The Folk-Lore Society

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PREFACE.

THIS book is not written for the use of members of Anthropological Expeditions, whose work demands far more thorough acquaintance with the subject than could possibly be conveyed in a single volume. It is addressed to officers of the public services, to missionaries, travellers, settlers, and others whose lot is cast among uncivilized or half-civilized populations abroad; to residents in country places at home; to medical men, philanthropic workers, and all educated persons whose lives and duties bring them into touch with the uneducated. Such persons have it in their power to contribute very greatly to the advance of an important study, the value of which is as yet hardly fully appreciated; and it is believed that they will be willing to do so, if only the way is pointed out to them. To do this is the aim of the *Handbook of Folk-lore*.

The genesis of the book is somewhat complicated. The scheme of classification devised by Sir Laurence Gomme for the original edition of 1890 has been retained, with only such modifications of detail as experience and extended knowledge have shown to be desirable. That its retention should have been found possible, in spite of the great development of the study during the last quarter of a century, is no small testimony to the prescience of its author. Beyond this, a few passages here and there, and the list of Types of Indo-European Folk-tales, represent all that has been preserved from the first edition. The earlier chapters are founded on a manuscript which Mr. E. Sidney Hartland began some years ago with a view to a new edition, but which for various reasons was never completed. This he generously placed at

the disposal of the Folklore Society, and the whole work has had the benefit of his wide range of reading, and of his suggestions and advice. The debt it owes to his unwearied kindness can hardly be over-estimated.

The account of Chinese Ancestor-worship in chapter vi, (p. 87), is by Mr. A. R. Wright, F.S.A. ; that of the religious system of the North American tribes in chapter vii, (p. 115), by Miss Freire-Marreco ; that of the English Village Community in chapter xi, (p. 188), by Mr. F. M. Stenton, M.A. Oxon., Professor of History at University College, Reading. Chapter xv, (Games), is by Miss Moutray Read ; and chapter xii, (Rites of Individual Life), is based on a draft by Mr. Stanley Casson, formerly Secretary of the Oxford Anthropological Society. Dr. W. H. R. Rivers has kindly supplied the material for the accounts of the Classificatory System of Relationship and the Genealogical Method of Enquiry, (pp. 166-170)—subjects peculiarly his own. For the rest I am myself responsible.

Dr. A. C. Haddon, Dr. R. R. Marett, Dr. W. H. R. Rivers, Dr. C. G. Seligmann, and Mr. W. Crooke have kindly read various portions of the work in MS., and have contributed valuable hints and criticisms. The whole Council of the Folklore Society have had the opportunity of reading it in proof. MS. notes received from these sources are in many cases indicated by initials. But the final responsibility of selection or rejection has rested on my own shoulders, and for whatever flaws or weaknesses may be found in the work, the blame must lie at my door, for I have throughout retained the woman's privilege of the last word.

Omissions there doubtless are, but I would ask readers to take the Questionary into consideration before making sure of this in any particular instance. Only the main points of each topic are touched on in the text : the Questionary is designed to supplement it, and to suggest further details in each case.

Repetitions are unavoidable, however carefully one's matter may be arranged. Life is not lived in water-tight compart-

ments, and the folklore which is its outcome and expression cannot be fitted into insulated pigeon-holes. One thing in folklore always involves another. The most ordinary story of an apparition involves questions of the nature of the phantom itself, of the kind of place where it appeared, the person to whom it was visible, and the " witching hour " at which it was seen.

When a gardener, in accordance with the traditional lore of his craft, swears at his lettuce or radish-seed and thrashes his young walnut-trees, or sows his peas in the wane of the moon and his potatoes on Good Friday, and utterly declines to root up the parsley-bed, he is putting in practice time-honoured beliefs, not only about trees and plants, but about life and death and the influence of sacred days and of the heavenly bodies. When the mourners at the funeral feast tell the bees of their bereavement, they are acting on ancient imaginings as to the nature of a future life and on their own actual beliefs as to the sagacity of the lower animals, as well as carrying out a traditional part of the funeral rites. A whole philosophy of Nature was bound up in the constitution of ancient Ireland when the Stone of Tara proclaimed the destined successor to the throne of Leinster. The more we look into the matter, the more the truth is borne in upon us that Folklore is an essential unity ; or, in other words, that Social Anthropology—" new Presbyter is but old Priest writ large "—is not an arbitrary selection of unrelated topics, but a homogeneous science which will some day come to its own.

