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### An Anglesey Superstition : Modes of Protection from Evil Spirits.

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## THE PRAYING PALM OF FARIDPUR.

CALCUTTA, 4th January.

UNDER the presidency of Lord Ronaldshay Sir J. C. Bose delivered a lecture this evening on "The praying palm-tree."

Sir J. C. Bose said that perhaps no phenomenon was so remarkable and shrouded with greater mystery as the performances of a particular palm tree near Faridpur. In the evening while the temple bells rang calling the people to prayer the tree bowed down as if to prostrate itself, and erected its head again in the morning. This process is repeated every day of the year. The phenomenon had been regarded as miraculous and pilgrims had been attracted in great numbers. It was also alleged that offerings made to the tree had been the means of effecting marvellous cures.

The lecturer first obtained photographs of the two positions which proved the phenomenon to be real. The next thing was to devise a special apparatus to record continuously the movement of the tree day and night. The records of the palm tree showed that it fell with the rise of temperature and rose with the fall. The records obtained with other trees brought out the extraordinary and unsuspected fact that all trees are moving, such movement being in response to changes in their environment.

*Pioneer Mail*, Allahabad, 11th January, 1918.

AN ANGLESEY SUPERSTITION: MODES OF PROTECTION  
FROM EVIL SPIRITS.

FOR the following note the Editor is indebted to Sir James Frazer.

Twenty-five years ago an old man in one of the parishes of Anglesey invariably bore or rather wore a sickle over his neck—in the fields, and on the road, wherever he went. He was rather reticent as to the reason why he wore it, but he clearly gave his questioner to understand that it was a protection

against evil spirits. This custom is known in Welsh as "*gwisgo'r gorthrwm*," which literally means "wearing the oppression." *Gorthrwm* = *gor*, an intensifying affix = *super*, and *trwm* = heavy, so that the phrase perhaps would be more correctly rendered "wearing the overweight." It is not easy to see the connection between the practice and the idea either of overweight or oppression; still, that was the phrase in common use.

For a similar reason, that is, protection from evil spirits during the hours of the night, it was and is a custom to place two scythes archwise over the entrance-side of the wainscot bed found in many of the older cottages of Anglesey. It is difficult to find evidence of the existence of this practice to-day as the old people no doubt feel that it is contrary to their prevailing religious belief and will not confess their faith in the efficacy of a "pagan" rite which they are yet loth to abandon.

R. GWYNEDON DAVIES.

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#### SANCTUARIES AND FAIRIES IN WEST IRELAND.

MR. T. J. WESTROFF, who is doing excellent work on the investigation on scientific lines of prehistoric remains in Ireland, has republished from the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (vol. xxxiv. Section C, No. 3) a paper on "The Ancient Sanctuaries of Knockaincy and Clogher, Co. Limerick." Here a cairn commemorates the cult of the goddess Aine, of the god-race of the Tuatha De Danann. She was a water-spirit, and has been seen, half-raised out of the water, combing her hair. She was a beautiful and gracious spirit, "the best-natured of women," and is crowned with meadowsweet (*spiræa*), to which she gave its sweet smell. She is a powerful tutelary spirit, protector of the sick, and connected with the moon, her hill being sickle-shaped, and men, before performing the ceremonies, used to look for the moon—whether visible or not—lest they should be unable to return. They used to comb the sheaves on St. John's Eve, carrying lighted wisps to bring luck