



A Children's Game and the Lyke Wake

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A CHILDREN'S GAME AND THE LYKE WAKE.

(*Folk-Lore*, vol. xxxii. p. 274 ff.)

PROFESSOR GRANGER's article on *A Children's Game and the Lyke Wake*, brought to my mind a version of the poem quoted, which was told to me as a child by one of our servants. It did not, with her, form part of a game, but was accompanied by a certain amount of gesture play. The poem is very short and incomplete and I can remember no reference to the worms and their unpleasant functions, while it will be seen that the church and the parson both occupy very subordinate positions. I can only quote from memory, and have not heard the rhyme for years, so it is possible that there may be omissions, though I do not think so. They run as follows :

" There was an old man all skin and bone—
He always went to Church alone.

He looked up, he looked round,
He saw a dead man on the ground.

He said to the parson, passing by,
' Shall I be like that man when I die ? '—

' Yes ! ' "

This is, of course, a very poor version ; but it is entirely possible that the worms have their place in it, though I have forgotten them. The woman used to recite it in a hollow voice, her hands folded palm to palm with the thumbs upwards and the fingers pointing at me. During the recitation she rubbed her hands slowly together, keeping a perfectly grave face and a mysterious manner ; but on reaching the final ' Yes ! ' her voice rose to a shout, and one hand shot out suddenly, hitting me in the face. I am not sure what part of the country this woman came from ; but I think that she was a Londoner.

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