C. S. B.

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INTRODUCTION.

I. What Folklore Is.

The word *Folk-Lore*—literally, "*the learning of the people*"—was coined in 1846 by the late Mr. W. J. Thoms to replace the earlier expression "popular antiquities." It has established itself as the generic term under which the traditional Beliefs, Customs, Stories, Songs, and Sayings current among backward peoples, or retained by the uncultured classes of more advanced peoples, are comprehended and included. It comprises early and barbaric beliefs about the world of Nature, animate and inanimate; about human nature and things made by man; about a spirit world and man's relations with it; about witchcraft, spells, charms, amulets, luck, omens, disease, and death. It further includes customs and rites as to marriage and inheritance, childhood and adult life, and as to festivals, warfare, hunting, fishing, cattle-keeping, etc.; also myths, legends, folk-tales, ballads, songs, proverbs, riddles, and nursery rhymes. In short, it covers everything which makes part of the mental equipment of the folk as distinguished from their technical skill. It is not the form of the plough which excites the attention of the folklorist, but the rites practised by the ploughman when putting it into the soil: not the make of the net or the harpoon, but the taboos observed by the fisherman at sea: not the architecture of the bridge or the dwelling, but the sacrifice which accompanies its erection and the social life of those who use it. Folklore, in fact, is the expression of the psychology of early man, whether in the

fields of philosophy, religion, science, and medicine, in social organization and ceremonial, or in the more strictly intellectual regions of history, poetry, and other literature.

Within all human societies, whether savage or civilized, we may naturally expect to find old beliefs, old customs, old memories, which are relics of an unrecorded past. Such sayings and doings, wherever found, wherever told or practised, have this common "note," that they are sanctioned and perpetuated, not by experimental knowledge or scientifically-ascertained facts, not by positive law or authentic history, nor by the written record which is the necessary condition of any of these, but simply by habit and tradition. And the scientific study of folklore consists in bringing modern scientific methods of accurate observation and inductive reasoning to bear upon these varied forms of Tradition, just as they have been brought to bear upon other phenomena.

The study of this traditional lore began with the observation that among the less cultured inhabitants of all the countries of modern Europe there exists a vast body of curious beliefs, customs, and stories, orally handed down from generation to generation, and essentially the property of the unlearned and backward portion of the community.

It was then noted that similar, and even identical beliefs, customs, and stories, are current among savage and barbaric nations. Numerous illustrations of this fact will be found in the ensuing pages. This similarity may reasonably be accounted for by the hypothesis that such ideas and practices among civilized peoples must be derived, by inheritance or otherwise, from a savage or barbaric state of society. They have accordingly received the technical name of "survivals;" and the establishment of the existence of "survival in culture" as an observable phenomenon may be taken as the first-fruits of the scientific study of folklore.

But the matter does not end there. Further study and examination of these traditional Beliefs, Customs, and Stories, in all their variations and in connection with their different settings and surroundings, ought to show us how far their

characteristics are common to humanity and how far they are due to the influences of race and environment; and should thus advance the study of Ethnology. A careful record of the geographical distribution of folklore in the United Kingdom should, for example, form a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the Ethnology of our own islands. We may look to learn what events or circumstances affect and modify racial folklore, what is the effect of contact, whether by way of commerce or of conquest, between peoples of varying degrees of civilization, and what amount of credit may be attached to tradition—using the word in the common but restricted sense of unwritten history. Eventually we may hope to adjust the balance between circumstance and character, and to arrive at the causes which retain some races in a state of arrested progress while others develop a highly-organized civilization. Thus a most important chapter will be added to the History of mankind. Further, the study of rudimentary economic and political forms should enable us to trace the lines of development of the several systems of civilized nations from their source, and to fathom the reasons of their strength or weakness; and should thus contribute to the progress of Sociology. And finally, in the domain of Psychology we may look to ascertain far more clearly than at present the early workings of the mind of man; to learn how unsophisticated man regards the facts of life and nature, and how he reasons about them; to discover what have been the processes by which religion, morals, philosophy, science, art, and literature have been developed from crude and barbaric beginnings; nay, even perhaps what have been the very germs and origins out of which they have sprung.

