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**Folk-lore relics of early village life.**



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FOLK-LORE RELICS OF EARLY  
VILLAGE LIFE.





FOLK-LORE RELICS  
OF  
EARLY VILLAGE LIFE.

BY

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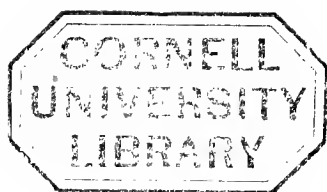
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## CONTENTS.

PREFACE . . . . .	vii
CHAPTER I. Introduction . . . . .	i
II. The Settlement of the Village . . . . .	16
III. The Foundation Sacrifice . . . . .	24
IV. The Occupation of the Homestead . . . . .	59
V. The House-spirits . . . . .	72
VI. The House-Gods as Gods of Agriculture . . . . .	124
VII. Early Domestic Customs . . . . .	152
VIII. The Village Marriage . . . . .	185







## P R E F A C E.



DO not offer this book as a scientific exposition of Folk-lore, though I hope the scientist will find nothing in it to quarrel with. I cannot pretend that the studies on the subject which I now put forward are in all ways complete, or satisfying; but while I do not think that the folk-lore not included in my pages will destroy the argument I advance, I am quite aware that to deal properly with the subject it would be necessary to re-arrange and re-docket all the items of Folk-lore now existing in our goodly collections. This one day I hope to do: for the present I give a small, and perhaps fragmentary instalment of a big subject.

I should like, however, to say exactly how these studies of mine meet the position I would claim for Folk-lore. Folk-lore I conceive to belong to a period of history when English social life was represented by a net-work of independent self-acting

village communities. It should explain and illustrate this stage of society, therefore. It should take us into the homestead, the village, the farm, the arable lands, the pastures, the forest boundary.

The present contribution to the subject, however, takes us no further than the village-home. It looks out into the surroundings, it is true, but it is only as distant landscape when we are sitting in the family circle listening to the tales of old times and old doings. I am not without hopes that I may be encouraged to make this distant landscape as well known as I have sought herein to make the village homes.

But in presenting this half of the picture of the primitive village life as portrayed by Folk-lore, there are still many gaps in the workmanship. To know what pieces of English Folk-lore are primitive, and what are modern superstition only, it is necessary to compare them with primitive customs and manners. This work of comparison is a long and difficult task. I have, however, confined myself to some near parallels in the forms of the customs, and have not touched upon the less precise and more difficult comparisons of motif. Nor have I, except in one instance, gone into the important question of the development of popular customs and superstitions. Thus many items of English Folk-lore are not to be found in the village-life I have depicted here. I know they have a place somewhere, except in respect of some branches of professedly modern superstition, and I am proceeding with my work of bringing them to their new home. But I

have not thought it worth while delaying the issue of the present contribution to make what, I venture to hope, is scientifically complete, logically complete as well.

CASTELNAU, BARNES, S.W. ;  
1882.







## FOLK-LORE RELICS OF EARLY VILLAGE LIFE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTION.



THE collection of popular antiquities and popular superstitions has been going on for some time. The work has been for the most part accomplished by the curious antiquary, who has jotted down his items of folk-lore, as we now term the study, and so preserved them for whatsoever use they may ultimately be put. There has thus been got together a museum of popular antiquarian lore, each item docketed and placed according to the wisdom of its collector. This museum contains such collections as John Aubrey's "Gentilisme and Judaisme," written in 1686-87, Sir Thomas Browne's "Vulgar Errors," Bourn and Brand's "Popular Antiquities," Henderson's "Folk-lore of the Northern Counties," and the host of other books which have followed up these pre-

curfurs of our ftudy. It is a goodly mufeum, this great collection of folk-lore, and it represents very nearly the whole contribution of Great Britain to the fubject.

Having thus pointed out the exiftence of our great mufeum of popular antiquities, the queftion comes to the ftudent of primitive culture—is not all this valuable to the fcientific inquirer : is there not a fcientific, as well as an antiquarian, value attached to thefe items of folk-lore? Well, this queftion alfo has been answered to fome extent. The modern folklorift is not content with the collection of merely Englifh or Scotch items of folk-lore, Englifh or Scotch fairy tales ; he muft go further afield and find out parallels in other European countries, becaufe he knows beforehand that the fciences of language and the fciences of comparative politics have declared the inhabitants of Europe to be the defcendants of one branch of the great Aryan family, and he juftly concludes that if folk-lore is of any value at all for the elucidation of the unwritten hiftory of the paft it muft go back to the times when the European family was united. Still this work of comparifon has only been fitfully accomplished—from the nature of things, perhaps, it could not be otherwife, and the refult is that we have collections of Englifh folk-lore annotated with parallels to the folk-lore of other countries, but not otherwife lifted out of the elementary ftage of collection. I am not faying this fhould be otherwife with the books that we have already upon our fhelves—their work has been the work of



collection, the work of adding to our museum items which, but for these collectors, might have perished for ever.

We reach another stage in the progress of English folk-lore studies when we arrive at Mr. Kelly's "Curiosities of Indo-European Tradition and Folk-lore," published in 1863. Here the great results of Grimm's work in Germany are summarized and placed before the student. This new school have made it their task to trace back the traditional beliefs and popular customs of ancient and modern Europe to their common source.<sup>1</sup> Thus the base of operations is again widened. From isolated English folk-lore we first launched out into European folk-lore, and now we arrive at Indo-European, or Aryan, folk-lore.

But there is yet another stage of comparative folk-lore, a stage at which the base of operations is still further widened from Aryan life into primitive life as illustrated by modern savages. It is well known that Mr. Tylor in his magnificent work on "Primitive Culture" has placed English and European superstitions and popular customs side by side with savage rites and customs. They both fit so well in their places in the restored picture of primitive culture, that their right to stand thus in the science of *Sociology* cannot be questioned. It is not questioned. It is accepted as a great scientific fact by those who are interested in learning something about the beginnings of civilization.

"Survival in culture," says Mr. Tylor, "placing

<sup>1</sup> Kelly's "Indo-European Folk-Lore," preface, page vi.

all along the course of advancing civilization way-marks full of meaning to those who can decipher their signs, even now sets up in our midst primæval monuments of barbaric thought and life. Its investigation tells strongly in favour of the view that the European may find among the Greenlanders or Maoris many a trace for reconstructing the picture of his own primitive ancestors."<sup>1</sup> Mr. A. Lang has put the matter still more strongly from a purely folk-lore point of view, and I must be pardoned for transferring from his preface to the "Folk-lore Record," vol. ii., words which better explain the subject I am anxious to explain than any I could use. "Setting aside the accidents of folk-lore," says Mr. Lang, "we find the great mass of the more essential popular customs and beliefs existing in almost identical shape, among peoples modern and ancient, peoples barbarous and civilized, peoples of the eastern and the western hemispheres, and of the Australian continent. Now when we find widely and evenly distributed on the earth's surface the rude flint tools of men, we regard these as the oldest examples of human skill. Are we not equally justified in regarding the widely and evenly distributed beliefs in ghosts, kelpies, fairies, wild women of the forests (which are precisely the same in Brittany as in New Caledonia), as among the oldest examples of the working of human fancy? And, to go a step further, is not the nursery-tale which you find among Celts, Germans, Basques, Bechuanas, Aztecs, and Egyptians, obviously a relic of human imagi-

<sup>1</sup> "Primitive Culture," i., 19.

nation, constructed in an age when people now civilized were in the same intellectual condition as people still savage? The flint arrow-head picked up from a British camp is like that which is buried with an Algonquin chief, or which is discovered in Egyptian soil, or on the plain of Marathon, or which tips the reed of a modern Samoyed.<sup>1</sup> Again, the popular tales of modern Samoyeds are often obviously related in plot and incident to, and identical in tone and style with, those which are deci-

<sup>1</sup> I must quote one illustration of Mr. Lang's statement. "A paper was read at the *soirée* of the Historic Society, at the close of last year's [1854] meeting of the British Association in Liverpool, by Mr. Wright, upon the Fauffett antiquities—a collection made by the Rev. Bryan Fauffett, of Heppington, near Canterbury, and which had been gathered from the graves of our forefathers, who existed in this country in a pre-historic period. Mr. Wright observes: 'In the case of a man we almost always find above the right shoulder the iron head of a spear; and in general we may trace, by the colour of the earth, the decayed wood of the shaft, until near the foot of the skeleton lies the iron-spiked ferule which terminated it at the other end. We sometimes meet with one or more smaller heads of javelins or arrows. Closer to the side of the skeleton lies usually a long iron broadsword, not much unlike the claymore of the Scottish Highlanders, of which it is probably the type'—the very weapons of warfare that are at this day used by all the Filatah nations with whom we came in contact on our voyage—the spear with its iron-spiked ferule, the javelins and arrows of different patterns in their blades, and the double-edged Houffa sword, manufactured by themselves, amongst tribes who never until our recent visit looked on the face of an European, and could not have received instructions in armoury fabrication from any so-called civilized nation."—HUTCHINSON'S *Narrative of the Niger*, pp. 75-6, 1855.

phered from Egyptian papyri, or are embedded in the Vedas, or are collected from the lips of Basques in the Pyrenees, Germans in the Black Forest, Celts in Barra, Zulus by the Buffalo River. To return to the analogy of the arrow-heads, how is the essential identity in form of the British, the Red Indian, the Greek, the Egyptian flint arrow-head, explained? Obviously by the simple fact that on English, American, Greek, and Egyptian soil there once existed races as simple, and as necessarily driven to the use of stone implements, as are the modern savages, who still use tools of flint. No one will say that people, after acquiring the art of using metals, will prefer to resort as a general rule to the employment of stone. No; the arrow-heads in the ground attest the ancient presence of barbarism on Greek, English, and Egyptian soil. Let us turn again to the fairy-tales. I am anxious to make out a parallel between them and the arrow-heads. I conceive that they are savage and early in character, that in style and type of incident they bear the marks of savage fancy as clearly as the arrow-head bears the marks of the rude stone hammer. And I conclude that many popular tales among Greeks, ancient and modern, Egyptians, Vedic Aryans, Basques, Celts, Germans, are just as plainly relics and survivals of the savage stage of fancy as the flint arrow-heads in European soil, and the rude clay pipkins of Celtic graves and of the modern cotters in the Hebrides, are relics and survivals of savage art and manufacture."

My task in the present case is a much simpler and

more humble one than that sketched out by the graphic pen of Mr. Lang. All that I propose doing is to travel in his company and in that of Mr. Tylor for a short distance of their journey and with a much lighter load. Instead of taking with me the folklore of all Europe and going into the homes and lands of savages, I propose taking only the folk-lore of England; and when I have secured my small stock of comparisons, I propose showing how this journey of mine has been equal to a journey backward through all the stages of English civilization to a time when the inhabitants of this island belonged to the class of primitive man who would have supplied Roman or Greek inquirers with the self-same knowledge that the modern inquirer obtains from modern savages. To put the whole question shortly in its historical aspect, I would say that by comparing English and German customs we arrive at a Teutonic stage of early life; take into this field the Scandinavian, the Celtic, and the Hindoo groups, and we arrive at an Aryan stage; take in yet earlier groups, and we come upon a thoroughly primitive stage of political and social life, the records of which are of inestimable value to the student of man and his works. Leaving for abler hands the task of this wide field of comparative study, I keep for the most part to the two ends of the subject, the English end and the savage end, and try by this means to indicate some lost facts of early village life in Britain. I do not say it is Teutonic life, or early European life, or Aryan life, but simply that it is primitive life and may belong to any one or all

of the ethnological groups to which English institutions belong.

I want specially to guard against one misapprehension that might arise from my mode of dealing with the subject. I do not pretend to have taken into consideration the whole corpus of English folk-lore. When all my comparisons are made, it will be found that there remains a great quantity of folk-lore not included in my studies of primitive life in Britain as brought to light by this short treatise on comparative folk-lore. That I have not dealt with this unworked material does not mean to say that it cannot be dealt with hereafter, but simply that for present purposes it has not been included in the small section of the subject with which I have begun. On the other hand, it must not be supposed that all the folk-lore not included by me is a relic of primitive life; because it can well be conceived, and indeed proved, that civilized people produce a growth of popular superstition within their own society, just as savage people do. The idea that it is unlucky to go under a ladder, for instance, is a superstition belonging to civilized society, based no doubt upon the primitive conception of things, but distinctly in form and meaning of modern origin. Still all this unworked material has a place of its own, and must be reckoned with in the final results of a study of comparative folk-lore. There are many obstacles to a complete assortment of folk-lore into primitive and non-primitive sections. Particularly is this so when taking as the basis of operations the folk-lore of one particular country, like Britain in the

present case. The proof of similarity with savage custom cannot always be given, because we may not possess any means of making the direct comparison. Folk-lore has developed in form and meaning just as language and law have. To be able to identify every item of folk-lore with its primitive original we must proceed backwards through, it may be, long lines of transitional forms. This labour may be obviated in many instances by enlarging the basis of the civilized group of folk-lore from an exclusive national group, like that of Great Britain in the present case, to a continental group; because the process of social development has affected particular branches of popular superstition differently in different countries—in one country it may have left its primitive form almost intact, in another it may have completely altered it. Thus a custom or superstition in England may be quite different from anything we know of in savage life, until we come to see how this self-same custom is represented in German or Scandinavian folk-lore, where it is often preserved in a more original form; or the converse of this may be the case. All this work comes into the department of comparative folk-lore. But for the present I have contented myself with dealing with direct analogies; first, because they give a tolerably complete picture without any serious blemishes in the detail or in the outline; secondly, because I have laboured to be as concise and clear as possible in presenting for the first time a study of folk-lore relics of primitive life in Britain.

The many connections which exist between Eng-

lish folk-lore and savage custom have not been placed fairly before the student of English antiquities. When they exist in literature, they exist only by accident, as it were, not in any specified grouping, not in any historical aspect. It seems to me, however, that it is well worth while to make some researches into this curious subject, perhaps not so much from an English-history point of view simply, as from an anthropological point of view as well. The survival of primitive amidst civilized life, the connection between savage man and civilized man, is seen at a greater advantage from this narrower sphere of research. But still the greatest advantage will be to the student of English antiquities—it will make him think of their value from a new point of view altogether, and it will teach him new lessons from his old institutions and old customs and habits.

Before proceeding to our task, I have a word to say upon the general question of the classification of folk-lore. At present we seem to be content with a haphazard arrangement based upon the peculiarity of each custom and its place in modern ideas. But surely all this is wrong upon scientific grounds. Instead of classifying customs and superstitions according to their own facility for literary arrangement, or according to the modern ideas of births, deaths, marriages, domestic life, fairies, and so on, we should first of all appeal to those studies which have dealt with the social formations of primitive man, and map out from thence a general arrangement of primitive society, within which to include the folk-lore belongings of the primitive social



group. Archæology will tell us all about the primitive village, its huts and its lands. Comparative politics will tell us all about the reciprocal rights and duties of villager to villager, and the modes of existence. And what the folklorist has to do, is to add his contribution to these departments of knowledge. Modern folk-lore was the custom of primitive society, and it must have been prevalent within the village and alongside all the facts of village life. It thus helps our view of the general aspect of primitive life in Britain. To pick out an isolated savage custom, and compare it with English custom, without reference to the state of society to which this custom belonged, is to tell only half a tale, and that perhaps in a wrong way, based upon wrong foundations, and leading to wrong conclusions. But to learn that this comparison has given us back again one of the lost items of village life in Britain; to learn that we see once more the action of a villager in his outlying plot of arable land, in his pasture grounds, in his assembly, in his own household, is to re-kindle life amidst the archæological objects which without this knowledge are lifeless enough.

With only archæology to help us, the mud huts or cave dwellings are untenanted; the flint implements, the ornaments, the domestic utensils are ownerless; the graves have no associations beyond the skeleton remains. The agricultural work is mapped out by the aid of comparative politics, but we see and know nothing of the workman. The old-world gods are set up on their pedestals; but the worshippers and all the outpourings of their

minds are but dimly seen far in the background. But guided by comparative folk-lore we may once more restore life into this desolated region, because we can once more get at some of the thoughts and fancies which accompanied the inhabitants of the primitive village throughout the several stages of their daily routine.

During the progress of our researches I shall more definitely point out to what particular branch of early village life the different items of folk-lore of modern England belong. But in order to give some idea at the outset of the kind of social group with which we shall find ourselves interested, I will here briefly sketch an outline of a typical village community as it exists in India and other primitive lands, and as it is known to have existed in England and the western world. So far as the following pages are concerned, we deal with one portion only of this primitive community—the village itself and the village homestead. We do not get beyond the boundary of the village, but in the following short description I include all the main features of house, and village, and lands.

The main features of the primitive village community may be thus broadly arranged: first, the inclosed habitations of the people, afterwards known as the village or *tún*, town. This represents the centre-point from which issued all the rights over the adjacent territory, and in the community; each family of villagers has there its homestead, house, courtyard, farm buildings,<sup>1</sup> and, according to Nasse,

<sup>1</sup> Stubb's "Const. Hist.," i., 49.

as much land as was requisite to form a garden, kitchen-garden, and for flax and other culture which required a constant protection.<sup>1</sup> All this formed an inclosed spot sacred against all comers, the home which came to be popularly called an Englishman's castle, the first step in the history of real property law. Then come the common lands, over which the villagers have only cultivating rights, according to rules determined upon at the common assembly of the people. This assembly, formed of the elders of the people, is represented in early European history by a non-development of the primitive institutions, and in modern Europe by a wealth of curious survivals of primitive institutions. It is best represented by what we find in Russia, Switzerland, and elsewhere. In Russia the assembly of inhabitants of the commune determines the time of sowing and harvest.<sup>2</sup> In Switzerland, all the commoners above the age of eighteen assemble, of absolute right, every year, in April, to receive the report of accounts, and to regulate current affairs.<sup>3</sup> In Germany the inhabitants assembled to deliberate on all that concerned the cultivation, and to determine the order and time of the various agricultural operations.<sup>4</sup> In Holland, the partners in the work met once a year, on St. Peter's day, in a general assembly, or *bolting*. They appeared in arms; and no one could absent himself, under pain of a fine. This assembly directed all the details as to the enjoyment of the

<sup>1</sup> Nasse, "Agric. Commun.," p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Laveleye's "Primitive Property," p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

common property ; appointed the works to be executed ; imposed pecuniary penalties for the violation of rules, and nominated the officers charged with the executive power. The mound where the *bolting* met (Malenpol) is still visible in Heldermalenveld, and at Spoolderberg, near Zwolle.<sup>1</sup>

Round the village are the inclosed grafs-lands, for the rearing of calves, &c. ; round this the arable land for three crops ; then the meadow ground for hay harvest ; then the stinted pasture lands ; and, finally, the wooded pasture, in primitive times the forest or mark boundaries of the whole community.<sup>2</sup>

Individual ownership in land is not recognized. In the typical village communities of Germany, the land is the property of the village as a corporate body. Individuals only acquire the use of a certain portion for a limited period. Each family or household has allotted to it a strip of the arable land, and possesses the rights of grazing cattle, drawing water, and hewing wood in the pasture lands, river, and wood. But at the end of a certain period—three, five, or seven years—the arable land is again cast into one common lot, and a new division is made, giving each household a strip equal in extent, but different in situation, to the former strip, and so dividing equally the use of fertile and sterile land among the villagers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Laveleye's "Primitive Property," pp. 283, 284.

<sup>2</sup> See Nasse, p. 17, and "Essay on the Land Tenure of Germany," by R. B. D. Morier, Cobden Club Essays, 1st series.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Fenton here gives an admirable summary from many sources. See "Early Hebrew Life," pp. 30, 31.

Then what I have to ask my readers to do, is to accompany me to these primitive villages of Britain. We shall there see some of the rites performed upon the foundation of the homestead; we shall see how sacred the house was in the minds of primitive men; we shall peep into the house and see many of the domestic usages that went on from day to day; we shall listen to some of the stories that were told, and see how these stories are but a reflex of what was going on around the narrators; and, finally, we shall take part in some of their village customs. The one cardinal fact we must bear in mind is that this primitive village is a community of customs and interests; if within the family individuals possess rights of their own, outside of this in all the means of existence everything is in common, one is not rich and another poor, one does not possess more knowledge of domestic joys and comforts than another—the individual, in short, is the child of the community, and as such obeys the unwritten laws and usages which declare that everything personal must give way to the village.





## CHAPTER II.

### THE SETTLEMENT OF THE VILLAGE.



MAKING up the general position as foreshadowed in the introductory chapter, we first deal with the village homestead, from which issues all the individual rights of the community, and around which is situated all the cultivated lands and the outlying wastes of the village. The homestead in short is the centre-point from which all else starts.

When a primitive tribe of people, either migrating to a new land altogether, or a primitive family group breaking off from a parent stem to make a clearing in the forest for itself, fixed upon the spot most advantageous for settlement, the first thing to be done was the foundation of the homestead. This was an important matter to the mind of primitive man, because every locality was the home of and was protected by its special deities. This early faith has given rise to the formulating in India of a written treatise upon the duties of builders, who must first ascertain by accurate measurement the exact position of *Vasthû-purusha*

—the God of the Earth.<sup>1</sup> We have here the commencement of a large class of ancient faiths, namely, those attaching to forest deities, hill deities, land deities, and the like. These faiths are very general. They form, in fact, a section of the wide study of fairy lore. Without, however, going deeply into this, I must give one or two examples of these local deities in illustration of what I shall have to say hereafter. Everywhere the hills are the abode of fairies. Even in Polynesia we learn that wherever the Ngatoro ascended a hill, he left marks there to show that he claimed it; the marks he left were fairies.<sup>2</sup> Trees also occupy a conspicuous place in all religious systems—Chinese, Hindu, Persian, Arabian, Babylonian, and Assyrian. In our own land when an oak is being felled, before it falls it shrieks and groans, “as if,” says Aubrey, “it were the genius of the oak lamenting.”<sup>3</sup> In Teutonic mythology this is represented more positively. “Temple means also wood,” says Grimm; “what we figure to ourselves as a built and walled house resolves itself, the farther back we go, into a holy place untouched by human hand, embowered and shut in by self-grown trees. There dwells the deity, veiling his form in rustling foliage of the boughs.”<sup>4</sup> In India, again, the belief in forest deities is very prevalent, and all wood-cutters make

<sup>1</sup> “Indian Antiquary,” v. 230.

