

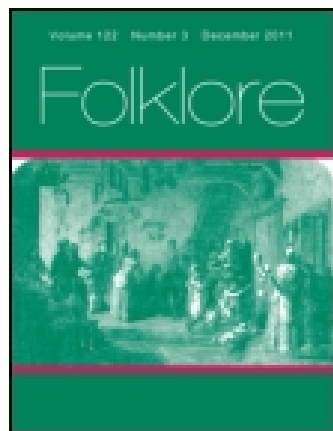
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A Fisher-Story and Other Notes from South Wales.

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III. *Sympathy.*

THE following extract from a private letter appears to me worthy of a place in *Folk-Lore*. The writer is manager of a large farm near Cambridge.

J. G. FRAZER.

"A cowman (a Suffolk man), lately said to me that the only cure for cows when there was an epidemic of abortion was to bury one of the premature calves in a gateway through which the herd passed daily.¹

"Another curious idea, prevalent among Cambridgeshire labourers, is that if a horse runs a nail or hook into its foot, as soon as the nail or hook is extracted, it is necessary to grease it with lard or oil, and put it away in some safe place, or the horse will not recover. A veterinary surgeon told me only last year that he was sent for to attend a horse that had ripped its side open on the hinge of a farm gatepost, and on arriving at the farm, nothing had been done to the horse, but a man was busy trying to pry the hinge out of the gatepost, so that it could be greased and put away, and thus ensure the recovery of the horse."

F. N. WEBB.

14th April, 1905.

A FISHER-STORY AND OTHER NOTES FROM SOUTH WALES.

Communicated through Mr. E. Sidney Hartland.

THE following is the only well-defined transformation-story which I have gathered in regard to fish and water. It was obtained near Carmarthen, but does not seem well-known. It was recited by my informant, a well-to-do farmer's son near Llanelly, with great clearness and, indeed, dramatic force, half in Welsh, half in English, and nearly in the following words:—

'Upon the Towy floated a fisher-lad. He was in the very dew of his youth. He sat in a coracle with his paddle stuck under his

¹ Cf. Gutch, *County Folklore (Yorkshire)*, p. 68.

left armpit, with his salmon rod and his "knocker," to kill his fish, all ready. Suddenly a great salmon leapt to his fly, and there was a long fight, in which at last he got the better, and the big fish was flapping in the coracle between his feet with the hook through its upper jaw on the left. He took his club and said, "Now, I will knock thee." When the fish reared itself against his leg, and spoke with a faint human voice, as it were the voice of a babe, and said, "No, do not knock me, be my *cariad* (lover), and I will be thine." "No," said he, trembling with amazement, "thou art a devil, and I will knock thee," raising his arm to strike. But before the blow could fall he found himself in the arms of a beautiful girl, but cold and wet, who knelt between his feet, but her face was against his and her eyes were asking him, and she said, "Be my *cariad*." "No," said he, "thou art a devil, I will knock thee." "Then I will drown thee," said she, bending him over with all her strength; so they capsized. Then the girl plunged him deep in the river and brought him up sputtering, for he could not swim. "Wilt thou be my *cariad*?" said she. "No," said he, "thou art a d——." "Then down you go *yn ngwaelod yr avon* (to the bottom of the river)," said she, and down they went. Up again she brought him, panting. "Wilt thou be my *cariad*?" said she. "No," he said, "by—." The word was drowned in his mouth. She forced him down again into the weeds at the bottom. Then she plucked him up again. "Now, wilt thou be my *cariad*?" The lad was almost drowned, and said "Yea." At that she was delighted, and wrung him in her arms, and swam with him with her feet to the shore. And the coracle went down the stream and the rod too, but that was held to her by the hook and line, for the hook was in her upper lip. So when he came to his strength he had with him a gel without a stitch of clothes on her. Oh, a beautiful gel as white as a salmon, trying to get a hook out of her lip. So he says, "Pity, I will get it out," but he could not pull it through. "I must cut thee," he said, and took out his little knife. "Yea," said she, "cut me," and he cut the hook out carefully and she did not wince, but kissed him suddenly on the mouth, so that her blood was upon his face. "Now thou has taken of my blood thou wilt love me for ever," she said, and at the word there came a violent love for

her which never left him during his whole life. He took her home and lived with her a long and lucky life, having many children, who all had a little scar, or what seemed like one, in their upper lips, to the left.'

But my informant said that if when the lad came up the second time he could have completed his oath with the name of the Almighty, she would have become *eog* (a salmon) again.¹

As to magical rites, I found some five years ago that there were such connected with Arthur's Stone (Gower), though denied by my informant. But she "did hear that gels went and walked round it to see their sweethearts—a long time ago—and if they didn't see him they took off their shawls and went on their hands and knees—nobody is so fulish now." This from a young girl at Port Eynon.

Again, at St. Nicholas, near Cardiff, a man told me that his mother took him to "Castle Corrig" (a cromlech near St. Nicholas, perhaps the biggest existing in Britain), when he 'had a decline' as a boy, and she spat upon the stone, rubbed her finger in the spittle and rubbed him on the forehead and chest. I met a man at Pentrevoelas, North Wales, when I was searching for a crossed stone between that and Festiniog. He told me where it was, and said when he was a boy his mother took him to it, and rubbing her finger on the cross made that sign on his forehead. I feel convinced there is a good deal of this sort of thing, but I cannot get it out, or else it exists among a residuum which feels such a gap to exist between student and peasant that freedom of speech becomes impossible. But I have felt the sort of thing to underlie many ordinary stories, from certain turns of expression.

Mrs. S. (mother of Mrs. T.), who is preparing a work relating to the county of Glamorgan, has a good Llanccarfan story of catching the ghost of a lady. The 'lady' used to appear and pinch a farm-lad at night. So he determined to catch her, and got the skin of a white-bellied horse, cutting it into thongs, of which he made a bag, and for the draw-strings of the bag he cut long thongs from hoof to hoof over the shoulders. This was good

[The above story is also given in a pamphlet by Mr. T. H. Thomas, entitled *Some Folklore of South Wales*. William Lewis, printer, 22 Duke Street, Cardiff. N.D., but issued 1904.—E. S. H.]

for catching ghosts. He placed it at the door of the room, but the ghost evaded the trap, and pinched him unmercifully. However she never more appeared to him, being afraid of the bag.

T. H. THOMAS.

45 The Walk, Cardiff.

ADDITIONS TO "THE GAMES OF ARGYLESIRE."

(*Continued from page 221.*)

HOPPING GAMES.

(P. 134, after line 18.)

Hop and Bar the Door.

Is a sort of general "Hoppy." Opposing parties are formed, dens for each side are defined by a straight line drawn on either side of a neutral ground from seven to ten paces apart. The players from both sides hop on the debatable land, jostling each other, endeavouring to make their opponents drop their feet, or to drive them into the den of the conqueror. If one of the players lets his foot drop he has to sit down on the spot and remains there for the rest of the game; those driven into the conqueror's territory become members of the conqueror's party. The game goes on till all of one side have been put out of action in one of these manners.

Bonnety.

Is related to "Cutting the Cheese" All the players' bonnets are placed in a row on the ground, a small space being left between them. The leader hops on the same leg over each bonnet from one end of the row to the other and back again, landing in the space between the bonnets. He repeats this, but hopping over each in a zig-zag direction, all of course without touching a bonnet or dropping the other foot. He