The conception of man's past history which has resulted from, and now directs, the study of folklore, has already made its impress on modern philosophical thought, and it would be difficult to over-estimate the additions to the sum of human knowledge which may be made in course of years by a continuance of the study on these lines. Meanwhile one very practical result should follow from it, namely, the

improved treatment by governing nations of the subject-races under their sway. In the words of Sir Richard Temple (*FL.J.*, iv. 209), "we cannot understand the latter rightly unless we deeply study them, and it must be remembered that close acquaintance and a right understanding beget sympathy, and sympathy begets good government; and who is there to say that a scientific study which promotes this, and indeed to some extent renders it possible, is not a practical one?"

The subjects comprehended under the name of Folklore may be arranged in three principal groups with sub-headings as follows:

I. *Belief and Practice* relating to:

(1) The Earth and the Sky.
(2) The Vegetable World.
(3) The Animal World.
(4) Human Beings.
(5) Things made by Man.
(6) The Soul and Another Life.
(7) Superhuman Beings, (Gods, Godlings, and Others).
(8) Omens and Divination.
(9) The Magic Art.
(10) Disease and Leechcraft.

II. *Customs.*

(1) Social and Political Institutions.
(2) Rites of Individual Life.
(3) Occupations and Industries.
(4) Calendar Fasts and Festivals.
(5) Games, Sports, and Pastimes.

III. *Stories, Songs and Sayings.*

(1) Stories: (*a*) told as true; (*b*) told for amusement.
(2) Songs and Ballads.
(3) Proverbs and Riddles.
(4) Proverbial Rhymes and Local Sayings.

It will be observed that this classification is of a purely objective character. No attempt is made to docket any of

the observances or sayings in accordance with what might be presumed to be their primary meaning or origin. The present Handbook is intended as an introduction for the student and a guide for the collector, and in such a work it is necessary to avoid committing the novice to theories which the advance of knowledge may afterwards oblige him to unlearn. The attempt, therefore, has been made throughout the following pages to steer clear of theory as far as may be. Not that it is possible to study any subject without becoming acquainted with some, at least, of the theories formed by previous students. But such theories as have been touched upon are either obvious inferences from facts, or points noted as requiring further investigation; and as such, and not as proven foundations on which to erect further structures, the worker is invited to consider them.

For above all things a collector of folklore should work independently of theory. The thought of a people finds its outward expression in manners and customs, in song and story. If these be carefully and literally recorded by an unprejudiced observer in the field, the thought which originally prompted them may often be more satisfactorily ascertained by the student at home, who has access to evidence from many lands and so has a far wider area for induction at his command. And if at first the meaning of the evidence be misinterpreted, the record of observed facts nevertheless remains intact until the coming of some thinker of deeper insight. For instance, the relations of Religion and Magic are still under discussion. Everybody will agree that some practices are magical; as to others, theorists may differ. But if they are simply set down as customs practised on certain occasions, without any attempt to refer them to their psychological source, the facts are put on record for future use, unobscured by the observer's personal prepossessions or opinions, and the settlement of the question is advanced far more than if each item were labelled as "magical" or "religious," and perchance labelled wrong! The first point is to ascertain and

record the actual concrete facts; the interpretation of them must follow later.

II. How to Collect and Record Folklore.

Let it once more be emphatically said that this book is not intended for the members of scientific expeditions, but for travellers or residents among backward folk at home and abroad. The field of research is vast, and "Expeditions" cannot hope to cover it before it is "developed" out of existence. Anyone, then, who can and will observe and record a single fact accurately is doing a service to science.

Whatever country be the scene of operations, the first requisite in collecting folklore is to enter into friendly relations with the folk. Anything in the way of condescension, patronage, or implied superiority will be a fatal barrier to success, and any display of wealth in dress or equipage should be avoided. A kindly, simple, genial manner, much patience in listening, and quick perception of, and compliance with, the local rules of etiquette and courtesy are needful; and the inquirer must be as careful to do nothing that could be resented as an impertinence or a liberty as he would be in the company of friends—or strangers—of his own class and nation. He must adopt a sympathetic attitude, and show an interest in the people themselves and their concerns generally, not merely in the information he wants to get from them. He should avoid any appearance of undue curiosity, should encourage them to talk, and should listen rather than ask questions. Incredulity and amusement must be concealed at all costs. The enquirer may not be able to rise to the height of a certain Somersetshire parson, and to perjure his soul with "Ah, very likely!" when assured that the Devil's footmark in a certain rock emits blue lights in thunderstorms. But if he cannot refrain from sarcastic remarks when told that two friends after a convivial evening saw two horses in the stable where only one should be, or suppress smiles when he hears

that the necessary qualification for the office of town-crier of the Bushongo is that a man should have been born a twin, he has mistaken his vocation and must not hope to succeed as a practical folklorist.