<sup>2</sup> Grey’s “Polynesian Mythology,” p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Aubrey’s “Gentilisme and Judaisme,” edit. Britten, p. 247.  
Cf. Denny’s “Folklore of China,” p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> Grimm’s “Teutonic Mythology,” p. 69.

sacrifices to them.<sup>1</sup> In Polynesian mythology we have the same idea fully represented. It is related how Rata went to the forest, and having found a very tall tree he felled it and cut off its noble branching top, intending to fashion the trunk into a canoe; and all the insects which inhabit trees and the spirits of the forests were angry at this . . . and they all came and took the tree and raised it up again.<sup>2</sup> And in Africa Livingstone relates that while "the Balonda were still building their village, they had found time to erect two little sheds at the chief dwelling in it, in which were placed two pots having charms in them. When asked what medicine they contained, they replied 'Medicine for the Barimo'; but when I rose and looked into them they said they were medicine for the game."<sup>3</sup>

Now what we must conclude from this widespread phase of belief is that the spots where the primitive homestead was to be built were fully guarded by the spirit-world. This is then the first step towards re-arranging in archaic sequence our scattered items of folk-lore, for it helps us to understand what the foundation of a homestead really was. In our own land we can hardly realize that at one time the villages that are now marked on our maps commenced their existence as a temporary residence almost of a family or clan. We all know Mr. Kemble's very fine picture of how these settlements began:—"On the natural clearings

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hunter's "Statistical Account of Bengal," i., 312.

<sup>2</sup> Grey's "Polynesian Mythology," p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Livingstone's "South Africa," p. 275.



in the forest, or on spots prepared by man for his own uses; in valleys bounded by gentle acclivities which poured down fertilizing streams; or on plains which here and there rose, clothed with verdure, above surrounding marshes; slowly and step by step, the warlike colonists adopted the habits and developed the character of peaceful agriculturists. All over England there soon existed a network of communities, the principle of whose being was separation, as regarded each other; the most intimate union as respected the individual members of each."<sup>1</sup> How these communities spread and sent forth daughter-communities over the land, must be learnt from Mr. Kemble's own pages. But just let us step for one moment to another land, where the communities have not yet become thoroughly settled, where cultivation means a periodical shifting of the village and not a periodical shifting of the lands. Here the business of settlement is not the great event of an era but the ordinary event of a year or so; and thus we get a stage further back into primitive society. Among the wild tribes of Southern India, the site of the village is changed as often as the spots fit for cultivation in the vicinity are exhausted. Mr. Lewin, describing the departure of a tribe to another site, says: "I have sometimes met a hill community as they were changing their residence; long files of men, women, and children, every soul of the village, in fact, proceed to their new place of abode, each one with a long circular

<sup>1</sup> Kemble's "Saxons in England," i., pp. 65, 70. Cf. Laveleye's "Primitive Property," p. 34.

basket slung at their backs and supported by a broad strip of soft bark passing over the forehead. In some of the baskets are their household goods; in others a child and a young pig sleep contentedly together. In the old village they have left behind perhaps half their property, and this without fear, as there are no thieves in the hills. They have gone probably a long distance (two days' journey) to the new site of the village; and on arriving there, every family has to build its own house."<sup>1</sup>

Now these primitive wanderings from place to place, either in their earliest stage, when the villagers followed the course of cultivation, or at later stages where a wholesale migration of tribes from one land to another took place, or at a still later stage where branches from an over-populated community went forth into the waste and forest to find new homes, were accompanied by some elements of the spirit world—the ancestral spirit of the tribe.

I will but give one piece of evidence of the migration of the tribal spirit with the tribe, and this comes from the Zulus and is complete in all its aspects. Dr. Callaway gives us the following remarkable story in his invaluable collection of Zulu Folk-lore:—"When we are about to go to another country, if the people do not see the Itongo at the new village, it having staid behind, a branch of umpafa is cut, and perhaps they take a bullock with them, and go to sacrifice it at the old site; they give thanks and call on the Itongo, and sing three songs which he used to sing whilst living; this is a sign of

<sup>1</sup> Lewin's "Wild Races of S. E. India," pp. 31, 40.

weeping for him, to excite pity, so that he may say, 'Truly my children are lonely because they do not see me.' And the branch is dragged when they set out, and they go with it to the new village. Perhaps the snake follows; perhaps it refuses, giving reasons why it does not wish to go to that place, speaking to the eldest son in a dream; or it may be to an old man of the village; or the old queen."<sup>1</sup>

This is a graphic picture enough. It takes us to the very beginnings of social life. I must, however, add two more scraps of information upon this opening section of our subject before proceeding further. What I want to add, is the evidence of the communal nature of these settlements. It is not a case of each man for himself, but it is essentially a case of every man for the community at large.

In Hawaii, when a chief wants a house, he requires the labour of all who hold lands under him; and, says Mr. Ellis, "we have often been surprised at the dispatch with which a house is sometimes built. We have known the natives come with their materials in the morning, put up the frame of a middling-sized house in one day, cover it the next, and on the third day return to their lands. Each division of the people has a part of the house allotted by the chief in proportion to its number; and it is no unusual thing to see upwards of a hundred men at a time working on one house."<sup>2</sup> The same custom

<sup>1</sup> "The Religious System of the Amazulu," by Dr. Callaway, part ii., p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> Ellis, "Missionary Tour through Hawaii," p. 292.

of claiming the assistance of the community in the building of the house is found among the Hindoos, and here it is not limited to the chief's residence.<sup>1</sup> And in Scotland we have the self-same custom extant till within very recent times. The farm-houses in general, and all the cottages at Dornock in Dumfriesshire are built of mud or clay. The manner of erecting them is singular. In the first place they dig out the foundation of the house, and lay a row or two of stones; then they procure, from a pit contiguous, as much clay or brick earth as is sufficient to form the walls; and, having provided a quantity of straw or other litter to mix with the clay, upon a day appointed the whole neighbourhood, male and female, to the number of twenty or thirty, assemble, each with a dung-fork, a spade, or some such instrument. Some fall to the working the clay or mud by mixing it with straw; others carry the materials, and four or six of the most experienced hands build and take care of the walls. In this manner the walls of the house are finished in a few hours; after which they retire to a good dinner and plenty of drink which is provided for them, when they have music and a dance, with which and other marks of festivity, they conclude the evening. This is called a daubing.<sup>2</sup>

The same thing survives in England in a very instructive form, namely, in connection with the formation of a new homestead. A manorial custom

<sup>1</sup> "Asiatic Researches," xvii., p. 398; also cf. Lewin's "Wild Races of S. E. India," pp. 120, 252.

<sup>2</sup> Sinclair's "Stat. Acc. of Scot.," ii., p. 22.

in Lancashire and some parts of Cumberland compels the lord of the manor to grant a piece of ground for a house and garden to a newly-married tenant. All the friends of the bride and bridegroom assemble on the wedding-day, and set to work to construct a dwelling for the young couple, of clay and wood.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hampson's "*Medii Ævi Kalendarium*," i., p. 289. Compare the Turkoman custom, "*Journ. Ethnol. Soc.*" i., p. 75.





## CHAPTER III.

### THE FOUNDATION SACRIFICE.

**T**HIS short indication of the process of settlements of the primitive village, clears the way to an understanding of what follows after, for it is necessary in all cases to approach our subject at each stage from a standpoint in primitive life, and not from theories formed by the facts of civilized life. We come now to a consideration of the foundation sacrifice. And it is to be observed that the necessity for propitiating the spirit of the locality commences one of the most extraordinary chapters of comparative folk-lore which I shall be able to relate during these researches. We find the foundation sacrifice among the lowest races of mankind, and in modern Europe. Originally it stands as a house-custum, that is, it is practised by the communal owners of every house in the village. Subsequently, in the cases where human sacrifice is kept up, it appears to have been limited to the chief house, or a great building, or the gates of the city. But in cases

where a substitution for human sacrifice has become the practice, we find that the custom is distinctly a house-custom. All this is very curious in the interpretation of the village life of primitive man. It leads us at once to the root of much that is otherwise incomprehensible in his nature, in his thoughts, and in his fears. How clearly this custom stands at the very basis of the existence of the primitive village I hope to show later on, but we will first trace out the facts of the foundation sacrifice as they are revealed to us by the aid of comparative folk-lore.

Commencing with the lowest forms of the savage custom, we have one or two very remarkable examples which have already been used by Mr. Tylor.

In Borneo, among the Milanau Dayaks, at the erection of the largest house, a deep hole was dug to receive the first post, which was then suspended over it; a slave girl was placed in the excavation; at a signal the lashings were cut, and the enormous timber descended, crushing the girl to death, a sacrifice to the spirits.<sup>1</sup>

In Great Bassam and Yarriba such sacrifices were usual at the foundation of a house or village;<sup>2</sup> and perhaps the custom of burying children in the floor of their houses among the Sandwich Islanders may be traced to the same idea of foundation sacrifices.<sup>3</sup>

In these instances a human sacrifice is made at the foundation of a house. It would appear, therefore, that we may properly place these as the most primitive forms, first, because the first stage of household

<sup>1</sup> Tylor's "Primitive Culture," i., p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Ellis, "Missionary Tour through Hawaii," p. 302.

life began, no doubt, with one house only for the accommodation of all the villagers; secondly, because the examples we shall have next to mention belong clearly to a stage when the cluster of houses has made some progress towards a village. The mention of the custom amongst the Dayaks is particularly valuable, because these people inhabit large houses which contain the whole tribe.<sup>1</sup>

These earliest forms of the custom develop in two directions—the one having the victim of the sacrifice varied, the other, the building for which the sacrifice was made.

Under the first heading we have the example of the Quop Dayaks, the chief of whom sets up a flagstaff near his house, a chicken being thrown in to be crushed by the descending pole.<sup>2</sup> And it is a remarkable coincidence that in France the custom has survived as a house-custom through the medium of this same substituted sacrifice. In a district of Normandy (La Neuville Chant d'Oifel), a newly-built house must be purified by the slaughter of a cock, the blood of which was shed upon the threshold. Should this ceremony be neglected, the tenant was sure to die in the course of the year.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Journ. of the Geographical Soc.," xvi., p. 298. The same thing is incidental to American Indian tribes. See "Contributions to American Ethnology," i., p. 215; Bancroft, i., 718.

<sup>2</sup> Tylor's "Primitive Culture," i., p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> "Melusine," i., p. 11. M. Baudry, the narrator, was eye-witness of such a sacrifice about fifteen years ago. See also p. 73, where another custom is described, according to which "on doit tuer un poulet (ou une autre volaille) et le faire saigner dans toutes les parties de la maison."



Dr. Hyde Clarke says this custom is Arabic, and has also been adopted by the Turks.<sup>1</sup>

Then from New Zealand another example comes. Mr. Taylor says:—"The verandah (of the house where food was taken) is ornamented in the same way as the interior of the house. Its wall-plate is often carved to represent prostrate figures of slaves, on whose bodies the pillars which support the house stand; this seems to refer to an extinct custom of killing human victims, and placing them in the holes made to receive the posts, that the house, being founded in blood, might stand; the custom still prevails in Borneo and other parts."<sup>2</sup>

Under the second heading there is a large group of very instructive examples, bringing us into contact with special buildings of the village or town, as distinct from the house, and again showing a substitution of animal for human sacrifices.

"In Africa, in Galam, a boy and girl used to be buried alive before the great gate of the city to make it impregnable, a practice once executed on a large scale by a Bambarra tyrant."<sup>3</sup>

"In Polynesia, Ellis heard of the custom, instanced by the fact, that the central pillar of one of the temples at Maeva was planted upon the body of a human victim."<sup>4</sup>

A seventeenth-century account of Japan mentions the belief there that a wall laid on the body

<sup>1</sup> "Notes and Queries," 5th ser., vii., p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor's "New Zealand," p. 502. Cf. Bancroft's "Native Races," i., 161, note 25.

<sup>3</sup> Tylor's "Primitive Culture," i., p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

of a willing human victim would be secure from accident; accordingly, when a great wall was to be built, some wretched slave would offer himself as foundation, lying down in the trench to be crushed by the heavy stones lowered upon him. When the gate of the new city of Tavoy, in Tenasserim, was built, perhaps twenty years ago, Mason was told by an eye-witness that a criminal was put in each post-hole to become a protecting demon.<sup>1</sup>

Formerly in Siam, when a new city gate was being erected, it was customary for a number of officers to lie in wait and seize the first four or eight persons who happened to pass by, and who were then buried alive under the gate posts to serve as guardian angels.<sup>2</sup>

Under the same group must be classified such stories as that of the human victims buried for spirit-watchers under the gates of Mandalay, of the queen who was drowned in a Burmese reservoir to make the dyke safe, of the hero whose divided body was buried under the fortress of Thatung to make it impregnable.<sup>3</sup>

In India, where custom has crystallized more than in any other land, we learn that when Rajah Sala Byne was building the fort of Sialkot, in the Punjab, the foundations of the south-east bastion gave way so repeatedly that he had recourse to a soothsayer, who assured him that it would never stand until the blood of an only son was shed there, wherefore the only son of a widow was sacrificed;<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tylor's "Primitive Culture," i., p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Alabaster's "Wheel of the Law," p. 212.

<sup>3</sup> Tylor's "Primitive Culture," i., p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

and "The Times," in its Indian correspondence, dated from Calcutta, 1st August, 1880, has the following passage:—"A rumour has got abroad, and is firmly believed in by the lower classes of the natives, that the Government is about to sacrifice a number of human beings in order to enforce the safety of the new harbour works, and has ordered the police to seize victims in the streets. So thoroughly is the idea implanted, that people are afraid to venture out after nightfall. There was a similar scare in Calcutta some seven or eight years ago, when the Hooghly bridge was being constructed. The natives then got hold of the idea that Mother Ganges, indignant at being bridged, had at last consented to submit to the insult on the condition that each pier of the structure was founded on a layer of children's heads."<sup>1</sup>

The custom of the Fijians, though varying in detail, seems to belong to the same division of our subject. The spot on which a chief has been killed is sometimes, we are told by Williams, selected as the site of the *bure*, or temple. On setting up the pillars of a temple, and again, when the building is complete, men are killed and eaten.<sup>2</sup>

In these examples we come to the gate of the city, the temple, and the fort, all of them showing a development from the most primitive forms of village life. No longer the foundation of the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Carnac-Temple says that the belief in the foundation sacrifice is current *throughout* India. See "Folk Lore Record," iv., p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Williams's "Fiji," i., pp. 221-2. Cf. Pritchard's "Polynesian Res.," p. 372.

simple house, or even the chief's house, the sacrifice is transferred to much more important buildings as we come upon more civilized types of humanity. And so it is in European folk-lore. The church, the bridge, the castle, the wall of the city, the fortrefs, are the objects of this foundation sacrifice in the legends of Germany, Thuringia, Denmark, Italy, Servia, and other parts of Europe. But it would be tedious to narrate these, as they are set out in detail in Mr. Tylor's "Primitive Culture," and they do not advance the subject now specially in hand. European folk-lore is only parallel to English folk-lore as a common inheritance from Aryan ancestors; but taking up the parallel between savage custom and European folk-lore, we arrive at an earlier stage still in the common inheritance of mankind.

What, then, does English tradition and folk-lore tell us of the foundation sacrifice? I think we shall be able to identify the custom by tracing out the various forms which legends of its occurrence have gradually assumed. In Scotland, says Mr. Tylor, there is current the belief that the Picts, to whom local legend attributes buildings of prehistoric antiquity, bathed their foundation stones with human blood. Surely this is the folk-lore legend of a foundation-sacrifice for the village homestead. It seems to be the only pure tradition of the custom in its earliest form, but there is ample evidence from other sources, and this will be found to divide itself into historical legends, popular superstition, and variants of the legend in transitional and debased forms.

Let us start with the most complete evidence, and see what new developments civilized life has forced folk-lore legends to assume. As might be expected, perhaps, the church is the nucleus round which the legends of foundation sacrifice have most persistently clung. The church was magnified into great importance among the early Christians, and being, perhaps, the only large building in the district, the application of the legend, if not the actual observance of the rite, was naturally connected with it. Moreover, the church nearly always stood upon the site of the pagan temple, and Christian priests often had to compromise between Christian doctrine and pagan customs, to obtain a hearing for their new and civilizing creeds.

The sacrifice of human victims as a foundation sacrifice is related in our earliest chronicles, at a period of history, that is, when the state of society to which the custom really belongs might naturally be called savage with regard to England as well as to modern barbarism. The first instance, too, is connected not with the church, but with a tower. Nennius, in his "*Historia Britonum*," written about the eighth century, is the first to notice the tradition of the celebrated Merlin; but the best version of the story is given by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Though Geoffrey's narrative is altogether rejected as history, there is no reason to reject it as a good collection of the traditions or popular beliefs of his time. His work was far too popular and too much sought after to have been a tissue of romantic inventions from a fertile brain,

even if we can believe that the history of novel-writing begins so early as his era.<sup>1</sup> According to his account, Vortigern was advised by magicians to build a very strong tower for his own safety, since he had lost all his other fortified places. Accordingly he found a suitable place at Mount Erir, where he assembled workmen from several countries and ordered them to build the tower. The builders, therefore, began to lay the foundation; but whatever they did one day the earth swallowed up the next. Let me note here, in passing, that this feature of the story is all-important for our future consideration; it will re-appear, presently, among popular legends of modern times. Vortigern being informed of the non-success of his operations, again consulted his magicians, who told him that he must find out a youth that never had a father and kill him, and then sprinkle the stones and cement with his blood; for by this means only, they said, would he have a firm foundation.<sup>2</sup> Mer-

<sup>1</sup> See Gairdner's "Early Chroniclers of England," p. 158; Stephens's "Literature of the Kymry," pp. 296-310. There are more MSS. of Geoffrey's work than of any other chronicle. Sir T. Duffus Hardy, in his collections of materials for British history, enumerates 192 copies, but I have identified from the Historical MSS. Commission fourteen more copies, which Sir Thomas Hardy does not enumerate.

<sup>2</sup> See Geoffrey of Monmouth's "British History," cap. xvii., book vi. Nennius "Historia Britonum" says that *the ground* on which the citadel was to be built was to be sprinkled with blood; but the Irish version of Nennius, published by the Irish Archaeological Society (pp. 93-97), says, "let his blood be sprinkled upon the dun, for by this means only can it be built." Cap. 40. Matthew Paris also quotes from Geoffrey, *sub anno*

lin, as we all know, was brought to the king for the victim, but he escaped his doom by telling Vortigern of other causes why the buildings disappeared. But this story is not so good as that of St. Columba. Merlin escapes the sacrifice, but St. Columba actually carries out the rite in building on Iona. The legend is that when Columba first attempted to build on Iona, the walls, by the operation of some evil spirit, fell down as fast as they were erected. Columba received supernatural information that they would never stand unless a human victim was buried alive. According to one account the lot fell on Oran, the companion of the Saint, as the victim that was demanded for the success of the undertaking. Others pretend that Oran voluntarily devoted himself and was interred accordingly. At the end of three days Columba had the curiosity to take a farewell look at his old friend and ordered the earth to be removed. Oran raised his swimming eyes and said, "There is no wonder in death, and hell is not as it is reported." The saint was so shocked at this impiety that he instantly ordered the earth to be flung in again, uttering the words, "Uir! Uir! air beal Orain ma'n labhair e tuile comh'radh"—that is, "Earth! Earth! on the mouth of Oran that he may blab no more." This passed into a proverb, and is in use in the Highlands at the present day.<sup>1</sup>

p. 464. See also "The Romance of Merlin," edited by H. B. Wheatley, F.S.A., for the Early English Text Society, p. 29.

<sup>1</sup> "New Statistical Account of Scotland," vii., p. 321; Pennant's "Second Tour in Scotland" (Pinkerton), iii., p. 298.

Taking us wholly out of the category of civilized custom, these early chronicle legends are comparable with modern savage customs. We pass by the parallel customs or traditions of modern Europe, because these take us into Aryan life only; but modern savage custom does much more than this—it declares English folk-lore, in this particular group at all events, and inferably so in other groups, to be the survival of a savage state of thought and existence, which has come down from the earliest times in spite of the progress which human thought and civilization have made beyond barbarism. But what if these legends of chronicle times can be followed up by relics of actual custom? As they at present stand they may be the records of early legendary events which only actually occurred in Celtic Britain. Whether, however, these are traditions which have lived through Roman and Saxon times from the earliest Celtic inhabitants of Britain cannot now be proved; but, noting that the supposed sources of the above legends are all Celtic, a remarkable discovery which I shall now relate tends to show that there is no occasion to stumble over the block which Celtic legendary history puts in our path.

In the year 1876, the old church at Brownsover, Warwickshire, was restored, the earlier parts of the building were of Norman, the latter of early 13th century architecture. The church stands upon the site of an early British entrenchment about two miles from Rugby, and two from the Roman station on the Watling Street road. It was found necessary



to lower the foundations of the north and south walls of the church; and in doing so two skeletons were discovered, one under the north, the other under the south wall—about one foot below the *original* foundations—exactly opposite to each other and about six feet from the chancel wall which crosses the north and south wall of the church at right angles. Each skeleton was covered with an oak slab about six feet in length by ten inches wide and two inches thick—of the colour of bog oak: these pieces of oak plank had evidently been used as carpenter's benches, from the fact that each of them had four mortice-holes cut in them in such a form as to throw the legs outwards, and from the cuts made in them by edged tools. The skeletons were found in a space cut out of the solid clay which had not been moved, on either side, and just large enough to take the bodies placed in them. The skeletons were seen *in situ*; they *could not have been placed there after the original walls had been built*. The skulls were, by an eminent authority, said to be Danish. They were remarkably thick and heavy, as also were the jawbones. The teeth, though a good deal worn, were perfect in condition and number. The feet pointed towards the east.<sup>1</sup> I am aware that the usual explanation of such circumstances as these is that churches are invariably built on old burial-grounds, and hence the finding of the remains, but would this explanation satisfy all the above facts? Certainly it could not answer for the coffin of a priest being built *into the wall* at

<sup>1</sup> "The Antiquary," iii., p. 93.

