



Sir George Laurence Gomme. 1853–1916

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Rt. Hon. Sir John Rhys.

By means of it he disentangled many a ravelled skein of tale and custom on both sides of St. George's Channel. The first results of his field-work were recorded in the early volumes of the *Cymru-rodor*. He subsequently entered on similar enquiries in the Isle of Man, in connection with other work. These labours in the field formed the foundation of the book on *Celtic Folklore*, published in 1901, which may be regarded as his final, though by no means his only, contribution to the science of Folklore. His philological, archaeological, and historical works do not concern us here; but they will always be among the chief pillars of his fame.

For many years Sir John Rhys was a Vice-President of this Society. In 1891 he presided over the section of Myth, Ritual, and Magic at the International Folklore Congress of London. In 1900 he was President of the Anthropological section of the British Association. In 1907 he received the honour of Knighthood, and in 1911 the higher honour of being appointed a member of the Privy Council, in recognition of his many distinguished services to the state. His wit, his geniality, his innate kindness and simplicity of heart endeared him to all who knew him; and they included a distinguished company of scholars in this country and elsewhere. He was happy in his marriage. Lady Rhys shared his interests, and was for many years a companion and helpmate who contributed much to her husband's success, though latterly she had been laid aside by ill-health. Her loss was a blow from which he never seemed to have wholly recovered. The two daughters who survive him are the centre of a wide circle of sorrowing friends for whom he will be an enduring and inspiring memory.

E. SIDNEY HARTLAND.

SIR GEORGE LAURENCE GOMME.
1853-1916.

My friendship with Sir Laurence Gomme dates from 1878, the year of the foundation of the Folk-Lore Society. For myself, the happy result was association with one of kindred tastes, cemented

Sir George Laurence Gomme.

by social intercourse with an amiable and gifted man. It was his reward to see the Society in whose creation he and W. J. Thoms (he died in 1885) took the leading part advance from strength to strength, become the medium of collection of material of incalculable value for study of social evolution (including in the term social, matters intellectual and spiritual) and give the impetus to the foundation of kindred societies in Europe and America.

As manifest in his article on "Folklore" contributed to Dr. Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, he had firm grasp and correct sense of proportion in handling his subject, but when "the fields are white to harvest," the reaper must hasten each to his own plot. And Gomme's interest mainly centred round the study of material, traditional and documentary, bearing on the origin and development of village and municipal life. And this as no dry-as-dust antiquary, but as one revelling in the evidence of continuity in institutions linking the customs of to-day with a remote past. Some of the theories which he formulated were bound to be open to question, because of the uncertainty as to the exact meaning of the materials on which they were based, and the absence of full proof of the racial intercourse on which he laid stress. But so much in so many things is still in the melting-pot, and differences of interpretation in no whit diminish the value of Gomme's work in its suggestiveness. As the eye runs down the list of the books which he has written, and of his miscellaneous contributions to *Folk-Lore* and other scientific journals, all the outcomes, not of learned leisure, but of margins of time wrung from strenuous official duties, the comment is, "Well done, good and faithful servant." In the larger margin which was afforded by his retirement from the high position of Clerk of the London County Council, he had looked forward to completing work interest in which grew with advancing years. *Dis aliter visum*. But, happily for us mortals, they cannot efface what has been accomplished, and for all that Sir Laurence Gomme did in service to the science of folklore we hold him in affectionate and grateful memory.

EDWARD CLODD.