Sympathy, a true "feeling *with*," and not merely "*for*," the people, is the main secret of success. The greatest possible respect should be shown to all their beliefs and opinions, even the most trivial; and the visitor should endeavour to attain to a certain passive and receptive frame of mind which will enable him to accept whatever marvels may be told him as if they were true.

One must from the outset recognize the fact that the customs of the lower culture, at home and abroad, eccentric though they may seem to us, are sensible and reasonable from the point of view of the folk who practise them. The difficulty is to grasp that point of view, to discover the underlying idea, as Miss Kingsley puts it. She relates a case in point from her own experience. When descending a West African river in a canoe manned by natives, a man on the bank suddenly fired at the party. She jumped ashore and demanded "why he had behaved so exceedingly badly?" It turned out that, as she drolly puts it, "the poor man was merely suffering under domestic affliction. One of his wives had run away with a gentleman from a neighbouring village, and so he had been driven to fire at and attempt to kill a member of any canoe-crew from yet another village that might pass his way; because, according to the custom of the country, the men of this village would thereby have to join him in attacking the village of the man who had stolen his wife." This apparently unprovoked attack, therefore, was merely a compliance with the native forms of law (*FL. Fjort*, p. iii.).

Miss Kingsley draws the moral that the traveller labours under great disadvantages in forming a true opinion regarding native customs compared to the resident to whom they are familiar. Residents in a locality have undoubtedly a great advantage over visitors; not only from their familiarity with

the speech, the ways, and the modes of thought of the people, and from their friendly acquaintance with individuals, but because there is—or there should be—no doubt of their good will and good intentions, however mysterious may be the curiosity they show. Among savage peoples, an introduction from a white man already known and respected is often of the first importance to inspire the natives with confidence in the stranger's integrity and good faith. Again, the visitor must be indebted to the resident for a sketch of the *carte du pays*, and of the local etiquette as to salutations, interviews, visits, presents, and the like. "It is such small matters as the mode of salutation, forms of address, and politeness, as rules of precedence, hospitality, and decency, as recognition of superstitions however apparently unreasonable—which largely govern social relations, which no stranger can afford to ignore, and which, at the same time, cannot be ascertained and observed correctly without due study," says Sir Richard Temple, addressing the Anthropological Section of the British Association at Birmingham, 1913. "Nothing," he adds, "estranges the administrator from his people more than mistakes on these points." Still less, then, can a casual visitor afford to disregard them.

On the other hand, it may happen that, given the requisite tact, sympathy, and understanding, a stranger may be able to penetrate to the confidence of the people more quickly than a resident who is too far removed from them by social rank or official position. To take one instance out of many, Mr. Cecil Sharp in Somersetshire collected a number of traditional songs from the dependents of a family who were utterly ignorant of their retainers' musical skill. The family in question welcomed the knowledge, and added the airs to their own repertory, but it sometimes happens in such cases that the resident treats the revelations made to the newcomer with surprise and incredulity. "I've known so-and-so for thirty years, and *I* never heard of anything of the sort." He does not realize his limitations, nor perceive that they are the penalty he pays for greatness—or perhaps

for incuriousness and want of observation. At home, the local pressman, the parish doctor, the veterinary surgeon, the land-steward, the intelligent master-workman, are better situated for collecting folklore than the squire and the parson ; and abroad, the trader and the settler may learn things that are hidden from the missionary and the Civil Servant. Yet much valuable information about social institutions and ceremonies may be gained and recorded by those who cannot easily obtain personal confidences, and they should not neglect the opportunities they have because others are not open to them.