Snailwell church, Cambridgeshire,<sup>1</sup> and I am inclined to let these two examples stand as archæological evidence of the custom we are now working out from tradition.

Folk-lore is, however, a more thorough guide than archæology in these matters. Leaving these discoveries of human remains as the initial stage out of the Celtic period of the history of Britain, let us turn to some popular superstitions. In Lancashire, to build, or even to rebuild, a house is always fatal to some member of the family, generally to the one who may chiefly have advised or wished for the building or alteration.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Baring Gould points out the following Yorkshire superstition:—"It is said in that county that the first child baptised in a new font is sure to die—a reminiscence of the sacrifice which was used for the consecration of every dwelling and temple in heathen times, and of the pig or sheep killed and laid at the foundation of churches. When I was incumbent of Dalton a new church was built. A blacksmith in the village had seven daughters, after which a son was born, and he came to me a few days before the consecration of the new church to ask me to baptise his boy in the old temporary church and font. 'Why, Joseph,' said I, 'if you will only wait till Thursday the boy can be baptised in the new font on the opening of the new church.'

<sup>1</sup> "The Antiquary," iv., p. 279. Cf. the curious tradition of Lincoln's Inn, *ibid.*, p. 273; also the Leigh tradition, "Nature," 15th June, 1871.

<sup>2</sup> Henderfon's "Folk-Lore of the N. Counties," p. 45.

‘Thank you, Sir,’ said the blacksmith, with a wriggle, ‘but you see it’s a lad, and we shu’d be forry if he were to dee; na if t’had been a lasf instead, why then you were welcome, for ’twouldn’t ha’ mattered a ha’penny. Lasses are ower mony and lads ower few wi’ us.’”<sup>1</sup>

In Suffex, too, we have something of the kind in the custum of burying a bottle full of pins under the hearthstone at the building of a house, to preserve it from witchcraft.<sup>2</sup>

A remarkable story is given by Mr. Henderson, which is unquestionably a debased form of the legend of foundation sacrifice, and I must be pardoned for quoting it at some length, so exactly does it fit in its place here. Its modern framework will be at once detected, but so, I think, will its archaic germ. It is told to account for the peculiar shape of the dining-room in a certain Dartmoor vicarage:—

A clergyman, on taking possession of a living on the confines of Dartmoor, found it necessary to enlarge the house. He lengthened the one sitting-room, and made it into a tolerable dining-room, adding a drawing-room and two or three bedrooms. These improvements satisfied his wife and children; but there was one interested party whom he had left out of consideration—the spirit of his predecessor, an old gentleman who had outlived all his family, and passed many solitary years in the remote parsonage. And ere long the consequences of this neglect appeared. Sounds were soon heard of an

<sup>1</sup> See Henderson’s “Folk-Lore of N. Counties,” pp. 121, 274.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232. Cf. “Archæologia,” xlvi., p. 133, note.

evening as though a figure in a dressing-gown were sweeping in and out of the rooms, and treading with a soft yet heavy tread, and this particularly in the dining-room, where the old vicar had spent the last years of his life. Uneasiness pervaded the household. Servants gave warning and went away; no one applied for their vacant places. The daughters fell ill, and were sent away for change of air; then their mother was anxious about them, and went to see how they were going on; and so the Vicar was left alone, at the mercy of his predecessor's ghost. At last, Mr. Henderson relates, the Vicar himself was scared, and his churchwarden promised to lay the ghost. A jury of seven parsons was convoked, and each sat for half-an-hour with a candle in his hand, and it burned out its time with six, showing plainly that none of them could lay the ghost. Nor was this any wonder, for were they not all old acquaintances of his, so that he knew all their tricks? But the seventh parson was a stranger, and a scholar fresh from Oxford. In his hand the light went out at once. He was clearly the man to lay the ghost, and he did not shrink from his task: he laid it at once, and in a beer-barrel. But now a fresh difficulty arose. What was to be done with the beer-barrel and its mysterious tenant? Nothing occurred to the assembled company but to roll the thing into one corner, and send for the mason to inclose it with stones and mortar. This done, the room looked very odd with one corner cut off. Uniformity would be attained if the other three were filled up as well; and besides, the ghost would

be safer if no one knew the very spot in which he was reposing. So the other corners were blocked up, and with success.<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen that this story, having in the shape of a modern ghost story all the incidents of the foundation sacrifice, practically takes us into the region of substitutes for human sacrifices. Such is the permanence of tradition that this ghost story, told to interest children or Christmas parties, has in reality brought away with it from very early times the recollection of customs that civilization has wiped out. But we have other evidence beside this ghost story.

Mr. Tylor has pointed out that German folk-lore presents us with the substitute of empty coffins being walled up with the structure, and Danish folk-lore with a lamb walled in under the altar to make the church stand fast.<sup>2</sup> In Scotland, however, I have come across a still more curious folk-lore substitute, and one that leads us nearer to the earliest forms of the custom. The famous Cistercian Abbey, founded by Devorgilla, daughter of Allan, Lord of Galloway, and wife to John Balliol, and mother of John Balliol, King of Scotland, it appears was first called "The Abbey of Sweetheart," from the circumstance of her husband's heart being embalmed and enclosed in a box of ivory bound with silver and built into the walls of the church.<sup>3</sup> This is certainly a relic

<sup>1</sup> Henderson's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," pp. 336-7.

<sup>2</sup> "Primitive Culture," i., p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Sinclair's "Statistical Account of Scotland," ii., p. 138.

of the still older custom of sacrificing human victims by building them into the wall, in order to secure the safety of the building.

This custom of substitution carries us away still further into the realms of modern legends or folk-tales. Remembering what has been said above about the importance of the common feature of the Vortigern and the Columba stories, in which all that is built during the day is destroyed at night, let me now quote an Irish folk-tale which commences a series of transitional forms of this tradition as recorded in our modern folk-lore.

“When St. Patrick was building the great church on the Rock of Cashel the workmen used to be terribly annoyed, for whatever they put up by day was always found knocked down next morning. So one man watched and another man watched, but about one o'clock in the night every watcher fell asleep as sure as the hearth-money. At last St. Patrick himself sat up, and, just as the clock struck one, what did he see but a terrible bull, with fire flashing from his nostrils, charging full drive up the hill, and pucking down every stone, stick, and bit of mortar that was put together the day before. ‘Oh, ho!’ says the saint, ‘I’ll soon find one that will fettle you, my brave bull!’ Now who was this but Ushen (Oifin), that St. Patrick was striving to make a good Christian. . . . The day after St. Patrick saw the bull, he up and told Ushen all about what was going on. ‘Put me on a rock or in a tree,’ says Ushen, ‘just by the way the bull ran, and we’ll see what we can do.’ So in the evening he was fettled comfortably in the bough of

a tree on the hillside, and when the bull was firing away up the steep like a thunderbolt, and was nearly under him, he dropped down on his back, took a horn in each hand, tore him afunder, and dashed one of the sides so hard against the face of the wall that it may be seen there this day, hardened into stone. There was no further stoppage of the work, and in gratitude they cut out the effigy of Ushen riding on his pony, and it may be seen inside the old ruins this very day.”<sup>1</sup> This folk-story appears to me to bridge over the chasm between the traditional form and the earliest recorded literary form of the group of popular traditions with which we are now dealing. We have here the sacrifice of the bull, without which the building would not have been completed, and his blood being scattered over the walls. But the main feature of this story seems to rest not so much upon the foundation sacrifice, as upon the incident connected with it, namely, the destruction by night of what was built during the day. This is the particular feature of the story that connects it with the stories of Vortigern and Columba; and the sacrifice of the bull, though appearing only in the background, identifies the legend with the foundation sacrifice.

But even a still better variant of the legend is related in “The Antiquary” (iv., 279), by Mr. J. H. Round.

“In the parish of Tollehunt Knights, on the edge of the Essex marshes, there is still shown in the middle of a field an enclosed uncultivated space. On the slope of a hill at some little distance there

<sup>1</sup> Kennedy’s “*Fire-side Stories of Ireland*,” p. 153.

stands an ancient manor-house, commonly known as Barn Hall. The legend relates that it was originally attempted to erect this hall on the above enclosed spot, but that the devil came by night and destroyed the work of the day. A knight, attended by two dogs, was set to watch for the intruder; a tussle ensued, and the Prince of Darkness, snatching up a beam from the building, hurled it to the site of the present hall, exclaiming as he did so—

‘Wherefoe’er this beam shall fall  
There shall stand Barn Hall.’

The original beam was believed to remain in a cellar of the present house, and no one, it was said, could cut it without wounding themselves. But the point of the tale is yet to be told. The devil, enraged at the knight’s interference, vowed that he would have him at his death, whether he were buried in the church or out of it. Now this doom was ingeniously averted *by burying him in the wall, half in, and half out, of the church.*”

In this unique form of the legend we find a striking confirmation of the solution I have suggested. We have the nightly destruction, and we have the mural burial, which, as will presently be shown, is a form of the foundation sacrifice.

Keeping these variants of the story in mind, therefore, it would appear that it has lasted in English tradition down to quite modern times. Still approaching the subject along the lines of a possible transition in the forms of the legend, we can discover one feature after another dwindling



away from the incidents of the story, until we come upon a very meagre form of it indeed. The first group cuts out the incident of animal or human sacrifice, but retains the animal cause of the removal of the building material during the night. It is a group of church building legends which are very common in all parts of the country, and must have descended from a common origin.

The church of Breedon, in Leicestershire, stands alone on a high hill, the village being at its foot. The inhabitants relate that the founder assigned a central spot for the site of the church, but when the builders began to erect the fabric there, all they built in the course of the day was carried away by "doves" in the night, and skilfully built in the same manner on the hill where the church now stands.<sup>1</sup> And so for the parish church of Winwick, Lancashire, the founder had destined a different site for it; but after progress had been made at the original foundation, at night time a "pig" was seen running hastily to the site of the new church, crying or screaming aloud "We-ee-wick, we-ee-wick, we-ee-wick." Then taking up a stone in his mouth he carried it to the spot sanctified by the death of St. Oswald, and thus succeeded in removing all the stones which had been laid by the builders.<sup>2</sup> The legend of "Burnley Cross and the Demon Pigs" is of a similar character. Prior to the foundation of any church in Burnley, religious rites were celebrated on the spot where the ancient cross now stands. Upon the attempt being made to erect an

<sup>1</sup> Choice Notes, "Folk-Lore," p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

oratory, the materials were nightly removed by supernatural agents in the shape of pigs to where St. Peter's church now stands.<sup>1</sup> At Leyland similar incidents are related with a "cat" as the agency, and elsewhere a "fish" takes the place.<sup>2</sup>

This form of the legend is very instructive as a transitional form in the long process of decay from the original primitive custom. We have in place of the bull, "a pig," "a cat," "doves," and a "fish." And what is more important as a connecting link with the foundation sacrifice, there is in the Lancashire story, the distinct reminiscence of the death of St. Oswald having sanctified the foundation.

Still keeping to that feature of the stories which has retained the firmest hold of the popular mind, we now come upon a group of legends which simply speak of general causes or witches and fairies being the agency of the removal from one place to another.

In Roby's "Traditions of Lancashire" (vol. i. p. 27, first series), there is a tale entitled "The Goblin Builders," showing how "Gamel the Saxon thane, lord of Recedham or Rached (now Rochdale), intended to build a chapel unto St. Chadde, nigh to the banks of the Rache or Roach." A level convenient spot was chosen for the site, but thrice were the foundations there laid, and thrice were all the building materials conveyed by invisible agency from this flat spot to a more airy and elevated situation. At last the thane, ceasing to

<sup>1</sup> Harland and Wilkinfon's "Legends and Traditions of Lancashire," p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> See a note in Choice Notes, "Folk-Lore," p. 4.

strive against fate, gave up his original design, and the present church was built upon the locality designated by these unseen workmen.<sup>1</sup> The parish church of Wendover stands half-a-mile from the town. It was to have been built upon a field adjoining the town, and there the building of it was begun, but the materials were all carried away by witches, or, as some relate, by fairies, and deposited where the church now stands. The field in which the church was to have been built is still called "Witches' Meadow."<sup>2</sup> At Alfriston, the foundations of the church were originally laid in a field on the west side of the town, and known as the Savyne Croft, but every night the stones that had been laid during the previous day were hurled by supernatural agency over the houses into a field called "The Tye," where the church now stands. It is added that a certain wise man observed in this field four oxen lying asleep, rump to rump, in the form of a cross, and that that incident suggested the cruciform arrangement which was ultimately carried out in the building.<sup>3</sup> At Waldron, the materials for a church, which had been deposited in a field on Horeham farm, were removed by a like mysterious agency to the present site of Waldron church. The spot near Horeham is still known as "Church Field."<sup>4</sup> At Udimore, near Rye, the villagers, according to ancient tradition, began to build themselves a

<sup>1</sup> See also Harland and Wilkinfon's "Legends and Traditions of Lancashire," p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Choice Notes, "Folk-Lore," p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> "Suffex Archæological Collections," xiii., p. 226.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

church, on the opposite side of the little river Ree to that where it was eventually reared. Night after night, however, witnessed the dislocation of huge stones from the walls built during the preceding day. Unseen hands hurled the stones to the opposite side of the river, and an awful supernatural voice in the air uttered, in warning and reproachful tones, "O'er the mere! o'er the mere!"<sup>1</sup> At Inveraven, in Banffshire, there is a tradition that the rebuilding of the old castle of Ballindalloch near a small stream was prevented by unseen agency—the part built in the daytime being always thrown down through the night. At length a voice was heard, saying, "Build in the cow haugh, and you shall meet with no interruption." This was done, and the house consequently raised and remained.<sup>2</sup>

There are still more debased forms of the old building legends, and one example of these I must give. The church of Over in Cheshire stands about a mile from the more populous part of the village. Tradition ascribes its present position to his Satanic majesty. Alarmed at the pious zeal of villagers in attending their church so well, and fearful of losing his worshippers by its convenience, he sought to avert such loss to himself by robbing them of the building and carrying it away bodily; but the prayers of the monks prevailed against him so far that he was glad to drop his burden as quickly as possible, when it fell where it now stands.

The legend of the church is interesting as a rem-

<sup>1</sup> "Suffex Archæological Collections," xiii., p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> "New Statistical Account of Scotland," xiii., p. 134.

nant of the past, and a poetical version of it has been given by Major Egerton Leigh in his "Ballads and Legends of 'Cheshire'" (p. 191), from which I quote a verse or two:—

"Over Church in days of yore,  
So speaks traditionary lore,  
Amidward Over flood.

"In vain the Devil spread his net,  
The church, protecting, ever let  
His schemes against men's souls.

"At length he rush'd the church to seize  
Nor less his devilish spite might please,  
And bear it far away.

"With claws the fane from earth he tore,  
And on his impious wings upbore  
One morn at break of day.

"He dreamt not he was heard and spied  
By monks he had so oft defied,  
Since first from Heaven he fell.

"At once in holy chorus swell,  
Their earnest prayers (of sin the knell),  
To stay the robber's flight.

"Still undismay'd he onward flew,  
Though heavier still his burden grew,  
He held on like despair.

"What sound is that now moves fresh fears?  
The Devil trembles as he hears  
Bells rolling through the air.

"Hark! from some distant tower unseen,  
(Vale Royal's Abbey church, I ween),  
A crashing peal rings forth.

"Well know we evil spirits fear  
The sound of bells so strong, so clear,  
Such holy notes they dread.

“ As Satan struggles on in pain,  
His boasted strength begins to wane,  
Though eke by malice fed.

“ Stunned by monks’ prayers and pealing noise,  
In vain he strives the weight to poise,  
Swift from his grasp it fell.

“ He spurned the church as down it flew,  
But a dark mist its mantle threw  
For safety round the pile.

“ Preserved it stood—there still it stands—  
Rescued from sacrilegious hands,  
Escaped the foul fiend’s blow.

“ One measured mile from the old site  
Where first from air it did alight,  
The church still Satan scares.

“ This is the reason why they say  
That Over Church from Over town,  
Stands distant many roods away.”

To these legends, as debased forms of the foundation sacrifice legends, may, I think, be added some of the ghost-laying stories. Already, in the story quoted from Mr. Henderson, we have the subject brought before us by a very direct analogy, and although in other stories we cannot revert back to the incident of building being the cause of the subsequent sacrifice, yet this is an incident that might well have dropped out in the course of transmission. Thus the legend connected with Clegg Hall, Lancashire, records that a pious monk wishing to “lay” the two ghosts who haunted the place came to a parley with them, and that they then demanded, as a condition of future quiet, the sacrifice of a body and a soul. The cunning monk substitutes the body of a cock

and the sole of a shoe.<sup>1</sup> This substitution of the cock for the human sacrifice is curiously like the substitution among the Dayaks and in France when foundation sacrifice is the object in view. And we have these kind of stories elsewhere. The sacrificial element in them is plain enough, and if in the nursery they are told as mere ghost stories, they must in the study, it appears to me, reflect the old tradition that the spirit of the place requires a sacrifice before the building can be inhabited.

These are typical examples of a class of traditions which are common enough in England and Scotland.<sup>2</sup> Taken singly, they might perhaps be regarded as an adaptation of legendary events to unexplained or unrelated historical facts—as the ideal fancies of villagers in explaining a curious phenomenon of their own villages, or as Mr. Lach-Szyrma has suggested (“*Antiquary*,” iii., p. 188), they may be the popular personification of storm-myths. This is no doubt the origin of one class of building legends, but for the class with which we are now specially dealing, I think my grouping affords the correct explanation. Unrecorded as they have been up to the present time in literature, could the Suffex peasant relate the self-same tradition as the Scotch Highlander, supposing both of them to have created the legend independently of each other? This question—the parallel to which is asked in many of the wider stages

<sup>1</sup> Harland and Wilkinfon's “*Legends and Traditions of Lancashire*,” p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> See many curious examples collected in “*The Antiquary*,” iii., pp. 188-189, and iv., pp. 33-34, 85, 133-4.

of folk-lore—is answered, and successfully answered, by the theory of a common origin of the earliest forms of this tradition. That form had connected with it an incident of savage custom which has gradually died out in the process of its traditional life in modern days. How gradual was the decay is, I think, shown by the distinct transitional groups into which this class of stories is capable of being divided, each group keeping fast hold of an important and dramatic feature which appears in the earliest group of all. Moreover, in evidence of the fact that this feature, which has filtered through all obstacles into modern literature, is a primitive feature of the story, we find that in addition to the Suffex peasant and the Scotch Highlander having preserved the self-same form of it, the New Zealander has also to be included in the case. One cannot positively say whether the New Zealand tradition is due to Christian missionary teachings or to a development of culture in this particular respect among the New Zealanders. But in the tradition about some remarkable-looking rocks at Whangarei, we have a distinct parallel with the latest forms of English folk-lore traditions of invisible agency interfering with the work of building. We do not even get the incident of sacrifice of animal life—nothing but the bare legend as it is told in English villages, with but little meaning until we come to group the various versions together. The tradition may be summarized as follows: Formerly a very powerful priest, Manaia, lived at Whangarei; his wife, Maunga-kie-kie, was also a priestess. The



tradition states that the rocks were made by Manaia's daughter for the convenience of fishing, but her father's gods every night replaced all the stones she had brought during the day and returned them to their original position. This opposition being continued night after night, she at last gave it up as being quite hopeless. The entire family then determined on going from Whangarei to the Bay of Islands, but having quarrelled among themselves, the gods, who were looking on, turned the whole party into stone.<sup>1</sup>

If this last important addition to our evidence is not due to the influence of civilized teaching, the whole group of building traditions affords very curious instances of the parallels between English folk-lore and savage custom. Not only is the most archaic English form of a custom parallel to the existing customs of savages, but when savages have broken away from their early customs and retained, either by tradition or symbolism, remnants of their savage rites, these new forms in savage life parallel the folk-lore forms of English life.

I cannot pass away from these legends without mentioning the fine example we get from Roumania. It is particularly interesting to us in connection with the present subject, because it is an illustration of the way in which, when English traditions have not retained their earliest forms, European parallel traditions may be the link between the civilized tradition and the savage custom. This Roumanian story

<sup>1</sup> Taylor's "New Zealand," pp. 276-7.

has all the features of the primitive savage custom and of the later traditional forms. There is the human sacrifice, that is to say, and the demolition of the building by unseen agency. Moreover, this story is so beautiful in its narrative, that my readers will not object to having it transferred to these pages from the collection of "Roumanian Fairy Tales and Legends," published anonymously by Miss E. B. Mawer, of Bucharest.

The story relates how Radu the Black, Prince of the Country, and founder of the principality, wanted to build a monastery, and setting out with a numerous cavalcade in search of a suitable site, he comes upon a young shepherd playing on his flute a *doïna* (national wail) of his country.

"Shepherd," cried Radu, stopping him, "thou must often with thy flocks have explored the banks of the Argis; tell me hast thou never seen a wall hidden amongst the green brushwood of the nut trees?"

"Yes, Prince, I have seen a wall which was begun to be built, and my dogs howled at it, as if they had been howling for a death."

"Right," said the Prince, with satisfaction, "it is there that our monastery shall rise;" then calling Manoli and his masons, "Listen," he said, "I wish you to build me an edifice, so noble and beautiful, that its equal shall never be found, neither in the present nor in the future. I promise to you all treasures, titles, and estates, which shall make you equal with the Boyards of my court. I promise on the honour of a prince, and you know you may

rely on my promises. Wait! don't thank me yet! My word is sacred, and again I say, what I promise I always carry out; if you do not succeed, I will have you walled up living in the foundation of the monastery, which shall be built by cleverer hands than yours."

