respects the definition was unexceptionable!

In conclusion, while conscious of the difficulties which surround the attempt to trace the origin of the Cagots, I would sum up the opinions I am myself disposed to adopt as follows:—

1st. The Cagots are not the descendants of the Goths; they are not a distinct race, but a despised class among the people of the country in which they live.

2nd. They are not more subject to goitre or to cretinism than the inhabitants in their vicinity; in short, cagotism and cretinism are in no way allied.

* French syn. *gaffe*; English, *gaff*.

3rd. The present representatives of the Cagots are now recognised by tradition, and not by their features, and are not distinguished by any peculiar mental or physical disorder, except when residing in an unhealthy locality.

4th. Although nothing like leprosy or leucoderma has for long affected the Cagots, and no one on the spot regards them in this light, there is evidence to show that they were originally, in some instances, lepers labouring under a particular variety of leprosy, and in others persons affected with leucoderma; the form of the affection accounting for their being regarded as in some respects different from ordinary lepers, though shunned in the same way.

5th. Many were no doubt falsely suspected of leprosy, in consequence of some slight skin affection. Others, again, were members of families in whom leprosy had died out—descendants of the lepers.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. EVANS agreed in the author's views, which also accorded with those of several French Anthropologists. He cited the existence of Lepers' Chapels in England, and notably one at St. Stephen's, near St. Alban's. With regard to the derivation of the name of Cagot, he observed that the term did not appear to date back much beyond the 13th century, and could therefore hardly be an original Breton word. Its earliest form, *Cacod*, suggested the possibility of its being a derivative from some Greek medical term, compounded from *κακός*, and the evil smell mentioned by the author as a characteristic of leucoderma pointed to *κακώδης* as a possible root. He made this suggestion doubtingly, but it might be worth consideration.

Dr. C. CLAPHAM: I look upon Dr. Hack Tuke's derivation of the word Cagot as extremely probable. As regards the prevalence of leprosy in Europe I may say that I have seen numerous cases of it in Norway, where special hospitals are provided for its treatment. Leprosy must not, however, be confounded with elephantiasis arabum (some photographs of which I see on the table) which consists in an immense thickening and hypertrophy of the true skin, sometimes involving underlying tissues and which at the hands of Mr. Bryant and other surgeons has been successfully treated by ligature of the main artery supplying the limb affected.

Mr. WALHOUSE: With respect to the side doors by which only in the Middle Ages lepers were admitted into churches, I believe some are still to be seen in several parts of England, as for instance in the very ancient church of Worth, near Swanage, in Dorsetshire, in the wall of which there is a doorway believed to date from Saxon times, so low that all who entered by it must bend their head; it is still known as the lepers' door. In India the disease

known as leucoderma is not uncommon: the patches of white are whiter than on European skin. Persons affected by it are avoided and regarded with disgust, and on death their bodies are not buried, as otherwise it is popularly believed drought or pestilence would be the result. When the disease appears at birth the infants are probably in most cases abandoned; leprosy does not seem to prevent those affected in after-life from reaching old age. In Southern India elephantiasis is most frequent on the western or Malabar coast, indeed it is commonly called the Malabar leg. People affected are nevertheless able to walk with considerable activity. I never remember seeing it in *both* legs, as in the photograph exhibited, nor, though Mussulmans form a considerable proportion of the population, did I ever see one affected by elephantiasis; it does not seem to be hereditary, nor, in its earlier stages at least, to affect health.

In the absence of the author, the following paper was read by the Director:—

NOTES *on the JÍVAROS and CANELOS INDIANS.*

By ALFRED SIMSON, Esq., F.R.G.S.*

THE tribe or family of the Jívaros is a large one, and one of the most distinguished, independent, and warlike in South America. They alike withstood the attacks of the Jucas and the Spaniards, burning the once famed cities of Logroño and Mendoza, and massacring all the male inhabitants who did not succeed in making their escape; and even to this day they maintain the most thorough independence. The missions at Macas and Gualaquiza have as yet produced no practical results, nor obtained any authority over the Indians. A Jesuit padre, who had resided three years at Gualaquiza amongst them, informed me that he had found it impossible to make any progress with them; and more than once his life was personally threatened. During these three years twenty nine whites (*i.e.*, half-caste traders) were killed in the neighbourhood of Gualaquiza.

The Jívaros speak a language of their own, Jíváro, and occupy the country generally from the Upper Pastassa to the Santiago, both rivers included, down to the Pongo de Mauseriche, on the Marañon. Most of those, however, at Pintuc understand and speak Quíchua.

* These notes were chiefly taken during a very short stay at a Jíváro Settlement on the borders of the River Pintuc (or Pindo), one of the tributaries on the left bank of the Upper Pastassa, in Ecuador, and refer mainly to that portion of the tribe inhabiting this region.