There is great difference in the comparative ease of investigating the several groups of subjects included in folklore. The collector will be wise to begin his own studies with the Beliefs treated of in the first part of the present volume, so as to familiarize himself with the attitude of the folk and their methods of thinking and reasoning, and to learn something of the principles of animatism, animism, the unity of nature, "virtue," sanctity, contagion, sympathy, and the like, which make up the natural philosophy of the lower culture. But in the actual work of collection he had better begin with Custom, with the social and political institutions and the rites connected therewith, (represented in England by the relics of the old village system and the local manorial customs). If the enquirer is judicious and takes care not to awaken fears of annexation or increased taxation, the natives are not likely to resent enquiry into their social customs ; nor will European folk be affronted by interest shown in their public festivals, their ancient monuments, and the legends connected therewith. In fact, their local pride is often flattered by it ; and the local sports and ceremonies, as well as the children's games, may be investigated without difficulty. Some hints on personal observation of local rites are given in chapter vii. The visitor should enquire for and take advantage of all opportunities of witnessing such things, so as to be able to speak from personal knowledge. In this way a considerable body of notes on custom and legend may

be got together, and acquaintances formed which may pave the way for more.

But Beliefs are a more difficult matter. They crop up incidentally and unexpectedly,—in a law-court, beside a sick-bed, on a journey or a sporting expedition ; and they must be gathered just as occasion occurs. A lady living in Needwood Forest sent her garden-boy to the house with a branch of blackthorn in flower. It never arrived there. She did not know it till afterwards, but it is held unlucky in that neighbourhood to take blackthorn into the house. Another lady, in the Punjâb, was asked by her gardener to shoot a parrot that was destroying his best vegetables. By the time she had got her sun-hat on, the *chuprassi* had forestalled her. Called to order afterwards by his master, he explained in deep distress that he had had no alternative. He knew that the Memsahib was "in hope," and had she taken life it would have endangered the life of the unborn. In New Guinea one afternoon towards dusk Dr. Seligmann had occasion to send the native boy who was his companion back to a village about a mile distant. The boy consented but asked that he might be allowed to carry a knife as a protection,—from what was not clear, but it was from no bodily foe. In such ways as these does belief betray itself, and there can be no more genuine or unimpeachable kind of evidence.

One may also note the taboos and other prohibitions observed, and enquire into the reasons for them. Every taboo must have, or must formerly have had, a belief at the back of it.

The importance of these little items of belief is not always fully recognized. We sometimes find them mentioned only as corroborative evidence of some important hypothesis arrived at on other grounds, whereas they are really the very foundation-stone of the whole structure of folklore. The main difficulty of instituting any direct quest for them is that the believer is often reserved in proportion to the reality of his belief, and not merely friendly but confidential relations are generally needed before he can be drawn out on the

subject. To betray previous and sympathetic knowledge on kindred subjects is the best key to the lock.

The magico-religious rites which are built upon these beliefs are for the most part shrouded in secrecy, and even payment will not always secure admission to them. Sometimes they are the property of an esoteric circle not limited by nationality, and then a professor belonging to another race may be welcomed. Dr. Hildburgh, hearing that a certain Sinhalese was a professional wizard, took the man into his service, made known his own interest in and acquaintance with sundry forms of magic art, and in consequence obtained much information from him and other "devil-dancers" concerning their secret rites. The negro "conjurer" King Alexander went so far as to deny all knowledge of magic till Miss Owen told him that she knew the ingredients of "a trick that could strike like lightning." Instantly he recognized a fellow-professor,—one, too, who could injure him if disobliged —and agreed to give her the sort of information she desired (*FL. Congr.* 1891, p. 242).

Still more sacred and jealously guarded are the rites and beliefs of clans and tribes, of local secret societies, and other social groups. Mr. Sproat lived for two years in Vancouver Island before he succeeded in discovering "a whole characteristic system of religious doctrines" which the people had carefully hidden from the white man up till then. It was twelve years before Mr. Batchelor discovered the serpent-cult of the Ainu. Sir E. B. Tylor gives a list of similar instances (*Prim. Cult.* i. 422). Only the initiated are admitted to the part in mysteries. The late Dr. A. W. Howitt took through an initiation-rite in Australia, after which he was informed of the existence of a divinity whose very name had been concealed from him before, though he had already collected a mass of information about native customs (*J.A.I.* 1885, p. 301 *sqq.*; cf. *Kurnai and Kamilaroi*, 1881, p. 192).

"The unspoiled savage," says Dr. Haddon, "is firmly impressed with the sanctity of the more important ceremonies and of all that pertains to them, and he also possesses remark-