The masons get quickly to work; they measure the ground, they dig the soil, and soon a majestic wall begins to rise. Satisfied with their work, and certain of success, they fall asleep, and dream of the lands, and treasures, and titles which their skillfulness is to bring them. Morning comes, the golden rays of the sun dart over the waters of the Argis; the cool morning air, and the desire to continue their work—only interrupted for needful repose—arouse the masons; they seize their tools and walk quickly to re-commence their labours; but alas! during the night all had crumbled and disappeared.

Instead of sitting down and complaining, the masons re-commenced their task, and at the end of the day they have repaired the terrible disaster, and when evening comes they again seek repose.

Again morning, and again sunlight reveals the crumbled walls! This happens four times to them.

The fourth night, notwithstanding his anxiety, Manoli sleeps, and he dreams a strange and terrible dream. He awakes and calls his comrades. "Listen," he says, "to what has been told me while I was asleep. A voice whispered to me that all our work will be in vain; that each night the work of each day will be destroyed unless we wall up, living,

in our edifice, the first woman, be she wife or sister, who in the early morning comes to bring our food."

The prospects of the honours which the construction of the monastery was to bring them; the riches and titles with which their work was to be recompensed, decided the workmen, and they each swore a solemn oath, to wall up while living, be she sister or wife, the first woman who should come amongst them next day.

Morning arrived clear and pure, as if it would not light on one despairing heart. Manoli anxiously looks into the distance, his oath strikes him with terror, and gets on a hillock to look around him; he even mounts a scaffolding, and his eyes scan fearfully the surrounding plain.

Distant, far distant, he sees something advancing. Who comes in such haste? In truth it is a woman, careful and diligent, bringing the early morning meal to the man she loves. See! with quick, light step she comes nearer and nearer,—she is recognized. It is the beautiful Flora, the wife of Manoli!

Everything disappears from Manoli's sight, the sun is dark and swollen; instead of light there is the darkness of the tomb.

He falls on his knees, and joining his hands, calls, "Oh Lord God! open the cataracts of Heaven, shower on the earth torrents of water, turn the streamlets into lakes, oh merciful Saviour, that my wife may not be able to reach me here!" Did God listen to his prayer? Shortly clouds cover the sky, and heavy rain began to fall, but Flora

continued her way. Was not her husband waiting? What mattered these obstacles?

Against stream and torrent she still advances, and Manoli watching her, again kneels, joins his hands, and cries, "Oh my God, send a wind to twist and tear up the plantains, to overthrow the mountains, and to force my wife to return to the valley!"

The wind rises and whistles in the forest, uproots the plantains, overthrows mountains, yet Flora only hastens more quickly to reach her husband, and at length arrives at the fatal spot. Then the masons tremble at the sight, but tremble with joy.

While Manoli, grief-stricken, takes his wife in his arms and says, "Listen, my dear. To amuse ourselves, we are going to pretend to build you up in these walls; it will be I who will place you there, so be very quiet."

Flora laughingly consented, for she loved Manoli and had full confidence in him. Manoli sighed heavily, but though sighing, began to build the wall, which already reaches to the ankles of Flora—to her knees—higher and higher. Flora laughs no longer, but seized with terror, cries, "Manoli, Manoli! leave off this cruel joking! the wall presses on me, it will crush me!"

Manoli is silent, but works on: the wall still rises, and is now level with her waist.

Again she cries, "Manoli! Manoli! stay your hand; soon I shall no longer see you; I love you so, and you are sacrificing me, and yet you say you love me too."

Manoli works on, and to console himself, thinks, "Shortly I shall no longer hear her complaining; suffering is not so bad when one does not witness it."

The work proceeds—the wall rises even to her eyebrows—at length she is hid from sight entirely. Manoli moves away, but still hears the faint moaning voice of his wife: "Manoli, Manoli! the wall is pressing on me and my life is dying out!"

\* \* \* \* \*

The day was magnificent on which the Prince came to kneel and give thanks at the beautiful monastery, the best proportioned and the finest in style which had ever been built. The master masons, Manoli amongst them, swelling with pride, waited at the top of the scaffolding the visit, the praise and the recompense of Radu, their Prince.

But the Prince commanded the people below to knock away props, poles, and planks, and the masons fell from the great height to an instantaneous death. Manoli alone caught at a projecting carving, and passing from one to another, would soon have reached the ground, but there came from the wall which he was touching, the cry, "Manoli, Manoli! the cold wall is pressing on me, my body is crushed, and my life is dying out." At this sound, Manoli turns giddy and faint, and falls to the earth.

On the spot where he fell, there springs a fountain of clear, sparkling water, but its taste is salt and bitter as the tears which are shed in Roumania,

even now, when any one relates the sorrows and the sacrifice of Flora, the wife of Manoli.

This beautiful and touching legend may well end our chapter on the foundation sacrifice. It has more poetry and music in it than its English parallels, and it is far more perfect in detail. It has retained the incident of savage life as an important part of its own dramatic form; and it thus stands midway between the English traditions and the savage custom. What we have practically done, then, by these close parallels between English folklore and savage custom, is to demonstrate to the scientific student of English history that some of the lost chapters of its earliest stages are capable of being restored; and what we have done for the folk-lorist is, I hope, to demonstrate to him that the customs and traditions he loves for their beauty of construction, their weirdness, or their local associations, have taken him back to times when they all lived as parts, and important parts, of a village life which, preceding all historical records, scarcely treads upon the borders of civilization. In this branch of our subject we have been obliged to trace out the development of the traditional forms with some degree of preciseness, because otherwise they were not recognizable as parallels to a savage custom. But this work must not let us lose sight of the significance of the custom itself as bearing upon primitive village life. It is not too much to say that the foundation sacrifice—horrible in its most savage form, brutal in its later

forms—had very much to do with the preservation of early society. So low down in the scale of man's history there is very little law, very little restraint upon the passions and temper of brute force. But once placed as a barrier to lawlessness and licence the sanctification by blood sacrifice, sometimes as we know human sacrifice; and at all events within the home, perhaps within the precincts of the home, what law has not done, the fear of offending local spirits, who have accepted sacrifice, will effectually do. We shall see presently how the ideas connected with the foundation sacrifice penetrated within the household and kept sacred many domestic rights which otherwise had no protection; and further, that the foundation sacrifice commenced and helped forward the germs of law and morality, seems to me to be a conclusion we may well draw from the circumstances of the case. Undefended by a state police, as civilization is accustomed to, the primitive home was defended by the village gods. And these village gods, known to exist in the primitive homes of savage races, are now proved to have existed in the primitive homes of the ancestors of civilized Britain, because we can trace them there through existing legends and superstitions.







## CHAPTER IV.

### THE OCCUPATION OF THE HOMESTEAD.



THE foundation sacrifice is not the only custom of savage society connected with buildings that will be found to have its parallel in civilized society. As a propitiation to the spirit of the locality, the history of the foundation sacrifice, as it has been recorded in the previous chapter, is so complete that its right to a first place in our archæological re-arrangement of English folk-lore is very clear. It also acts as a clue to the method of research which must be adopted where the parallel between English and savage folk-lore is not quite complete. Accordingly, we now turn to a few other customs and observances relating to the building of a homestead, which, though not so typical as those just considered, still carry us very far into the realms of comparative folk-lore, and consequently into the history of early village life in Britain. I shall, therefore, proceed to set forth some customs of primitive society which relate, first, to the building of the house,

secondly, to the occupation thereof; and after we have thus gained some idea of how primitive man looked upon his homestead, some idea of the ever constant faiths and beliefs with which he surrounded his primitive village home, we shall be able, also, to understand that social restraints, which are the effect of civilized law or civilized morality in modern society, existed likewise in unwritten village customs in primitive society; and we shall be able to construct some portions of English history belonging to a period long anterior to written laws or written histories.

From a most remarkable Tamil treatise which has been published in the "Indian Antiquary,"<sup>1</sup> the ceremony of building a house is ascertained to be governed by the closest observance of very minute practices. The lucky day, and the lucky hour of the day must first be ascertained. On your way to select a site, should a person with a broad head, or a bald head, should a snake, a fanyâsi, a single Brâhman, a woman with no breasts, a new pot, a person without a nose, a bundle of firewood, a sick person, a barber, a blind person, an oil merchant,—should these or any of them meet you, it is an omen of evil. Should the architect or the master about to build a house, meet a young handsome virgin, the sign is propitious. Then follows the ceremony of ascertaining the auspicious hour. And upon at last beginning actual operations, the very spade that is used to mark off the site of the proposed building, and the peg and lines must give forth their omens.

<sup>1</sup> 'Silpa 'Sâstra, "Indian Antiquary," v., pp. 230-7, 293-7.

If the edge of the spade bends at the first delve, if the peg flies out of the ground as the blow is made upon it, or if the marking line snaps in two, these are inauspicious omens. Then auspicious days are given for setting up the posts, rafters, &c.; on Monday set up the posts, on Wednesday place the rafters, on Friday thatch the house, and on Thursday take up residence. Strange as all this appears to Europeans, natives regard these things as matters of great importance, and many of the rules mentioned in this old treatise are adhered to now.

These, and a great many more curious observances, not of immediate interest enough to transcribe here, are mentioned in this curious treatise. The Hindoos seem to have gathered together the superstitions of ages, and to have kept on adding to their beliefs until we arrive at a code that cannot be matched elsewhere. Still we do find glimpses of the same state of things in other parts of the world, and if I have brought forward the Tamil treatise as a species of pattern, there are relics elsewhere which show a parallel state of belief and ideas.

In Orissa upon building a house, you must be careful to begin with the southern wall and build northwards, and it is very unlucky to add to a house on the south side. If you are obliged to do so you must leave a cubit and a quarter of clear space between the new house and the old.<sup>1</sup>

The Nicobar Islanders will not use nails in the construction of their houses. Before they build a

<sup>1</sup> "Indian Antiquary," i., p. 169.

house, the priest is called to choose the spot, and by different ceremonies he compels the Hivie or spirit to leave the place.<sup>1</sup>

Even when the house is built, the same conception of a connection of the spirit world with it is kept up. While idolatry existed in Hawaii, a number of superstitious ceremonies were performed in houses before they could be occupied. Offerings were made to the gods, and presents to the priests who entered the house, uttered prayers, went through other ceremonies, and slept in it before the owner took possession, in order to prevent evil spirits from resorting to it and to secure its inmates from the effects of incantations (Ellis, "Missionary Tour through Hawaii," p. 293). In Madagascar, the first corner post set up when building a house is always at the sacred part of it. Several kinds of plants are attached to its base, and on the top is fixed a silver chain, a sort of assurance that the owner will always have money in his dwelling. In the case of a royal house, the post is sprinkled by the sovereign with sacred water brought from a special spring, and an invocation is announced imploring a blessing on the building.<sup>2</sup>

Among the Hill tribes of the Chittagong district, the principal post of the house is considered sacred, and the head of the family is the only person who can touch it. Should any other person do the same he becomes the slave of the master of the house ("Journ. Asiatic Soc. Bengal," xiv. 383). And

<sup>1</sup> "Journ. Asiatic Society of Bengal," xv., p. 351.

<sup>2</sup> "Folk-Lore Record," ii., p. 38.

we meet with the same idea in an altogether different part of the world. In a story called "The Wisdom of Manihiki," in Gill's "Myths and Songs of the South Pacific," p. 63, it is related that a wonderful lad had noticed that his father mysteriously disappeared at dawn every day, and in an equally mysterious way came back again to their dwelling at night. Being resolved to discover the secret, the son puts his father's girdle under him at night (when he sleeps with his father), and accordingly was roused from his slumbers by the girdle being pulled from under him: he lay perfectly still to see what would become of his father. The unsuspecting parent went, as he was wont, to the main pillar of his dwelling and said:—

"O pillar! open, open up,  
That Manuahifare may enter and descend to nether-  
world."

But the feeling of superstitious reverence or fear connected with the house is carried to a much greater extent among other races.

A New Zealander will never lean his back against the wall of a house. The company assembled within a house, however numerous, always leave a little space between themselves and the wall. The cause of this strong objection to sit close to the wall, is their dread of the mysterious influence of certain *tapu* objects, which have been thrust into the rush walls of dwelling houses for concealment. (Shortland's "Traditions, &c., of the New Zealanders," p. 112.)

And so in various ideas as to the desertion of a

house, or as to a death within it, we meet with the all-prevailing feelings.

It appears to have been a custom with the ancient Americans, yet observed by the Indians of modern times, never to occupy the same wigwam a second time. A superstition is universally prevalent among the north-western Indians that live in tents, that when a place of abode has been deserted, an evil spirit enters and dwells there.<sup>1</sup> Among the New Zealanders a deserted house becomes of sacred importance.<sup>2</sup>

In Afam houses are deserted when deaths have occurred in them.<sup>3</sup> And so it is with the Ova-hereró, a South African tribe.<sup>4</sup>

And it is curious to note that the Kaffirs have a great repugnance to a person's dying inside the hut, and even respectable Kaffirs are generally carried outside to expire.<sup>5</sup>

An almost corresponding belief is the notion of the Ahts of Vancouver Island, that when a person is dangerously ill his soul leaves his body and goes down to the country of Chay-her, but does not enter a house. If it enters a house, it is a sign that it has taken up its abode below for good, and the sick man dies.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Traditions of Dee-Coo-Dah," by W. Pidgeon, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> Polack's "Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders," i., p. 215-16.

<sup>3</sup> "Asiatic Researches," xvii., p. 369.

<sup>4</sup> South African "Folk-Lore Journal," vol. i., p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> Maclean's "Kaffir Laws and Customs," p. 102.

<sup>6</sup> Sproat's "Scenes and Studies of Savage Life," p. 214.

In the interior of the island of Madagascar, particularly in Ankova, a feeling of veneration is associated with the north side of the house as the part sacred to their ancestors. Should the spirits of the departed visit their former abodes, the northern part of the house is the place in which they would be heard.<sup>1</sup>

Such are a few of the customs and superstitions which relate to the house in primitive society. The great and special feature about them is the strong animistic associations with which the house is surrounded. The spirit-world has to be reckoned with at every stage. Now what is this house-spirit, if we may now call it so—is it a mere unmeaning superstition, or does it represent a primitive system of belief? There seems to me but little doubt that we have here the first conceptions of the ancestral spirit of the family, who guards and watches over and demands worship and sacrifice from its children. Of course we shall have to proceed carefully along the lines of comparison to discover the self-same class of thought and superstitious belief in civilized society, where civilized thought and action have been operating upon the beliefs of mankind for centuries, but, as we shall find out, without eradicating some of the earliest ideas which the human race in its infancy was capable of producing.

Mr. Gregor says: "On laying the foundation of a house in Scotland, there was the indispensable

<sup>1</sup> Ellis's "History of Madagascar," i., p. 240; 'Folk Lore Record,' ii., 37.

*fooinin pint*. The workmen were regaled with whisky or ale, with bread and cheese. Unless this was done, happiness and health would not rest on the house. It is told of a manse on the banks of the Spey, that the minister refused to give the usual *fooinin pint*, and that, out of revenge, the masons built into the wall a piece of a gravestone. The consequence was the house proved unhealthy, and the ministers very short-lived.”<sup>1</sup>

On removing from one house to another it was accounted unlucky to get possession of a clean house. “Dirt’s luck,” says the proverb. If one who was removing from a house was jealous of the successor, and wished to carry off the good fortune of the house, the out-going tenant swept it clean on leaving it. There were two other methods of taking away the luck from a house. The one was for the tenant who was leaving, to mount to the roof and pull up the *crook* through the *lum*, instead of removing it in the usual way by the door. The other was by *trailing the raip*. A rope of straw was twisted from left to right—the *vrang wye*—and pulled round the house contrary to the course of the sun. To avert all evil from those who were entering a house others had quitted, if there was suspicion that evil had been left on it, a cat was thrown into it before any of the new in-dwellers entered. If evil had been left on it, the cat in no long time sickened and died.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gregor’s “Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland,” pp. 50, 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.



Now in these curious Scottish customs we have a clear indication of what has already been seen is the belief with savage life, namely, a spirit of the house which affects, or may affect, the occupier. The parallel between the American Indian superstition about not occupying a deserted wigwam, and the Scotch customs upon entering a new house, are particularly close. But we may go a step further than this, I think. We shall, it is true, be obliged to go somewhat beyond the homestead, the private dwellings of the primitive village, and take our stand upon the place of assembly or the temple of the village. Still the transfer of superstition from a general object to a particular object is simply the answer to the ever-prominent question, what are the effects of civilization and political progress upon primitive life?

We find then, that the selfsame feelings which prevented the New Zealander from leaning against the wall of a building, prevented some of the inhabitants of Great Britain from worshipping otherwise than under the open sky. A passage in Train's "History of the Isle of Man" well illustrates this. Churches were built, says this author, and age after age successively passed away, yet so deeply rooted was the opinion in the minds of the people that supplications to the Deity could not be offered in any place so appropriate as from an eminence in the open air, that down to the close of the eighteenth century, a numerous sect prevailed in the south of Scotland called Mountaineers, or Hill Folks, from their convening on the hills to perform their devo-

tional exercises after the manner of their forefathers. The mounds adjoining the churches in the Isle of Man were used for the same purposes.<sup>1</sup> But we can translate this deeply-rooted popular opinion into stronger language still—language that takes us from the borderland right into the depths of primitive thought and action—by turning from religious assemblies to political assemblies. The well-known story from Beda details the particulars with curious exactitude. “The king, Ethelbert of Kent, came to the island of Thanet, and sitting in the open air, ordered Augustine and his companions to be brought into his presence. For he had taken the precaution that they should not come to him in any house, lest, according to an ancient superstition, if they practised any magical arts, they might impose upon him and so get the better of him.” This is plain language enough. It is to be met with elsewhere, however. The Deemsters of the Isle of Man in former times must judge in the open air, that magic might have less power over them, and the selfsame idea occurs in Ireland, where the Brehon judges sat in the open air.<sup>2</sup> This little group of parallel Anglo-savage folk-lore takes us back to very early times indeed in the history of English institutions, times when household gods occupied the place of Christianity, and superstitions and fears the place of morality and knowledge. I very much doubt if anything in

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i., p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> I have detailed these curious examples of primitive thought in my book “Primitive Folkmoets, or Open Air Assemblies in Britain,” pp. 55, 94.

the whole range of survival of primitive culture in civilized lands appeals more forcibly to historical proof than the open-air judging of the Deemsters of the Isle of Man, which is thrown back for explanation upon the open-air meeting of Ethelbert of Kent, and thence to the practices of primitive society. There we meet with ample proof that worship and legislation must not be attempted within roofed buildings; and although we cannot step from the platform of public law to that of private custom by means of historical aids when dealing with Great Britain only, yet it appears to me that the fears of Ethelbert of Kent were only parallel to the peculiar custom of the Rajah of Kachar, who never resided in a building of masonry, but in bungalows surrounded by a stockaded enclosure,<sup>1</sup>—both the Saxon king and the Indian chief mistrusting the building of civilized life and in the latter case carrying his mistrust far enough to retain the dwelling that he used to have among the woods of Upper Assam, where stone buildings were unknown.

The peculiar position which the house and its animistic surroundings occupied in the mind of the primitive villager, is further to be illustrated from some curious items of English folk-lore. An old cottage tenant at Poliphant, near Launceston, when asked why he allowed a hole in the wall of his house to remain unrepaired, answered that he would not have it stopped up on any account, as he left it on purpose for the pikies (Cornish for

<sup>1</sup> "Journal, Asiatic Society, Bengal," ix., p. 832.

pixies) to come in and out as they had done for many years.<sup>1</sup>

We have seen how among some savage races the dying were taken out of the hut to breathe their last; and this meets with a similar idea in the question of Meg Merrilies, "Wha' ever heard of a door being barred when a man was in the dead-thraw? How d'ye think the spirit was to get awa thro' bolts and bars like thae'"—a question which she answers herself on the occasion of the smuggler's death in the Kaim of Derncleugh, when, unbarring the door, she says:—

"Open lock, end strife,  
Come death, and pass life."

The custom is found in many parts of England,<sup>2</sup> and it formed the subject of a communication to the "Athenæum" of the 17th of October, 1846, where it is stated that "it originates from the belief which formerly prevailed, that the soul flew out of the mouth of the dying in the likeness of a bird."

Thus, I think, we have studied some preliminary chapters from the science of folk-lore sufficiently to form, at this stage, some sort of outlook from which our future progress may be guided. The primitive homestead—as the homestead of uncivilized races of the present day—was the seat of superstitious beliefs and practices which, if not codified into a religion, at all events occupied the place of a primi-

<sup>1</sup> "Notes and Queries," 1st ser., vol. v., p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> See the same custom in Suffex, "Folk-Lore Record," i., p. 60, and see upon the whole subject, "Choice Notes, Folk-Lore," p. 117.

tive system of morality. The primitive villager, quick to revenge, with no complete conceptions of right between man and man, with strong hatred to men of other communities, with passions untamed by philosophy or culture, dared not defecrate the homestead of his fellow villager because it was surrounded by protectors from the spirit-world. That these early fancies in the mind of man developed a higher form of belief, is the proposition that now meets us. The house so surrounded became the home of a house religion; and this house religion accordingly will be our next stage in the archaic re-arrangement of English folk-lore.

Looking at the broad outline of the question before us, it appears to me that we may thus state our position. Archæology has discovered some of the forms of the primitive house; but it has not restored the associations of the people who lived there. The bare walls, the unhewn stone, the thatched roofs, the earthen floor, are all that is presented to the modern inquirer. Standing amidst all these desolations of history, the comparative folk-lorist, by recalling the customs and superstitions—the thoughts and associations—of people who lived in these primitive homes, restores too the life which once more makes the primitive village home a known factor in English history. Knowing now that the rude and meagre village hut was as sacred as the walled castle, knowing that the local spirits of the homestead represented a force in the mind of primitive man, we shall be able to go forward into further researches prepared to meet the sequence to all this in other parts of household life.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE HOUSE SPIRITS.



IN primitive society the family circle was completely hemmed in from the outer world. All that we have just now ascertained belongs to the village, outside the household life of each villager; it is, in fact, the outer crust of primitive ideas through which we must penetrate to find the enormous accretions within. Inside the house all was secret and unknown. A Hindu woman has an insuperable objection to permitting a European to know aught of the internal economy of her house. The secrecy of domestic life forbids that a stranger should ever be informed of anything so private as the mode in which a mother soothes her child to rest.<sup>1</sup> Thus we see how the protective influences of the spirit-world, as described in the last chapter, bring about protective influences of early village social laws, which proclaimed in no uncertain voice that the domiciles of primitive man,

<sup>1</sup> Gover's "Folk Songs of India," p. 138.

held sacred to the spirit of the locality, must be held sacred, too, from the intrusion of visitors. This secrecy is maintained throughout India in very humble households, and under difficulties which at first sight seem insurmountable.<sup>1</sup> It is the key, says Sir Henry Maine, by which much that is not quite intelligible in early legal history may be explained. The public state law, for instance, never in early society penetrated this secrecy, and it is a "conjectural explanation of the scantiness of ancient systems of law as they appear in the monument in which an attempt was made to set them formally forth, that the lawgiver merely attempted to fill, so to speak, the interstices between the families of which the aggregate formed the society."<sup>2</sup> In exactly the same way I would attempt to explain that this family secrecy is the reason why morality and religion—the morality and religion of the most highly cultured of the nation—has been so long in ousting from civilized society the customs and superstitions which so extensively exist. In the general advancement of a people (says Dr. Mitchell) there is always a going down of some and a going up of others. When we speak of a nation's reaching a high state of culture, it is never meant that all the individuals composing that nation, but only that some of them have reached it. A high civilization reaches all the members of a nation, but a high culture has never been known to do so.<sup>3</sup> The customs

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Maine's "Village Communities," p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell's "The Past in the Present," p. 56.

and superstitions of family life, therefore, have remained very much as they were for centuries back mainly because the state law has not, and the state religion could not penetrate into the stronghold.

From these facts it would appear to be in conformity with the general rule of social development that in the household, in matters of small significance or relating to things which belong to the nursery and the early days of childhood, there should still remain some of the customs and old ideas of primitive life. Our English proverb, "Every Englishman's house is his castle,"<sup>1</sup> expresses the adhesion to the secrecy which is prevalent in primitive society; and in the house, therefore, has been preserved these many years, numerous relics of primitive life in Britain. The secrecy with which the believers in old customs and popular superstitions still carry out their beliefs is well known. The state of the New Zealander is somewhat akin to that of the English or Scotch peasant. Shortland tells us of the chief Tarapipipi, who was a Christian, that he had evidently not been able to entirely subdue the force of

<sup>1</sup> Müller, in his "Dorians," gives some interesting parallels to this subject. "The Lacedæmonians held the doctrine that the door of his court was the boundary of every man's freedom; without, all owned the authority of the state; within, the master of the house ruled as lord on his own ground." It was the custom at Sparta not to knock, but to call, at the outer gate (Plutarch). The same was also the custom among the Æolians, according to Alcæus, among the poems of Theocritus, xxix., 39 (vol. ii., p. 266). According to the supposed saying of Lycurgus, "first make a democracy in thine own house" (Plutarch, "Lycurgus").



early impressions. He would not acknowledge that he had any belief in the gods of his fathers; but he had still a lingering dread of their power, which, though weakened, was not totally destroyed.<sup>1</sup> And in Scotland, Dr. Mitchell says, "when persons are charged with taking part in some heathenish rite, and when its nature is honestly and roughly expressed, I have often been struck with the embarrassment which resulted from a struggle between a desire to disown all faith in it, and a fear of evil from doing so."<sup>2</sup>

Following out the plan of re-arranging in archaic sequence the many customs and superstitions which now exist in our midst and have their parallels in savage society, we now consider how the exclusiveness and sacredness of the primitive household is illustrated. By picking up the waifs and strays of English local customs, and placing them in their restored archaic history, we shall see that the threshold of the house was guarded by ceremonies and customs which, if significant of anything, must be the prelude to important and sacred customs within the house.

To stumble at the threshold is in English folklore a most ominous sign.<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Gloucester a reminiscence of this superstition :

<sup>1</sup> Shortland's "Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders," p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> "The Past in the Present," p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> Henderfon's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 38; Aubrey's "Gentilisme and Judaisme," pp. 26, 56.

“ For many men that stumble at the threshold  
Are well foretold that danger lurks within.”

3 *Henry VI.*, act iv., sc. 7.

But when taken into the realms of savage custom, it is a terrible affair. In a Polynesian story we read that a boy was sent one day with a message to Uenuku, who was an *ariki* or chief high priest, and the little fellow accidentally tripped and fell down in the very doorway of Wharekura, the house of Uenuku, and this being a most unlucky omen, Uenuku was dreadfully irritated, and he laid hold of the boy and ate him up.<sup>1</sup>

But the folk-lore of our islands supplies us with some definite evidence of how the threshold was protected. As there was a sacrifice at the foundation of the house, so there was at the threshold. At St. Peter's, Athlone, every family of a village, says Mason, in his “Statistical Account of Ireland” (iii., 75), kills an animal of some kind or other; those who are rich kill a cow or a sheep, others a goose or a turkey; while those who are poor and cannot procure an animal of greater value, kill a hen or a cock, and sprinkle the threshold with the blood, and do the same in the four corners of the house, and this ceremonious performance is done to exclude every kind of evil spirit from the dwelling where this sacrifice is made till the return of the same day the following year.<sup>2</sup> I cannot conceive anything more significant than this singular custom: without

<sup>1</sup> Grey's “Polynesian Mythology,” p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> See Dyer's “Popular Customs,” p. 420.

any variation in form or motif, it belongs entirely to the primitive home-life of our ancestors. We have other customs by which the entry of "fairies" was prevented, and they belong to the same group as the above, though not in so perfect a form. On May eve the juvenile branches of nearly every family in the Isle of Man used to gather primroses and strew them before the doors of their dwellings, in order to prevent the entrance of fairies on that night.<sup>1</sup> And so for the admittance of a good fairy the ceremony at the threshold was adopted. On the eve of the first day of February, a festival was formerly kept, called in the Manx language "laa'l Breeshey," in honour of the Irish lady who went over to the Isle of Man to receive the veil from St. Maughold. The custom was to gather a bundle of green rushes, and standing with them in the hand on the threshold of the door, to invite the holy St. Bridget to come and lodge with them that night. In the Manx language the invitation ran thus:—"Brede, Brede, tar gys my thie, tar dyn thie aymys noght. Foshil jee yn dorrys da Brede, as lhig da Brede e heet staigh." In English:—"Bridget, Bridget, come to my house, come to my house to-night. Open the door for Bridget, and let Bridget come in." After these words were re-

<sup>1</sup> Train's "History of the Isle of Man," ii., p. 117. Among the Pagan festivals which were most strenuously kept up at the birth of the Christian religion and during its spread over the Roman empire, Gibbon specially mentions the decoration of the doors with lamps and branches of laurel—the doors being under the protection of the household gods ("Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" (Murray), i., p. 344).

peated, the rushes were strewn on the floor by way of a carpet or bed for St. Bridget. A custom very similar to this was also observed in some of the Out-Isles of the ancient kingdom of Man.<sup>1</sup>

The protection of the threshold from the influences of witchcraft is also a special function of folk-lore. It was customary to place under the entrance door a jug filled with horse-shoe nails, to prevent the entrance of witches.<sup>2</sup> "To this purpose," says Aubrey, "we still use frequently to naile a horse-shoe (found by chance) on the threshold of the dore; nothing more common and most used in London."<sup>3</sup> This custom is still prevalent in Scotland. To find a horse-shoe (says Mr. Napier), "and hang it behind the house-door, was considered to bring good luck to the household, and protection from witchcraft or evil eye."<sup>4</sup> And it is to be met with in China, in a slightly different form. "Of the charms affixed to buildings," says Mr. Dennys, "the Chinese have a fair variety. The all-potent horse-shoe is, indeed, not found nailed against doors and gables; but, oddly enough, a horse's hoof hung up in the house has the same preservative effect in native eyes."<sup>5</sup>

I think, too, there is some indication of the ancient sacredness of the house in the secrecy once

<sup>1</sup> Train's "History of the Isle of Man," ii., p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> "Notes and Queries," 1st ser., vi., p. 271; 4th ser., vi., p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> "Remains of Gentilisme and Judaisme," p. 204.

<sup>4</sup> Napier's "Folk-Lore of West of Scotland," p. 139.

<sup>5</sup> Dennys' "Folk-Lore of China," p. 48.

attending the act of courtship. In Cumberland "the youth visits his sweetheart at her home. These visits are most commonly made on the Saturday evenings. After the family are gone to bed, the fire darkened, and the candle extinguished, he cautiously enters the house. In this murky situation they remain for a few hours. . . . With these proceedings the parents or masters of the lovers are well enough acquainted. When the marriage is nearly concluded on, and it is understood that the girl's parents have no objection to the match, the young man ventures to show himself."<sup>1</sup>

And thus, when we come to the intrusion of a new inmate to the house, the bride of the house-father—the house-mother that is to be,—the ceremony of lifting her over the threshold of her husband's door is found to be a necessary element in the rite. The marriage ceremony is symbolical of a great many features of primitive life; but there are three especial stages which may be clearly and unmistakably defined. We shall presently see the duties of the bride or house-mother, and the ceremonies attending her new degree, after she has passed within the domain of her lord and master; and hereafter we shall see something of the village ceremony before her arrival at the threshold of her new home. Here, however, we must pause, in order to point out that whatever may be the customs before and after, the passing over the threshold was an important stage in the village marriage cere-

<sup>1</sup> Jollie's "Manners and Customs of Cumberland," 1811, pp. 39, 40.

mony. The bride being lifted over the threshold, and the cake being broken over her head, are customs to be found in many savage societies. We meet with the key to the matter in the Fiji custom, limited as it is, however, to the temple, or the chief's house. To sit on the threshold of a temple is *tabu* to any but a chief of the highest rank. All are careful not to tread on the threshold of a place set apart for the gods: persons of rank stride over, others pass over on hands and knees. The same form is observed in crossing the threshold of a chief's house.<sup>1</sup>

The Chinese throw rice over the head of the bride as she returns to her future home; and, in Sicily, wheat is similarly thrown.<sup>2</sup> On her arrival she was not to be allowed to touch the threshold. In China, the entrance is usually covered with red cloth for this purpose. In some parts of the country she is lifted out of the sedan over a pan of charcoal placed in the court, and carried to her chamber.<sup>3</sup> This custom of lifting the bride over the threshold of her husband's house is to be found also among the Redskins of America, and among the Abyssinians.<sup>4</sup>

Henderfon gives us the English custom: "As the newly-married wife enters her new home on returning from kirk, one of the oldest inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who has been stationed on the threshold, throws a plateful of short-bread over her

<sup>1</sup> Williams's "Fiji and the Fijians," i., p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> Dennys' "Folk-Lore of China," p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Lubbock's "Origin of Civilization," p. 122.

head, so that it falls outside. A scramble ensues, for it is deemed very fortunate to get a piece of the short-bread, and dreams of sweethearts attend its being placed under the pillow. A variation of this custom extends as far south as the East Riding of Yorkshire, where, on the bride's arrival at her father's door, a plate of cake is flung from an upper window upon the crowd below. An augury is then drawn from the fate which attends the plate: the more pieces it breaks into the better; if it reach the ground unbroken, the omen is very unfavourable."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Gregor's account of the custom in Scotland is still more indicative of its origin in the primitive sacredness of the threshold: When the bride arrived, she was welcomed by the bridegroom's mother, if alive. If she was dead, the welcome was given by one of the bridegroom's nearest relatives. When passing over the threshold there was held over the bride's head a sieve containing bread and cheese, which were distributed among the guests. They were sometimes scattered around her, when there was a rush made by the young folks to secure a piece. At times an oatmeal cake was broken over her head. In later times a thin cake of "short-bread," called the bride cake, was substituted for the oatmeal cake. It was distributed among the guests, who carefully preserved it, particularly the unmarried, who placed it below their pillows to "dream on." In some districts, when the sieve was

<sup>1</sup> Henderfon's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 36.

in the act of being placed over her head, or the bread broken, it was the bridegroom's duty to snatch her from below it.<sup>1</sup>

There are other customs which belong to this same group. In remote parts of Yorkshire it is the custom to pour a kettleful of boiling water over the doorstep, just after the bride has left her old home; and they say that before it dries up another marriage is sure to be agreed on.<sup>2</sup> No doubt we have here an altered form, incidental to the nature of survivals from primitive customs, of the customs before described as taking place at the husband's threshold, because, among the ancient Romans, we find that fire and water are placed upon the bridegroom's threshold. But from Brand we get a clear survival of the ancient ceremony. There was an

<sup>1</sup> Gregor's "Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland," pp. 92, 93; see also Napier's "Folk-Lore of West of Scotland," pp. 46 *et seq.*, and Dalrymple's "Darker Superstitions of Scotland," p. 292.

The custom of breaking a cake over the bride's head, originally belonging entirely to the realms of folk-lore, was adopted by the Church in some cases. Walker relates, in his "Sufferings of the Clergy," how a minister of Rotherfield, in Suffex, was summoned to answer some charges preferred against him, among which he was accused of "being superstitiously inclin'd for breaking a cake over a bride's head;" to which he answered, "yt he had indeed broake a cake, as was usuall in his parish for the minister over a bride's head; yt 'twas a custom which had long prevailed in his parish, and w<sup>ch</sup> he thought might be inoffensive in itself, neither good nor bad, as many other received customs were" (see "Suffex Arch. Coll., vol. xxxi., p. 178).

<sup>2</sup> Henderfon's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 40.



ancient superstition (he writes) that the bride was not to step over the threshold in entering the bridegroom's house, but was to be lifted over by her nearest relations. She was also to knit her fillets to the doorposts, and anoint the sides, to avoid the mischievous fascinations of witches.<sup>1</sup> Herrick, in his "Hesperides," describes the customs:—

“ And now the yellow vaile, at last,  
Over her fragrant cheek is cast.  
\* \* \* \* \*  
You, you that be of her neereft kin  
Now o're the threshold force her in.  
But to avert the worst,  
Let her her fillets first  
Knit to the posts ; this point  
Rememb'ring, to anoint  
The sides, for 'tis a charme  
Strong against future harme,  
And the evil deads, the which  
There was hidden by the witch.”

Again, when digging deeper into the mines of folk-lore, which, when taken up as a living element of human life, in the same way as language exists, assumes shapes and forms differing from the original standard, we come across variants of this custom at the threshold. The house-father's threshold loses its importance when the house-religion is reduced to a superstitious survival by the influences of Christianity. But the original custom, persistent in its long life, is easily transferred from the house-altar to the church-altar. Christianity did not always eradicate primitive customs, but adapted them to Church

<sup>1</sup> Brand's "Popular Antiquities," ii., pp. 169, 170.

usages. So it is with this protection of the threshold. We find that Mr. Henderfon puts on record very clearly the evidence of its transfer from the house to the church: "A singular custom prevails at the village of Belford, in Northumberland, of making the bridal pair with their attendants leap over a stone placed in their path at the outside of the church porch. This is called the louping stone, or petting stone, and it is said on the spot that the bride must leave all her pets and humours behind her when she crosses it. At the neighbouring village of Embleton, two stout young lads place a wooden bench across the door of the church porch, assist the bride and bridegroom and their friends to surmount the obstacle, and then look out for a donation from the bridegroom. The Vicar of Embleton considers it to be connected with some superstition as to touching the threshold or the building, or stumbling upon it. At a wedding in a High-Coquetdale family, it was proposed to have a petted stone. A stick was therefore held by two groomsmen at the church door for the bride to jump over. Had she fallen or stumbled, the worst auguries as to her temper would have been drawn. At the church of Bamburgh, during a wedding, the following scene took place: The ceremony ended, on leaving the church, a three-legged stool, about a foot high, was placed at the churchyard gate, and covered with about two yards of carpet. The whole of the bridal party had separately to hop or jump over this stool, assisted on either side by a stalwart villager."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 38.

Now Dr. Hearn, in his valuable work the "Aryan Household," attributes this profound reserve and secrecy of the primitive household to the special and exclusive worship of the hearth.<sup>1</sup> And looking back upon all that has been collected from English folk-lore about the sacredness of the house, how narrowly it was guarded from hostile or inquisitive intrusion, how clearly it was protected by the spirit world, the question becomes almost a natural one to ask, is there not also a house-god and a house-worship to be discovered from English folk-lore, just as we have discovered that English folk-lore contains so many germs of primitive custom relating to the house and its position in the village?

Let us, first of all, see what the house-god and house-worship is in primitive society. There can be no question but that its germs lie much deeper than Aryan civilization. Dr. Hearn rightly looks upon the house-worship as a belief in the spirit rule of deceased ancestors.<sup>2</sup> This worship, we know, goes far back into savage society. But besides this there are many other customs too much in accordance with what has already been noted respecting the sacredness of the house, to suppose that they can be parallel in form without being parallel in *motif*.

Thus, among the Samoans, the house was built by direction of the family god. It could never under any circumstances pass from the family.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Aryan Household," p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Pritchard's "Polynesian Reminiscences," p. 109.

Among the New Zealanders, again, houses are accounted sacred to the use of the persons for whom they are built; and rarely, after a battle, when every savage enormity has been perpetrated, are the houses of the murdered proprietors made use of by the victors. Such places are deserted and left to decay in ruin, and the fallen and rotten framework, after years of disuse, is not allowed to be made use of as firewood.<sup>1</sup> The principle here involved is only putting savage custom in a little stronger light than has already been seen. In the Samoan instance, there is the remarkable fact, that the house was built under the direction of the family god. To this family god, we are told by Mr. Pritchard, the father of the household prayed when the evening meal was spread. This god was spiritually present in the house which the head of the family occupied. At certain times family gatherings were held, when a feast was provided in honour of the god, and a bowl of ava was solemnly and slowly poured on the ground as a propitiatory drink-offering.<sup>2</sup> At the evening meal the whole family assemble and eat together. Before any one began to eat, the head of the family, pouring a portion of his ava upon the ground, "said grace" after the following manner: "This is your ava, O ye our gods. Remember this our family. Let our number increase. Let us all live in health. Let us all grow strong. We are your people, O ye, our gods.

<sup>1</sup> Polack's "Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders," i., pp. 204, 216.

<sup>2</sup> "Polyneesian Reminiscences," p. 108.

Then give to us food to eat. Let there be plenty, and make our plantations to flourish and all things good to eat. Ye also, the gods of war! This is ava for you. Make strong, make brave, make numerous the people in this our land. Ye also the gods that sail the sea! This is your ava. Pass this our land and sail into another land." When there was no ava prepared, the head of the family prayed by the light of the fire. In every house there is a fire-place in the centre. Before going to eat, the fire was made to blaze up well, and the patriarch began his prayer, addressing first his family god, and then the whole host of gods.<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, we have the ancestral spirit worshipped and sacrificed to at the family hearth. How clearly this worship at the hearth is held sacred to the ancestral spirits of the family is perhaps better seen from the customs of the Ovahereró, a tribe of South Africans, among whom every important occurrence connected with the family—birth, marriage, sickness, death—is associated with the sacred hearth. I shall speak of the different customs incidental to each of these occasions when we come to consider them in their order, but it must be noted here that the Ovahereró are the only tribe of which we have such complete evidence. We have seen in the previous chapter that the Ovahereró deserted their habitations upon a death taking place within. The custom which attends the re-occupation of these deserted places enables us to obtain a full conception of the worship paid to ancestors at the sacred house-

<sup>1</sup> "Polynesian Reminiscences," p. 124.

fire when they return to the old werft, as it is called: "the holy fire of the werft where they have been living is extinguished, and as a rule they take no brand of the holy fire with them to the old werft whither they return, but holy fire must now be obtained from the ancestral deity. . . . When the people have arrived near the werft they make dismal lamentation for the dead, and when the fire is made on the old okuro (place of the holy fire), a sheep is slaughtered near it, which is called 'that of the fire.'"<sup>1</sup> Each head of a household, we are told elsewhere, possesses an okuro of his own, which is considered to be inferior in importance to that of the priest.<sup>2</sup>

I will now mention one or two more examples of the house religion of savage society, and then pass on. In Japan, "Dai Gakf," "the great black one," is worshipped as the god of riches. He is represented as a little man with a large sack on his shoulders, and a hammer in his hand. His proper place is in the kitchen, and he is always found placed near the hearth.<sup>3</sup>

Among the New Zealanders there was a household god, an image in the form of an infant, which belonged solely to females; this was nursed by those who were barren as if it were a baby; it was made with great care and generally as large as a child, adorned with the family jewels and the same gar-

<sup>1</sup> South African "Folk-Lore Journal," i., pp. 61-62.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii., p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. S. Beal, in the "Academy" of July 3rd, 1880. This is exactly parallel to the Greek God Hephaestus, dwarf-like figures of whom were placed near the hearth.—*Ibid.*

ments that they usually wear, and was addressed in the same endearing terms.<sup>1</sup> But further on in the same volume (p. 501), we have the following remarkable piece of information:—"The ridge pole of the house is supported by a pillar in the middle of the house, the bottom of which is carved in the form of a human figure, representing the founder of the family; immediately before the face of this figure is the fire-place"—the whole incidents belonging to hearth-worship. The Nicobar islanders had at the entrance of their houses a wooden figure of a man, from half to three-quarters life-size, the tutelary deity of the place.<sup>2</sup>

At the sacrifice of the White Dog, the New Year's festival of the Iroquois, the proceedings extended over six days. The strangling of the white dog destined for sacrifice was the chief feature of the first day's proceedings. On the second day the two keepers of the faith visited each house and performed the significant ceremony of stirring the ashes on the hearth, accompanied with a thanksgiving to the Great Spirit. On the morning of the fifth day the fire was solemnly kindled by friction, and the white dog was borne in procession on a bark litter, until the officiating leaders halted, facing the rising sun, when it was laid upon the flaming wood and consumed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Taylor's "Te Ika a Maui, or New Zealand and its Inhabitants," p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> "Calcutta Review," vol. li. (1870), p. 274.

<sup>3</sup> "League of the Iroquois," pp. 207-221, quoted in Prof. D. Wilson's "Pre-historic Man," i., p. 146. Among all the

Among the aborigines of Victoria no one ever spat in the fire, as it would cause some unknown injury to the person so offending.<sup>1</sup> The Mongols have a place for offerings to their gods just inside the entrance.<sup>2</sup> Among the Bunjogeos sacrifice is offered inside the house.<sup>3</sup> In each house among the Dard communities, the fire-place consists of three upright stones, of which the one at the back of the hearth is the largest. On this stone they place an offering for the Lha-mo from every dish cooked there before they eat. They also place there the first fruits of the harvest. Such is their household religion.<sup>4</sup>

Now, although I think we can perceive in the Aryan ancestor worship at the hearth certain indications of new lines of departure from the savage worship—lines of departure, that is, which have led on to civilization—yet we cannot doubt but that the germs of this hearth-worship lie far behind Aryan history.<sup>5</sup> But to get fairly at the English survivals

Indian tribes, not only was a certain superstitious sanctity attached to fire, but they looked with distrust on the novel methods employed by Europeans for its production (Wilson's "Pre-historic Man," i., 149.)

<sup>1</sup> "Transactions of Ethnological Society," i., 300.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i., 98.

<sup>3</sup> Lewin's "Wild Races of S. E. India," p. 244.

<sup>4</sup> Biddulph's "Tribes of the Hindoo Kooosh," p. 51. Here is a curious example in European folk-lore. There are places in Lithuania where the inhabitants adore a Domestic God, called *Dinstipan*, that is, *The Director of the Smoke or Chimneys* (Bekker's "World Bewitched," 1695, p. 49).

<sup>5</sup> Consult Farrer's "Primitive Manners and Customs," pp. 296-302.



of this primitive worship we must ascertain what the Aryan custom was. Agni is pre-eminently the regulator of sacrifices, and, as such, answers to the Greek Hestia and the Latin Vesta, the deities of the household hearth and sanctuary.<sup>1</sup> The family is held together by the family sacra, says Sir Henry Maine,<sup>2</sup> and Professor Max Müller adds that many traces remain to show that the hearth was the first altar, the father the first elder, his wife, and children, and slaves the first congregation gathered together round the sacred fire, the Hestia, the goddess of the house, and in the end the goddess of the people.<sup>3</sup>

We have now to deal with English folk-lore, then, in respect of its adherence to the old home-life of the primitive world, where there is the ancestral house-god, whose chief priest is the house-father, whose altar is the hearth, and whose element is the ever-burning sacred fire.

That the hearth is the residence of the house-god is to be illustrated by many scraps of our fairy mythology. In a seventeenth century work quoted by Brand, we read "Doth not the warm zeal of an Englishman's devotion (who was ever observed to contend most stiffly *pro aris et focis*) make him

<sup>1</sup> Cox's "Introduction to Mythology and Folk-Lore," p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> "Ancient Law," p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> "Lectures on the Science of Religion," p. 152. I must refer here to Mr. Ralston's "Songs of the Russian People," pp. 119-139, for the important Russian ceremonies of this ancient cult. Müller's "Dorians," vol. ii., pp. 199, 232, gives some useful notes.

maintain and defend the sacred hearth, as the sanctuary and chief place of residence of the tutelary lares and household gods, and the only court where the lady fairies convene to dance and revel" (ii. 504). Maids are punished by the fairies (fairies being the generic folk-lore title for the primitive household gods) for untidy household habits, and particularly for not attending properly to the hearth. Thus in the old ballad of "Robin Goodfellow" it is said,

"Where fires thou find'st unraked and hearths unswept,  
There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry."

In Ireland the fairies are believed to visit the farm-houses in their district on particular nights, and the embers are collected, the hearth swept, and a vessel of water placed for their use before the family retire to rest;<sup>1</sup> Spenser observes that at the kindling of the fire and lighting of candles they say certain prayers, and use some other superstitious rites, which show that they honour the fire and the light;<sup>2</sup> and in an old diary, printed by the Kilkenny Archæological Society (vol. i. [n. s.], p. 183), we read that "servants when they scour andirons, fire-shovell, or tongues, setting them down make a courtesie to each."

Drayton, in the "Nymphidia," records a piece of genuine traditional folk-lore in the following lines:—

"Hence shadows, seeming idle shapes  
Of little frisking Elves and Apes,

<sup>1</sup> Croker's "Researches in the South of Ireland," p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Spenser's "View of the State of Ireland," p. 98.

To earth do make their wanton scapes,  
 As hope of pastime haſtes them ;  
 Which maids think on the hearth they ſee  
 When fires well near conſumed be,  
 Theſe dancing hayes by two and three,  
 Juſt as their fancy caſts them."

The ſame idea is given by Reginald Scott.  
 "Indeed, your grandam's maids were wont to ſet a  
 bowl of milk before him (Incubus) and his couſin  
 Robin Goodfellow, for grinding of malt or muſtard,  
 and ſweeping the houſe at midnight." <sup>1</sup>

Shakespeare, too, deſcribes ſome of the acts of  
 Robin Goodfellow as thoſe of the houſehold  
 fairy:—

"Either I miſtake your ſhape and making quite,  
 Or elſe you are that *ſbrewd* and *knawiſh ſprite*,  
 Call'd *Robin Goodfellow*: are you not he,  
 That fright the maidens of the villagery ?  
 Skim milk, and ſometimes labour in the quern,  
 And bootleſs make the breathleſs houſewife churn ?  
 And ſometimes make the drink to bear no barm ?  
*Miſlead* night wanderers, *laughing* at their harm ?  
 Thoſe that *Hobgoblin* call you and ſweet Puck,  
 You do their works, and they ſhall have *good luck*:  
 Are not you he ?"

But the other characteriſtics, ſays Tſchifchwitz,  
 in his "Shakſpere Forſchungen," Part II., alſo anſwer  
 to the nature of the German "*Hauſgeiſt*." Grimm  
 tells us that "dirty and negligẽnt ſervants will be  
 puniſhed by the goblin ; he pulls off the bedcovers  
 of the lazy, blows out their candle, twiſts the neck

<sup>1</sup> Reginald Scott's "Dæmonology," p. 980. See Keightley's  
 "Fairy Mythology," ii., 108.

of the best cow, knocks over the pail of slovenly milkmaids, so that the milk is spilt, and then mocks them with scornful laughter."

But the house-spirit, as represented by the modern fairy, is not quite a true survival of ancient ideas. The fairy has been influenced by literature, and we do not get his primitive form. By turning to the Scandinavian outskirts of our land, the hearth-spirits appear as a living belief. Not above forty or fifty years ago, says Brand, in his "Description of Orkney, Zetland, &c.," almost every family had a "Brownie, or evil spirit, so called, who served them, to whom they gave a sacrifice for its service; as when they churned their milk they took a part thereof, and sprinkled every corner of the house with it for Brownie's use; likewise when they brewed they had a stone, which they called Brownie's stone, wherein there was a little hole into which they poured some wort for a sacrifice to Brownie."<sup>1</sup> We get a glimpse of the same living belief in the hearth-spirit in Ireland. Among the Irish the expression "the breaking of cinders" means to charge and confirm guilt on a man at his own hearth, so that his fire, which represents his honour, is broken up into cinders. The trampling of a man's cinders was one of the greatest insults which could be offered to him, as it conveyed the idea of guilt, and not only on the individual himself, but also on his family and household.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hearn, who uses this remarkable piece of evidence, observes that we may well believe that

<sup>1</sup> Keightley's "Fairy Mythology," ii., pp. 273, 274.

<sup>2</sup> Sullivan's Introd. to O'Curry's "Lectures," i., p. cclxxviii.

we have here a memorial of the time when the hearth was the centre and the shrine of the family, and when the fortunes of its head brought a like fortune to every member of the household.<sup>1</sup> By turning to some other customs we shall find this more fully exemplified.

In the Western Isles of Scotland, as Candlemas Day comes round, the mistress and servants of each family, taking a sheaf of oats, dress it up in woman's apparel, and after putting it in a large basket, beside which a wooden club is placed, they cry three times, "Brüd is come, Brüd is welcome." This they do just before going to bed, and as soon as they rise in the morning they look among the ashes, expecting to see the impression of Brüd's club there, which if they do, they reckon it a true presage of a good crop and prosperous year.<sup>2</sup> The same conception is more generally expressed in the Manx customs. In many of the upland cottages it is customary for the housewife, after raking the fire for the night, and just before stepping into bed, to spread the ashes smooth over the floor with the tongs, in the hope of finding in it, next morning, the trace of a foot; should the toes of this ominous print point towards the door, then it is believed a member of the family will die in the course of the year; but should the heel of the fairy foot point in that direction, then it is firmly believed that the family will be augmented within the same period.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Aryan Household," p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Martin's "Western Isles," p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Train's "History of the Isle of Man," ii., p. 115; also

All these customs carry us unmistakably to the old homes of our primitive ancestors, where the hearth was sacred to the ancestral house-spirit. It is not the province of the science of folk-lore to fettle why they are extant now : it only knows of them as a living factor in modern popular superstition, and also a living factor in primitive every-day belief ; and it argues that, if primitive in the one case, they must be primitive in the other case. From Cornwall I have obtained a note of a custom which is, to all intents and purposes, a hearth sacrifice. The practice of resorting to the hearth, and touching the cravel (the mantle-stone across the head of an open chimney) with the forehead, and casting into the fire a handful of dry grass, or anything picked up that will burn, is regarded as the most effectual means of averting any impending evils of a mysterious nature.<sup>1</sup> How could folk-lore speak plainer than this? It declares that the threshold was sacred because beyond it lay the sacred-hearth and the dwelling of the house-spirit.

The fire on the sacred hearth was never allowed to go out. Of this custom there are some very wide-spread examples. In New Zealand it was rarely that the fires were wholly extinguished in a

Hampson's "*Medii Ævi Kal.*," i., p. 221. Compare Mr. Lang's parallel example from Australia in Preface to "*Folk-Lore Record*," vol. ii., p. ii., also Henderfon's "*Folk-Lore of Northern Counties*," p. 51.

<sup>1</sup> Bottrell's "*Stories and Folk-Lore of West Cornwall*," 3rd series, p. 17. For another curious chimney custom, see "*Folk-Lore Record*," v., p. 160.

village, and it was usual when a family had their fires extinguished to send to their neighbours for some burning embers.<sup>1</sup> Among some tribes of the North American Indians the fire is usually kept burning night and day.<sup>2</sup> These have not the full significance of the Aryan custom, but they show how far back in the history of man begins the permanence of custom, and how this permanence is made possible by the practice of adapting old customs to new ideas and wants. Early Aryan history is very positive about the house-fire being ever burning,<sup>3</sup> and there are traces of the primitive practice in English folk-lore. Formerly throughout England the house-fires were allowed to go out on Easter Sunday, after which the chimney and fireplace were completely cleaned and the fire once more lighted.<sup>4</sup> Similarly in the Isle of Man, Train says that "not a family in the whole island, of natives, but keeps a fire constantly burning; no one daring to depend on his neighbour's vigilance in a thing which he imagines is of so much consequence; and every one firmly believing that if it should ever happen that no fires were to be found throughout the island, the most terrible revolutions and mischiefs would immediately ensue."<sup>5</sup> A curious relic of fire-worship

<sup>1</sup> Polack's "Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders," p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft's "Native Races of the Pacific States of North America," i., p. 102; cf. Brinton's "Myths of the New World," pp. 140-148.

<sup>3</sup> Kelly's "Indo-European Folk-Lore," cap. ii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Train's "History of Isle of Man," i., p. 316.

exists in Scotland. It is called the festival of "The Clavie," and takes place each 12th of January at Burghead, a fishing village on the coast. A tar-barrel is burnt, and as it falls into pieces the fisher-wives rush in and endeavour to get a lighted bit of firewood. With this the fire on the cottage hearth is at once kindled. It is considered lucky to keep this flame all the rest of the year.

In Ireland on no account would either fire or water—but above all things, a coal of fire, even the kindling of a pipe—be given for love or money out of a house during the entire of May Day. The piece of lighted turf used to kindle another fire is styled the seed of the fire; and this people endeavoured to procure from the bonfire of the previous night, and to keep it alive in the ashes to light the fire on May morning.<sup>1</sup>

This last example is a modernized variant of the more primitive customs noticed in England, Scotland, and the Isle of Man. How it might have still further varied had it not thus become enshrined in literature is curiously illustrated by the introduction of the "kindling of a pipe." If we had simply come across the custom that it was unlucky to give light for a pipe in Ireland on May Day, there would have been some difficulty in getting this accepted as a survival from primitive hearth-worship. Yet in the above record we can well see how the process of variation goes on. Nothing is more curious or instructive in the study of folk-lore than to note the variants that different customs take in different

<sup>1</sup> Wilde's "Irish Popular Superstitions," p. 55.



places. Thus from there being an ever-burning fire, it has come to be that the fire must not be allowed to be extinguished on the last day of the old year, so that the old year's fire may last into the new year. In Lanarkshire it is considered unlucky to give out a light to any one on the morning of the new year, and therefore if the house-fire has been allowed to become extinguished, recourse must be had to the embers of the village pile.<sup>1</sup> In some places the self-extinction of the yule-log at Christmas is portentous of evil. A portion of the old log of the preceding year is sometimes saved to light up the new log at the next Christmas to preserve the family from harm in the meanwhile.<sup>2</sup> Herrick says of this :—

“ With the last yeeres brand  
 Light the new block, and  
 For good successe in his spending.  
 On your pſalties play,  
 That ſweet luck may  
 Come while the log is a tending.”

Again, the candle that is lighted on Christmas Day must be so large as to burn from the time of its ignition to the close of the day, otherwise it will portend evil to the family for the ensuing year.<sup>3</sup> Another variant of the original custom takes us even still farther from the old hearth-fires. Formerly at Lyme Regis the wood-ashes of the family being sold throughout the year as they were made, the

<sup>1</sup> Dyer's "Popular Customs," p. 506.

<sup>2</sup> Hampson's "Medii Ævi Kal.," i., p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> Hampson, *loc. cit.*, i., p. 109.

person who purchased them annually sent a present on Candlemas Day of a large candle. When night came this candle was lighted, and assisted by its illumination the inmates regaled themselves with cheering draughts of ale and fippings of punch until the candle had burnt out, the signal for rest being the self-extinction of the Candlemas candle.<sup>1</sup> One can scarcely help recognizing in this the modern folk-lore form of the sacred hearth-fire.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dyer's "Popular Customs," p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hearn summarizes this subject in a few short sentences, which I shall transcribe here:—Notwithstanding all hostile influences, the Teutonic Haus-geist has left many traces of his individuality. He is known as the Husing or Stetigot, the House god or *Lar Familiaris*. "We can often trace in them," says Grimm, "a special relation to the hearth of the house, from beneath which they often come forth, and where the door of their subterranean dwelling seems to have been; they are peculiarly hearth gods" ("Deutsche Mythol.," vol. i. 468). The House spirits had a multitude of names which it is needless here to enumerate, but all of which are more or less expressive of their friendly relations with man. They always dwell in or about the house, and are, if they are well treated, always friendly and helpful in the house and in the yard. The name of Kobold appears in Normandy, and hence probably in England under the familiar form of Goblin. In the latter country he has many names. He is the Brownie, or, as in Yorkshire, he is called the Boggart, or Hob Goblin, or Robin Goodfellow. By whatever style he is described, his fee is white bread and milk; and overnight he does all the household work. The Irish representative of the House is said to be the Cluricaun. In the Hebrides at the present day "the Gael call their evil spirits Boduchs (Boddus), while the word still retains its ancient secondary signification of old man, head of the family" ("The Aryan Household," by W. E. Hearn, pp. 45-47).

There are many other customs which belong equally to this chapter of primitive household life. The variants which modern folk-lore supply shade off into many degrees of similarity to the primitive custom, until we lose sight almost of every feature that is ancient. To rightly grasp the significance of modern popular customs, this is what we must continually look for, and continually hope to find; and when every item of folk-lore is thus placed in its relation to the primitive customs of our ancestors, the residuum, it appears to me, would be insignificant in extent, and generally traceable to some special cause of modern superstition. But we must stop far short of this now, and be content with the illustrative examples given above.

Before leaving the ever-burning hearth-fire of the primitive household, I have one more feature of it to touch upon. It takes us a little beyond the house into the village, but as I do not propose dealing with the village customs in the present work, it is advisable to mention the connection of the house custom with the village custom here. Over and over again in Aryan history we come across evidence to prove that the communal family was the prototype of the communal tribe or village. What was incidental to the one was incidental in another degree to the other. Thus as every family had its sacred hearth, so the city, the tribe, and the clan had each its own altar or hearth, where alone the common worship of each might be held. In the Prytaneion of each town (says Sir George Cox) the sacred fire burning on the public hearth was

never suffered to go out. If, however, at any time it went out, it was restored by fire obtained by rubbing together pieces of wood or by kindling them with a burning-glass.<sup>1</sup> Now this village hearth is represented in English folk-lore by the Beltan fires so common a few years back. Already in the Lanarkshire custom we have seen the house-fire lighted from the village fire; and thus we get an almost complete survival of the ancient custom. As at present placed in folk-lore studies, the Beltan fires do not tell us very much of the early history of our ancestors. Once restore them to their archaic position, once trace out their place in the re-arrangement of folk-lore in archaic instead of literary sequence, and they tell us a history the magnitude of which is hardly realizable.

If the sacred hearth-fire was to be kept up continually, there must be some appointed person peculiarly fitted and destined for this office. We find her in the house-mother.<sup>2</sup> That this was so is, I think, evidenced by many peculiar customs now attached to our rural wedding ceremonies. As I shall presently show, the marriage was essentially and in all particulars a village-rite; but when the bridal pair stopped before the threshold of the husband's dwelling—the house-father as we have called him in his old world capacity—the village ceremony and the village aspect of the rite entirely ceased, and the house ceremony began. What was

<sup>1</sup> Cox's "Introduction to Mythology and Folk-Lore," p. 168. See also Farrer's "Primitive Manners and Customs," p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> "Hearn's "Aryan Household," p. 87.

beyond that threshold was unknown to the primitive village, was entirely beyond its interest or its business; the duties of the community had ceased at that stage when the marriage, which interested all, had terminated its public character. We have already witnessed the scene at the threshold, and now we must go within and see how clearly the customs which follow the ceremony there are part and parcel of the self-same worship and reverence for the house-spirit.

In all the principal Aryan countries, says Dr. Hearn, the ceremony of marriage seems to have consisted of three essential parts. The first was in substance the abandonment of, or at least the agreement to abandon, his authority by the house-father of the bride. The second was the formal delivery of the bride to the bridegroom. The third was the presentation of the bride to the house spirits in her new home. Just as the Chinese bride at the present day worships in company with her husband his ancestors, so the Aryan bride did homage to the gods of the house to which she was introduced, and entered into formal communion with them. To this end she was presented, upon her entrance into the house, with the holy fire and the lustral water, and partook, along with her husband, in the presence of the Lares, of the symbolic meal.<sup>1</sup>

We can see the germs of the house-custom and its connection with fire elsewhere than in China among non-Aryan races. Among the Tunguses and the Kamchadales of Siberia, attacks on women are not

<sup>1</sup> "The Aryan Household," p. 88.

allowed to be avenged by blood, unless they take place within the yourt or house. The man is not regarded as to blame if the woman has ventured to leave her natural place, the sacred and protecting hearth.<sup>1</sup> Among the Samoans whatever intercourse may take place between the sexes, a woman does not become a man's wife unless the latter takes her to his own house.<sup>2</sup> Exactly the same notion exists among the New Zealanders. The ceremony of marriage differs from a state of concubinage inasmuch as the lover steals to the hut of his mistress, but should he take her to his house, marriage is complete.<sup>3</sup> Among the Californians, the girl is escorted by the women to a lodge, where she is subsequently joined by the man, conducted by his male friends. All the company bear torches, which are piled up as a fire in the lodge of the wedded pair.<sup>4</sup> The Ovahereró custom, however, stands out pre-eminently clear and distinct. At the beginning of the marriage festival the bride is brought to the place of the holy fire, where she must submit herself to certain ceremonies, and where sacrifice is made.<sup>5</sup>

The Indian ceremony is described by Mr. Kelly. The bridegroom makes oblation to fire, and the bride drops rue on it as an oblation. The bridegroom solemnly takes her hand in marriage. She

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Lubbock's "Origin of Civilization," p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Pritchard's "Polynesian Reminiscences," p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> Polack's "New Zealanders," i., p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> Bancroft's "Native Races of the Pacific States of North America," i., p. 350.

<sup>5</sup> South African "Folk-Lore Journal," vol. i., p. 49.

treads on a stone and mullar. They walk round the fire. This is all done at the house of the bride, where the bridegroom remains three days. On the fourth he conducts her to his own house in solemn procession. She is then welcomed by his kindred, and the solemnity ends with oblations to fire.<sup>1</sup> Among the tribes of the Hindoo Koosh, on the bride entering the house, branches of cedar are burned in an iron dish and waved about over the bridegroom's head, and the party is sprinkled with flour.<sup>2</sup> And again, after leading out the bride, the bridegroom returns and deposits a present of a gun or sword on the hearth.<sup>3</sup>

What we see here in savage and early Aryan society is illustrated remarkably by some Scotch customs. After the ceremony at the threshold already described, the bride was led straight to the hearth, and into her hands was put the tongs, with which she made up the fire. The besom was at times substituted for the tongs, when she swept the hearth. The *crook* was then swung three times round her head, in the

<sup>1</sup> Kelly's "Indo-European Folk-Lore," p. 293. Mr. Ralston considers the Russian [and Scotch] practice of walking three times round the church to be a survival of this ("Academy," 15th Feb., 1879). It is interesting to observe here a curious custom among the Ahts of Vancouver Island. "When the feasting, the speeches, and the marriage ceremonies are over, the woman's friends light two torches in her late house, and after a time extinguish them in water that is spilt for this purpose on the ground" (Sproat's "Scenes and Studies of Savage Life," p. 102).

<sup>2</sup> Biddulph's "Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh," pp. 78-80.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and with the prayer, "May the Almighty mack this umman a gueedwife." The last act of her installation as "gueedwife" was leading her to the *girnal*, or *mehl-bowie*, and preffing her hand into the meal as far as possible. This last action, it was believed, secured in all time coming abundance of the staff of life in the household.<sup>1</sup>

And again, when the bride is entering her future home, two of her female friends meet her at the door, the one bearing a towel or napkin, and the other a dish filled with various kinds of bread. The towel or napkin is spread over her head, and the bread is then poured over her. It is gathered up by the children who have collected round the door. In former times the bride was then led up to the hearth, and, after the fire had been scattered, the tongs was put into her hand, and she made it up.<sup>2</sup>

This is sufficiently remarkable a relic of the worship at the house-fire at the installation of the house-mother. We find in many ways that the sacred fire was associated with the marriage custom. Among the Poles the bride walked three times round the fire, then sat down and washed her feet.<sup>3</sup> In Lapland the old way of kindling fire by the sacred flint was the only ceremony incidental to marriages,<sup>4</sup> and Aubrey, in his quaint and amusing

<sup>1</sup> Gregor's "Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland," p. 93. See also Henderfon, *loc. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Gregor, *loc. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> "Notes and Queries," 6th ser., i., p. 259.

<sup>4</sup> Pinkerton, i., p. 165.



way, records, "I have a conceit that the Highlanders have something of this custom, *de quo quaere*,"<sup>1</sup> a query which I am unfortunately not able to answer.

House-birth follows upon house-marriage and the installation of the house-mother. The same adhesion to the worship of the hearth is shown here as in the previous sections of the primitive household. Turning once more to Dr. Hearn, we learn that "among all Aryan nations it was necessary that when a child was born it should forthwith be presented for acceptance to the house-father. It rested with him to recognize its claims to admission or to reject them. In the former case the new-comer was initiated into the domestic worship, in the latter it was either at once killed or exposed. But if the least morsel of food or the least particle of drink had touched the child's lips, the discretion was at an end, and the child was held to have shared in the meal and so to be duly recognized. It is probable that the paternal recognition was followed by other ceremonies. At Athens, at least, a special festival was held on the fifth day, it is said, after the birth. There the child was carried round the sacred hearth, and was presented, in the sight of all its relations, to the spirits of the house and to the household. Its name was then given to it, and of this presentation and this name the guests then assembled were witnesses. At Rome a similar ceremony was performed on the eighth or ninth day. A lustration was celebrated and the *prænomen* was given."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Remains of Gentilism and Judaism," p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> "The Aryan Household," by W. E. Hearn, p. 73.

But this is not limited to Aryan nations. A full description of the ceremony attending childbirth in Madagascar which Mr. Ellis gives us is extremely interesting, and I transcribe it in full.

In Madagascar, after the birth of an infant, the relatives and friends of the mother visit her, and offer their congratulations. The infant also receives salutations, in form resembling the following: "Saluted be the offspring given of God! May the child live long! May the child be favoured so as to possess wealth!" Presents are also made to the attendants in the household; and sometimes a bullock is killed on the occasion, and distributed among the members of the family. Presents of poultry, fuel, money, &c., are at times also sent by friends to the mother. A piece of meat is usually cut into thin slices, and suspended at some distance from the floor by a cord attached to the ceiling or roof of the house. This is called the Kitoza, and is intended for the mother. A fire is kept in the room day and night, frequently for a week after the birth of the child.

At the expiration of that period, the infant, arrayed in the best clothing that can be obtained, is carried out of the house by some person whose parents are *both still living*, and then taken back to the mother. In being carried out and in, the child must be twice carefully lifted over the fire, which is placed near the door. Should the infant be a boy, the axe, large knife, and spear, generally used in the family, must be taken out at the same time, with any implements of building that may be in the

house. Silver chains of native manufacture are also given as presents, or used in these ceremonies, for which no particular reason is assigned.

One of the first acts of the father, or near relative, is to report the birth of the child to the native Sikidy, for the purpose of ascertaining and declaring its destiny. . . . At the expiration of the second or third month from the birth of a first child, on a day declared to be good (lucky) by the Sikidy, a peculiar ceremony takes place, called "scrambling." The friends and relatives of the child assemble. A portion of the fat taken from the hump on the back of an ox is minced in a rice pan, cooked, and mixed up with a quantity of rice, milk, honey, and a sort of grass called voampamoa. A lock of the infant's hair is also cast into the above *mélange* (a lock of hair is first cut on the left side of the child's head, and called *sonia ratsy*, "the evil lock;" this must be thrown away, in order to avert calamity. Another lock is then cut on the right side; this is called *sonia foa*, "the fortunate lock"), and the whole being thoroughly well mixed in the rice-pan, which is held by the youngest female of the family, a general rush is made towards the pan, and a scramble for its contents takes place, especially by the women, as it is supposed that those who are fortunate enough to obtain a portion may confidently cherish a hope of becoming mothers. Bananas, lemons, and sugarcanes are also scrambled for, for a similar result. The ceremony of scrambling only takes place with a first child. The head of the mother is decorated during the ceremonial with silver chains, while the

father carries the infant, if a boy, and some ripe bananas, on his back. The rice-pan used on the occasion becomes in their estimation sacred by the service, and must not be taken out of the house for three subsequent days, otherwise the virtue of these observances is supposed to be lost.<sup>1</sup>

It was the custom with the Basutos, immediately after the birth of a child, to kindle the fire of the house afresh. For this purpose, it was necessary for a young man of chaste habits to rub two pieces of wood together, until a flame sprang up pure as himself.<sup>2</sup>

Among the Ovahereró, immediately after the birth of a child the mother is placed in a small house specially built for her, at the back of her own house. After a certain time, the mother takes her child to the place of the holy fire, to present it to the ancestral deity, so that mother and child may be admitted again to the house. On this occasion the father gives the child its name.<sup>3</sup> Is not this almost an exact reproduction of what Dr. Hearn says about the Aryan custom?

These customs tell us of the ideas associated in the mind of primitive man with the birth of children to the house. In Aryan countries, again, the hearth worship takes a more distinctive form, although its germ is not absent from savage customs. We meet with the survival of the ancient custom in Scotland,

<sup>1</sup> Ellis's "History of Madagascar," i., pp. 151-3.

<sup>2</sup> Cafalis's "Les Bassoutos," p. 282.

<sup>3</sup> South African "Folk-Lore Journal," i., p. 41; ii., pp. 63, 66.

where, according to Mr. Gregor's account, on the birth of the child, the mother and offspring were *sained*, a ceremony which was done in the following manner:—A fir-candle was lighted and carried three times round the bed, if it was in a position to allow of this being done, and if this could not be done, it was whirled three times round their heads; a Bible and bread and cheese, or a Bible and a biscuit, were placed under the pillow, and the words were repeated, "May the Almichty debar a' ill fae this umman, an be about ir, an blifs ir an ir bairn." When the biscuit or the bread and cheese had served their purpose, they were distributed among the unmarried friends and acquaintances, to be placed under their pillows to evoke dreams. Among some of the fishing population a fir-candle or a basket containing bread and cheese was placed on the bed to keep the fairies at a distance.<sup>1</sup> The similarity of this to some of the features of the Madagascar custom will be at once noticed.

Dalyell records the following curious custom:—"The child put on a cloth spread over a basket containing provisions was conveyed thrice round the crook of the chimney"<sup>2</sup>—thus preserving the proximity of fire.

Pennant describes a christening feast in the Highlands, wherein the father placed a basket of food across the fire, and handed the infant three times over the food and flame.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gregor's "Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland," p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Dalyell's "Darker Superstitions of Scotland," p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> Pennant's "Tour in Highlands," iii., p. 46.

The transition from the burning of fire to the burning of candles is easily understood, when the influences of civilization are taken into consideration. This is well illustrated by a custom mentioned by Napier, from a ballad called "The King's Daughter." A child is born, but under circumstances which do not admit of the rite of baptism being administered. The mother privately puts the baby in a casket, and sends it afloat, and, as a protection, places beside it a quantity of salt and candles.

"The bairnie she swyl'd in linen so fine,  
In a gilded casket she laid it syne,  
Mickle faut and *light* she laid therein,  
Cause yet in God's house it had'na been."<sup>1</sup>

The Irish custom is perhaps still more significant of the original connection between the primitive house-birth and the sacred fire, for in West Galway we meet with the curious notion that no fire must be removed out of a house in which a child is born until the mother is up and well.<sup>2</sup>

The mothers of Scotland are much afraid of the household fairy who changes the new-born babe; and the question is put to the test by an appeal to the house fire, the abode of the fairies, or, according to their primitive meaning, the ancestral spirits. It is curious that these fairy changelings should thus be connected with the old house fire, but it is only the folk-lore form of the primitive custom.

<sup>1</sup> Napier's "Folk-Lore of the West of Scotland," p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> "Folk-Lore Record," iv., p. 108.

Mr. Gregor says the hearth was piled with peat, and when the fire was at its strength the suspected changeling was placed in front of it and as near as possible not to be scorched, or it was suspended in a basket over the fire. If it was a "changeling child" it made its escape by the *lum*, throwing back words of scorn as it disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

And so to discover whether it was a fairy-child, the hearth, as the home of the household fairy, the primitive house-god, that is, was again the place of operation. A new *skull* was taken and hung over the fire from a piece of a branch of a hazel tree, and into this basket the suspected changeling was laid. Careful watch was kept till it screamed. If it screamed it was a changeling, and it was held fast to prevent its escape.<sup>2</sup>

One other subject that is connected with the primitive hearth-worship is house burial. This makes the cycle of primitive household life complete. Marriage, birth, and death, each connected with the hearth-god, concludes perfectly the system of ancestor-worship. Accordingly we find that there is the all-important element of sacrifice associated with burial. The hearth was the seat, not of the fire only, but of the spirit of the house ancestor himself. In earlier times it appears that the bodies of the deceased ancestors were actually buried within their dwellings.<sup>3</sup> That house burial is a *vera causa*, says

<sup>1</sup> "Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland," pp. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> The ashes of the deceased are usually buried near the door of his hut at the expiration of a week after cremation,

Dr. Hearn, is proved by the fact that it is practised at the present day by many of the inferior races. It exists among many tribes of South America,<sup>1</sup> and is also found among the Fantees, the Dahomans, the Affins, and other tribes of Western Africa.<sup>2</sup> Among the Fijians the graves of children are often at the best end of the chiefs' houses.<sup>3</sup> In the ruined cities of the ancient Peruvians, the best preserved mummies have been found, and when burial took place in their houses the domestic implements of the Indians, cooking and water-pots of clay, and other utensils are found. Below this stratum are found the gods, mostly made of clay, but sometimes of silver and gold.<sup>4</sup> The chief was buried in his house in some parts of New Zealand.<sup>5</sup> But among the Aryan nations the practice has long since disappeared, and its very existence has been disputed. Dr. Hearn, however, collects together some passages from Plato, Servius, the *Æneid*, and other classical authorities, which give direct evidence that at some remote period our ancestors were accustomed to dispose in this manner of their dead.<sup>6</sup> But Mr. Evans, in an article contributed to "Macmillan's Magazine," does much more than refer us to classical

and a post is set up to mark the spot. Numbers of such posts are to be seen in every village (Hunter's "Stat. Acc. of Assam," Gáros, ii., p. 155).

<sup>1</sup> Spencer's "Principles of Sociology," i., p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> Hearn's "Aryan Household," p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Williams's "Fiji and the Fijians," i., p. 191.

<sup>4</sup> "Journ. Ethnol. Soc.," i., p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor's "Te Ika a Maui," p. 44.

<sup>6</sup> "Aryan Household," p. 53.



authorities. He traces out from the customs of the people of the Black Mountain district, clear and distinct relics of house burial among the Aryans,<sup>1</sup> and archæology, at all events in this particular, supplies us with the evidence that folk-lore is not capable of. Professor Boyd Dawkins points out that the Neolithic tribes in Britain buried their dead sometimes in caves which had previously been used by them for dwellings, and sometimes in chambered tombs which probably represent the huts of the living.<sup>2</sup>

Of some of the accompanying rites of the old house burial, we find some peculiar relics in primitive custom and English folk-lore. Among the Samoans, in all the houses fires were kept burning night and day at the death of the chief, and hard was the fate of the man for whom no fires were kindled.<sup>3</sup>

On the death of a Maulai no food is cooked in the house for from three to eight days, according to the rank of the deceased, and the family subsist on food cooked elsewhere. Food is also placed on trees and exposed places for birds to eat. On the evening of the appointed day a Calipha comes to the house, and food is cooked and offered to him. He eats a mouthful, and places a piece of bread in the mouth of the dead man's heir, after which the rest of the family partake. The lamp is then lighted

<sup>1</sup> See "Macmillan's Magazine," January, 1881, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> "Early Man in Britain," p. 284. Cf. Nilsson's "Primitive Inhabitants of Scandinavia," pp. 148-168.

<sup>3</sup> Pritchard's "Polynesian Reminiscences," pp. 150-1.

(from which the ceremony is called "Chiragh roshan"), and a six-stringed guitar, called "gherba," being produced, singing is kept up all the night.<sup>1</sup> Here we have the non-use of the house fire, but the burning of the lamp, and the offering of food. And in Scotland we meet with the significant extinction of fire, and with the still more significant animal sacrifice. A very singular belief prevails along the Borders, of which mention is made in Pennant's "Tour in Scotland:" "All fire is extinguished where a corpse is kept, and it is reckoned so ominous for a dog or cat to pass over it that the poor animal is killed without mercy." Two instances of this slaughter were related to the Rev. J. F. Bigge by an old Northumbrian hind, and Mr. Henderson duly records them in his work on the folk-lore of the northern counties. In one case, just as a funeral was about to leave the house, the cat jumped over the coffin, and no one would move till the cat was destroyed. In the other, as a funeral party were coming from a lonely house on a fell, carrying the coffin, because they could not procure a cart, they set it down to rest themselves, and a colly dog jumped over it. It was felt by all that the dog must be killed, without hesitation, before they proceeded farther, and killed it was.<sup>2</sup>

Is not this the primitive hearth sacrifice as represented in its modern folk-lore form? The steps of the transition are not very great, as the above instances are placed in Mr. Henderson's book; but

<sup>1</sup> Biddulph's "Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh," p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Henderson's "Folk-Lore," p. 59.

add to this all that has gone before in our researches upon the primitive household gods, and these steps appear to me to dwindle down to an almost level platform. How clearly fire is represented at death is shown, I think, by the widespread custom of the use of torches and lights while the body is lying in the house, a custom that is lengthily described by Brand.<sup>1</sup>

There are one or two other relics of the primitive household and its hearth-worship which I must mention before passing on to another branch of our subject. In the use of fire for the cure of disease, may we not have a relic of the appeal to the house-spirit, and a sacrifice at the hearth for the obtaining of his goodwill?<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hunt relates a story in his "Popular Romances of the West of England,"<sup>3</sup> which well introduces the subject. The child of a miner who had been suffering from a disease and had been sent on several occasions to the doctor without any good resulting, was one day discovered by the father to be 'overlooked.' "The gossips of the parish had for some time insisted upon the fact that the child had been ill-wished, and that she would never be better until 'the spell was taken off her.' It was then formally announced that the girl could never recover unless three burning sticks were

<sup>1</sup> Brand's "Popular Antiquities," ii., p. 276 *et seq.* For the curious Chinese parallels see Denny's "Folk-Lore of China," p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> It is curious to note among the Pimas (New Mexicans), if a man has killed an Apache he must not look on a blazing fire during sixteen days (Bancroft's "Native Races," i., p. 553).

<sup>3</sup> "Popular Romances of the West of England," p. 212.

taken from the hearth of the 'overlooker,' and the child was made to walk three times over them when they were laid across on the ground, and then quench the fire with water." How this was carried out all readers of Mr. Hunt's book will know.

Without going into the wide and interesting subject of folk-medicine, we meet with one or two remarkable parallels of the cure of disease at the house fire. I will quote a case from savage custom and then turn to English folk-lore. In Hawaii they believe that the forcerers can by certain incantations discover the author or cause of the disease. The most general ceremony is the Kuniahi, broiling fire. When a chief wishes to resort to it, he sends for a priest, who, on his arrival, receives a number of hogs, dogs, and fowls together with several bundles of tapa. He then kindles a small fire near the couch of the invalid and covers it with stones. This being done, he kills one of the dogs by strangling it, and cuts off the head of one of the fowls, muttering all the while his prayers to the god he invokes. The dog, fowl, and pig, if there be one, are then cut open, embowelled, and laid on the heated stones, the priest continuing his incantations and watching, at the same time the offerings broiling on the fire. A small part only of these offerings are eaten by the priest, the rest remain on the fire until consumed, when the priest lies down to sleep; and if his prayers are answered, he informs the poor sufferer on awaking who or what is the cause of his sickness.<sup>1</sup> This custom, even in its savage outline, represents

<sup>1</sup> Ellis's "Missionary Tour through Hawaii," p. 259.

something in the chain of events which connect the house fire with the sacred hearth devoted to ancestor worship. But a fuller account of a custom among the South African Ovahereró tribe leaves no doubt upon the subject. When a chief is ill, a pot containing meat killed for the purpose is cooking on the okuro (sacred) fire. As the pot boils the sick man is carried round and round by his friends, who chant something like the following supplication to the Omukuru (ancestral deity).

“ See, Father, we have come here,  
With this sick man to you,  
That he may soon recover.”<sup>1</sup>

Of course we do not get in English folk-lore exact parallels to these weird customs, but they are so nearly exact as to make an extraordinary addition to our stock of evidence. Henderson records some singular instances of charming disease. In one of these, for example, the object was to restore to health a young man said to be bewitched. A fire was made by midnight, and the doors and windows closed. Clippings from every finger and toe-nail of the patient, with hair from each temple and the crown of his head, were stuffed into the throat of a pigeon which had previously been placed between the patient's feet, and there had died at once, thus attesting the witchery from which he was suffering. The bird's bill was riveted with three pins, and then the wise man thrust a pin into its breast, to reach the heart, everybody else in the room in turn

<sup>1</sup> South African “Folk-Lore Journal,” i., p. 51.

following his example. An opening was then made in the fire, and the pigeon dropped into it. The wife man began to read aloud Pſalms from the prayer-book, and a loud scratching and whining began outside. All in the houſe were ſatisfied that the young man's enemy had appeared outside, perhaps in the form of a dog.<sup>1</sup>

During the preſent year (1882) the daily papers record an extraordinary caſe of ſuperſtition which agrees very cloſely with the interpretation I am ſeeking for this group of folk-lore. At Wells, in Somerſet, the wife of a working man became mentally affected, and was removed to a lunatic aſylum. Immediately before her departure it was ſtated that ſhe was bewitched, and the following mode of removing the ſpells was preſented to the huſband. Firſt he muſt ſtick a large number of pins in an animal's heart, which in the dead of night was to be roasted before a quick fire, the revolutions of the heart to be as regular as poſſible. After roaſting, the heart was to be placed in the chimney and left there, the belief being that, as the heart rotted away, ſo would the heart of the witch rot, and the bewitched would be releaſed from the power of her enemy.<sup>2</sup>

A Scotch cuſtom ſhows that the virtue of the fire for healing diſeaſe lay in its being new, virgin fire. This virgin fire takes us back to ſome cuſtoms already noted in connection with the ſacred fire on the hearth. A notice having been given to all the

<sup>1</sup> Henderſon, *loc. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> "Folk-Lore Record," v., p. 172.

householders within the boundaries of two streams to extinguish all lights and fires on a given morning, the sufferer and his friends cause an emission of new fire by a spinning-wheel or other means of friction, and having spread it from some tow to a candle, thence to a torch, and from the torch to a peatload, send it by messengers to the expectant houses.<sup>1</sup> This appears to me to represent an appeal to the old sacred fire of the hearth; and when we consider the curious nature of the other customs mentioned under this division of our subject, and connect them with what has been proved of other branches of ancient home life, there does not appear to me to be much doubt that we have here another important phase of primitive belief in the sacred hearth as the seat of the health-giving divinities—the gods of the household.

We have now gone through the various items of English folk-lore which, when compared with the existing customs of savage society or of early Aryan society, take us back to the old household spirits of our ancestors. How complete is the survival of this group of ancient beliefs, is only to be seen now that we have placed modern customs and superstitions in the right relationship one with another, and side by side with primitive belief. Step by step we have placed in archaic sequence customs and superstitions which mean nothing in their isolated position in modern folk-lore, but which mean in their new place that they form part of a system

<sup>1</sup> Stewart's "Popular Superstitions of the Highlanders," p. 149.

which commences farther back than hearth-religion, and goes still farther forward into early village life.

Dr. Hearn fums up the substance of these primitive household rites as follows:—

“The primitive religion was domestic. This domestic religion was composed of two closely related parts ; the worship of deceased ancestors, and the worship of the hearth. The latter form was subsidiary to, and consequent upon the former. The deceased ancestor, or his ashes, was either actually buried, or assumed to be buried beneath the hearth. Here therefore, according to the primitive belief, his spirit was supposed to dwell ; and here it received those daily offerings which were its rightful dues, and were essential to its happiness. The fire which burned on the hearth rendered these offerings fit for the finer organs of the spirit world, and transmitted them to him for whom they were designed. Thus the worship of the Lares was the foundation and the support of the adoration of the hearth, which was in effect its altar, and of the holy fire which for ever burned there.”<sup>1</sup>

In grouping together many customs which are the property of the few and the ignorant in our own country, and comparing them with the customs of savage tribes, we have done much towards understanding the factors which underlie primitive life. Comparative folk-lore thus claims as a part of its possessions many of the isolated and singular customs of the peasantry of civilization ; and from this platform we can look back beyond the ages which

<sup>1</sup> “The Aryan Household,” p. 54.



political progress has placed between civilization and barbarism and see how it was that our ancestors lived, and what they had in place of our state machinery and national government. The household was one in itself. It was protected by the tribal or village gods, and in return it protected with sacred exclusiveness and under the sacred influences of its own special spirit all the members of the family under its roof. From this point of view, to adopt the words of Sir George Cox, "the influence of the house-god was more deeply felt and brought more good than that of any other deity. Her worship involved direct and practical duties. She could not be fully served by men who broke their plighted word or dealt treacherously with those whom they had received at their hearths; and thus her worship was almost an unmixed good, both for households and the state."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Introduction to Mythology and Folk-Lore," p. 168.





## CHAPTER VI.

### THE HOUSE GODS AS GODS OF AGRICULTURE.



WE have now seen how in the minds of early mankind the house was protected by the spirit-world. That the self-same fancies which exist among savage men existed among our own ancestors is also shown by the fact that we find them still extant in folk-lore, which, as before stated, consists of survivals of ancient thought and custom among certain sections of the community who have not embraced all the teachings of political civilization. But there is a question to be asked at this stage which takes us to another branch of comparative folk-lore.

Did these fancies exist in the minds of our Aryan ancestors in the same way, and with the same undefined object as they exist in savage races? It is no use entering upon the study of comparative folk-lore unless we not only compare, but endeavour to fix upon the archaic significance of the various customs and superstitions brought into notice. It

is no use comparing the foundation sacrifices of savage races and of early Britain, the house gods of savage races and of early Britain, unless we can work out from this comparison some evidence as to wherein lay the difference in the two races, that compelled the one to stand still or progress only within narrow limits, and the other to push forward and ultimately build up such a civilization as the world now possesses. That difference will be found to rest upon the existence of a definite and progressive village life in the early Aryan, as compared with an indefinite, shifting, social grouping of the savage. From what we have seen in the previous pages there can be no doubt that the early Aryan retained all, or almost all, the faiths and superstitions of his earlier social stage, but he welded them into a definite and homogeneous system, he wove them into the daily life that surrounded him, put them to new uses, and made them serve him instead of master him.

I think I can see my way to these conclusions arising from the facts of comparative folk-lore, as they have been considered in relation to early home life; and when we come to note how the house-religion, so exclusive and sacred as it has been proved to be, has gradually penetrated into the realms of nature-worship so prevalent among early man, and absorbed into its ritual and its beliefs old fancies and superstitions which cling round the objects of nature, we shall be able to comprehend more clearly the forces which have built up the home life of our ancestors. We have ascertained thus far what the house-

worship was and what were its chief influences, but by proceeding yet further in our studies I think it will be seen that the Aryan house-worship was a much stronger belief than its savage original, because it incorporated much of the religion which in savage life was directed elsewhere. Mr. Morgan says, "the first ascertained appearance of the Aryan family was in connection with the domestic animals, at which time they were one people in language and nationality."<sup>1</sup> But how many important surroundings are included in this domestication of animals!—sufficient to tell us of a family life which has laid the foundation of empires.

It has already been pointed out that the foundation sacrifice—the first ceremony that gives us any idea of the sacred characteristics of the primitive household—was a sacrifice to the spirit of the locality. Earth, water, forests, and hills are all the abodes of deities in the fancies of early mankind; and the folk-lore literature of this subject would embrace an extensive research.<sup>2</sup> Stepping on to the borderland of this subject, let us note an example or two which will explain somewhat the nature of the sacrifice at the foundation of the house. "The Aka fears the high mountains which tower aloft over his dwelling; he fears the roaring torrents of the deep glen, which interposes between him and his friends beyond; and he fears the dark and dense jungle in which his

<sup>1</sup> "Ancient Society," p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> See Tylor's "Anthropology," cap. xiv., and Mr. Ralston's article "Forest and Field Myths," in the "Contemporary Review," 1878, xxxi., pp. 520-37.

cattle lose their way. These dark and threatening powers of nature he invests with supernatural attributes; they are his gods, and he names them Fúxo, the god of jungle and water; Firan and Siman, the gods of war; and Satu, the god of house and field. Offerings are made to the gods at the different cultivating seasons, and also in token of gratitude when a child is born.”<sup>1</sup>

This represents the general characteristics of nature-worship existing in more or less degree all over the world. Turning to a special phase of it incidental to our present object, we find among the Basutos that, upon the site of the village being chosen, the chief drives into the ground a peg covered with charms, in order that the village may be firmly nailed to the soil.<sup>2</sup> When the North American Indians went to a new land, they would build a fire, and burn upon it some fish, good mats, or something made with the hand, except clothes, in order to gain the good will of the god of the land.<sup>3</sup> Among the Karok tribes of North America there is a great dance of propitiation, at which all the tribes are present. They call it by a term which signifies literally “working the earth.” The object of it is to propitiate the spirits of the earth and the forest, in order to prevent disastrous land slides, forest fires, earthquakes, drought, and other calamities, and among the many ceremonies connected

<sup>1</sup> Hunter’s “Statistical Account of Assam,” i., p. 356; quoting Dalton’s “Ethnology of Bengal.”

<sup>2</sup> Cafalis’s “Les Bassoutos,” p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> “The American Antiquarian Journal,” ii., p. 14.

with it is the kindling by flint and steel of the sacred fire.<sup>1</sup>

Again, from New Zealand we have a curious piece of evidence. The Hawaiki fleet reached New Zealand in the summer. To appease the spirit of the land for their intrusion humiliating prayers were said; one uttered by a chief on this celebrated occasion is still preserved as a modern charm :—

“ I arrive when an unknown earth is under my feet,  
I arrive when a new sky is above me,  
I arrive at this land,

A resting-place for me.

O spirit of the earth ! the stranger humbly offers his  
heart as food for thee.”<sup>2</sup>

This worship of land deities is shown to have survived among the early races of Britain by some curious pieces of evidence. Does not such a picture as the following tell us distinctly of this old-world faith, almost as if it were written by the modern chronicler of the Aka Indians, rather than by an English Christian ?

The fens and wilds (says Mr. Wright<sup>3</sup>) are in Beowulf constantly peopled by troops of elves and nicers and worms (dragons and serpents). So in the faints legends are they ever the haunts of hobgoblins (dæmones) ; and many and fierce were the struggles between them and the hermits, before the latter succeeded in establishing themselves in their

<sup>1</sup> “ American Ethnology,” iii., pp. 28-30.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson’s “ Story of New Zealand,” i., p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> “ Essays on the Middle Ages,” i., pp. 263-4.

ferted abodes. St. Guthlac built him a mud-cot the Isle of Croyland, a wild spot, then covered th woods and pools and fedgy marshes. The isle d hitherto been uninhabited by man; but many goblin played among its solitudes, and very unlling were they to be driven out. They came on him in a body, dragged him from his cell, metimes tossed him in the air, at others dipped m over head in the bogs, and then tore him rough the midst of the brambles; but their efforts are vain against one who was armed like Guthlac, r he carried to the combat "scutum fidei, lorica ei, galeam castitatis, arcum pœnitentiæ, sagittas almodiæ." St. Botulf chose for his residence kanho, a place not less wild and solitary than royland itself, which had hitherto, his historian tells, been only the scene of the fantastic "illusion" (æery, we might say) of the goblins now to be unished by the intrusion of the holy recluse. At s first appearance they attempted to scare him ith horrid noises; but finding him proof against eir attacks (for he was not worse armed than uthlac), they endeavoured to move him by perafive expostulations. "A long time," they said, we have possessed this spot, and we had hoped to well in it for ever. Why, cruel Botulf, dost thou rcibly drive us from our haunts? Thee or thine e have neither injured nor disturbed. What seekest ou by dislodging us? and what wilt thou gain by ir expulsion? When we are already driven from very other corner of the world, thou wilt not let ; stay quietly even in this solitude." Botulf made

the sign of the cross, and the elves and nicers departed.

It is curious to observe that these land deities thus existing in popular tradition are preserved to us by other records. Camden says that, among the Celtic population of Ireland, "when anyone gets a fall, he springs up, and turning about three times to the right, digs a hole in the ground with his knife or sword, and cuts out a turf, for they imagine there is a spirit in the earth."<sup>1</sup>

The prefect of a Gaulish cohort, who erected an altar on the limits of Caledonia, has summed up in small compass the whole invisible heathen world of the country. This altar is dedicated "to the field deities and deities of Britain." It was found at Castle Hill, on the wall of Antoninus, and is described in Stewart's "Caledonia Romana."<sup>2</sup> These field deities and land deities of Britain were, of course, the representatives of *Dēmētēr*, *Terra mater* ("mother earth," as the popular saying still gives it in our own land), and all the rural deities of Greece and Rome, the history of the belief in which forms one of the most interesting chapters of ancient mythology.

In these old earth-goddesses of Greece and Rome, and of other Aryan lands, we have the tribal or ethnological expression of belief in this one phase of nature-worship. It has become varied, and symbolized during its progress from the savage originals

<sup>1</sup> Camden's "Britannia," ed. by Gibson, ii., p. 378; quoted by Forbes Leslie, "Early Races of Scotland," i., p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> Forbes Leslie's "Early Races of Scotland," i., p. 153.



to the forms in which it appears in the advanced Aryan thought as shown in classical literature, and it has become degraded by the time it appears in English traditional lore. But this does not represent the whole of the process that has been going on. One part of the belief in the old land deities has become attached to the house-religion, has been absorbed into the house-religion. Turning to some agricultural rites and ceremonies existing in England and among some hill tribes of India, we shall find that underlying the long-enduring belief in land deities, there is yet a deeper and more enduring belief still, a belief engendered by the fact that the god who provides the plenty, who clothes and feeds, was worshipped at the same altar, and with the same offerings, and the same ritual, as the ancestral deity was worshipped at the sacred house-fire, and who thus became identified with the household deity.

This gradual encroachment of the house-religion upon the old nature-beliefs of early man can be shown by the curiously progressive examples to be gained from comparative folk-lore. The earliest fancies of the Aryan mind clearly connect the agricultural deity with the earth deity.

“ When the corn grows, then the demons hiss ;  
When the shoots sprout, then the demons cough ;  
When the stalks rise, then the demons weep ;  
When the thick ears come, then the demons fly.”

says an old Aryan hymn quoted by Mr. Tylor,<sup>1</sup> and representing, as it does, the demons to be antagonistic to the produce of corn, it is the counter-

<sup>1</sup> “ Anthropology,” p. 382.

part of many savage customs, as among the New Zealanders, who offered the first fruits to the atua of evil.<sup>1</sup>

The Khands have many deities, race-gods, tribe-gods, family-gods, and a multitude of malignant spirits and demons. But their great divinity is the earth-god, who represents the productive energy of nature. Twice each year, at sowing time and at harvest, and in all seasons of special calamity, the earth-god required a human sacrifice. The duty of providing the victims rested with the lower race attached to the Khand village. Brahmins and Khands were the only classes exempted from sacrifice, and an ancient rule ordained that the offering must be bought with a price. Men of the lower race kidnapped the victims from the plains, and a thriving Khand village usually kept a small stock in reserve "to meet sudden demands for atonement." The victim, on being brought to the hamlet, was welcomed at every threshold, daintily fed, and kindly treated till the fatal day arrived. He was then solemnly sacrificed to the earth-god, with Khands shouting in his dying ear, "We bought you with a price; no sin rests with us!" His flesh and blood were distributed among the village lands.<sup>2</sup>

I think we have here a good type of the transitional stage of worship from the earth-god to the

<sup>1</sup> Polack's "Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders," ii., p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Hunter's "Imperial Gazetteer of India;" cf. Tylor's "Anthropology," p. 365.

house-god ; for this sacrifice which was made to the earth-god was yet sanctified at every threshold of the village. So, too, the foundation sacrifice made, in its oldest and savage form, to the earth-deity, was made, in its later and Aryan form, to the house-deity. It is at such a stage as this that I conceive the point of departure to have been, that I think the advancing Aryan began transferring his worship from nature-gods to house-gods ; began clustering his old faiths and beliefs, rites and ceremonies, superstitions and fancies around the home in the village.

A very curious contribution to this transitional phase of agricultural folk-lore is contained in the comparative history of the Christmas yule-log festival.

We all know the description of this given by Brand, Henderson, and other writers on English folk-lore. The hauling home of the log, and the lighting of it from the remnants of the last Christmas log, the prohibition against giving out fire on Christmas day, are the folk-lore representations of the ever-burning house-fire, which was rekindled once a year from the ever-burning village fire. But how nearly this modern folk-lore corresponds to the ritual of early house-religion, is best seen by a comparison with the yule-log custom of the Black Mountain people, and a custom appertaining to ancestor worship among a South African people. The yule-log of Christmas is here taken quite out of the category of Christmas customs, and unmistakably linked on to the religious ceremonies of primi-

tive ancestor worship. Mr. Arthur J. Evans thus describes the Black Mountain custom in some very instructive papers which appeared in "Macmillan's Magazine," for January, 1881:—

The log duly felled, the house-father utters a prayer, and placing it on his shoulders, bears it home to his yard, and leans it against the outer wall of the house, with the freshly-cut end uppermost—a point about which they are most rigorous. Other lesser logs, representing the different male members of the family, are now brought out and leant beside the *glavni badnjak*; and the house-father as he set each log in succession against the house-wall, had repeated the formula, *veseli badnji dan!* "A merry log day!"

Let us now turn to another and far distant land. A custom of the Ovahereró tribe of South Africa in approaching their ancestors or deities is most curiously parallel. A dead chieftain had been buried in his house, which had consequently been deserted. But his relations, upon visiting the shrine, approached it as the abode of the ancestral deities. A fire "is made upon the old place of holy fire, and a sheep slaughtered near it, of which persons of both sexes and all ages are allowed to eat."<sup>1</sup> Is not this the savage original of the Christmas feast? In the Black Mountains Mr. Evans tells us that—

"The house-elder looks out some animal—a pig,

<sup>1</sup> South African "Folk-Lore Journal," i., p. 62. Compare the Madagascar legend, told by Mr. Sibree, of the meeting of the cattle at the burial-place of the chief, and the self-sacrifice of the fattest of them ("Folk-Lore Record," iv., p. 46).

sheep, goat, or fowl—to be fed up for the Christmas feast, during the whole time that the feast lasts. Rich and poor alike do this; even the poorest families buying a chicken, if they have no stock of their own, as it would be a terrible misfortune not to be able, as they say, ‘to make the knife bloody for Christmas.’ On ‘Tuchni dan,’ or slaughter day, the third day before Christmas, the animal thus set apart is slaughtered by having its throat cut, is cleaned, and hung for Christmas morning.”

And in English folk-lore this is represented by the Manx custom, which is, that on the 24th of December all the servants have a holiday, and after twelve o'clock at night they hunt the wren, kill it, and bury it with great formality.<sup>1</sup> Or applying the archaeological law of the transference from one season to another of customs which once belonged to primitive society, the Irish idea that some animal must be killed on St. Martin's day, because “blood must be shed,”<sup>2</sup> is the exact counterpart of the Black Mountain Christmas custom, and the folk-lore survival in civilized society. So far, then, the Black Mountain Christmas sacrifice and its parallel in English folk-lore are types of a primitive Aryan custom. But the parallel runs much farther back into early society than this. The yule-log custom of the Black Mountain people is parallel to a log custom of the Ovahereró in the worship of their ancestors. After the slaughter of the sheep, as noticed above, every son of the buried chief ap-

<sup>1</sup> Brand's "Popular Antiquities," i., p. 472.

<sup>2</sup> "Folk-Lore Record," iv., p. 107.

proaches the place of holy fire with a branch or a small tree. These they set up in a row on the south-west side of the building, and an ox is slaughtered for each of the sons.<sup>1</sup> Can we help recognizing in this the parallel savage custom to that of the Black Mountain people? The South African custom definitely and distinctly appertains to the worship of ancestors, the Black Mountain Christmas custom absorbs so many features of this cult as known to Aryan society, that Mr. Evans rightly places his papers on the subject as a fresh chapter of its history.

Our next task is to see how all this survival of the primitive house-religion is connected with early agricultural rites. I cannot help connecting the Black Mountain log festival with the agricultural festival. As the logs are brought into the house, the house-mother sprinkles some corn, and utters a wish or prayer, a custom significant enough. And this very nearly assimilates with a custom among the wild tribes of India. At the gathering of the harvest, the Lhoofai, or Kookies, have a festival called among them "Chukchai." The chief goes solemnly with his people to the forest, and cuts down a large tree, which is afterwards carried into the village, and set up in the midst. Sacrifice is then offered, and "khong," spirits, and rice are poured over the tree. A feast and dance close the ceremony.<sup>2</sup> We do not here get the burning of the log at the house fire; but this, it appears to

<sup>1</sup> South African "Folk-Lore Journal," i., p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Lewin's "Wild Races of S. E. India," p. 270.

me, is the addition which Aryan society made to the primitive harvest festival.

We will now endeavour to show how other branches of the old house-religion are connected with agricultural duties. We have seen that ancestor worship is the worship at the hearth. So, too, is ancestor worship connected with the agricultural festival. What else can be the explanation of the old ploughing custom of telling the yoke-horses or cattle of the death of their owner? <sup>1</sup>—a custom that was in full vogue in Herefordshire a few years ago. A no doubt substituted or debased variant of this, namely, telling of the death of the owner to the bees, has a large range of folk-lore literature, but the true parallel is seen in the following custom among the Naga hill tribes of India. On the occurrence of a death, they howl their lamentations, feast, and bury the corpse, placing the deceased's spear in the grave, and his shield, and a few small sticks, like forks, with some eggs and grain, on the grave, as an offering to insure them good crops. <sup>2</sup>

Another custom incidental to the primitive house-worship, as noticed in the preceding chapter, was the ceremony attending the birth of children. We have seen that it took place at the sacred hearth of the household. But before the house-religion had fully absorbed it, and made it a part of itself, there were phases of transition from its first form in nature-worship. One example of these transitional phases

<sup>1</sup> See "Bye-gones relating to Wales," Feb. 1882, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> "Journ. As. Soc. Bengal," xii., p. 952.

we meet with among the wild tribes of India, and I cannot do better than quote Mr. Lewin's account of the custom, for it will need no comment or explanation. At a Chukma village, Mr. Lewin was once present when sacrifice was offered to the "nats," or deities of the wood and stream, by the head man, on the occasion of the recovery of the man's wife from childbirth. The offering was a sucking pig and a fowl. The altar was of bamboo, decorated with young plantain shoots and leaves. On this raised platform were placed small cups containing rice, vegetables, and a spirit distilled from rice. Round the whole, from the house-mother's distaff, had been spun a long white thread, which encircled the altar, and then, carried into the house, was held at its two ends by the good man's wife. The sacrifice commenced by a long invocation uttered by the husband, who stood opposite to his altar, and beneath each snatch of his charm he tapped the small platform with his hill-knife, and uttered a long, wailing cry; this was for the purpose of attracting the numerous wandering spirits who go up and down upon the earth, and calling them to the feast. When a sufficient number of these invisible guests was believed to be assembled, he cut the throats of the victims, and poured a libation of blood upon the altar and over the thread.<sup>1</sup>

In the curious volume of "*Anglo-Saxon Leechdoms*"<sup>2</sup> we have, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary records of agricultural folk-lore, in its

<sup>1</sup> Lewin's "*Wild Races of S. E. India*," p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i., pp. 399-405. Cf. Thorpe's "*Analeceta*," p. 117,



connection with the old house-religion that English literature contains. We learn that the way to restore fertility to land rendered sterile by witchcraft or forcery was as follows: "Here is the remedy, how thou mayst amend thine acres, if they will not wax well, or if therein anything improper have been done by forcery or witchcraft. Take then at night, ere it dawn, four turfs on the four quarters of the land, and mark how they formerly stood. Then take oil and honey, and barm, and milk of every cattle which is on the land, and part of every kind of tree which is grown on the land, except hard beans, and part of every wort known by name, except buckbean (?) [burr]; and add to them holy water, then sprinkle thrice the place where the turf grew, repeating these words thrice, 'Crescite (*i.e.* increase), multiplicamini (*i.e.* multiply) et replete terram (*i.e.* and replenish the earth), in nomine Patris,' &c. Say Paternoster an equal number of times; then carry the turfs to the church, and let the mass-priest sing four masses over them, and let the green side be turned towards the altar. And then carry the turfs before sunset to the place they came from; and have ready made of juniper tree four crucifixes, and write on each end, 'Mattheus, Marcus, Lucas, and Johannes.' Lay the crucifix down in the hole, and say, 'Crux, Mattheus; crux, Marcus; crux, Lucas; crux, Johannes!' Then take the turf, and place it thereon, repeating nine times the word 'Crescite' and Paternoster. Then

and Metcalfe's "Englishman and Scandinavian," p. 103. I have used the latter version as far as possible.

turn to the east, and make an obeisance nine times, and say these words—

“ ‘ Eastward I stand,  
 Mercies I beg :  
 I beg the great God,  
 The mighty Lord,  
 I beg the holy  
 Guard of heaven ;  
 I beg earth  
 And high heaven,  
 And the true  
 Sancta Maria,  
 And the lofty mansion,  
 That I may this enchantment,  
 By the favour of the Lord,  
 Utter with my teeth,  
 With firm mind  
 Awaken the fruits  
 Unto us for worldly use,  
 May fill the earth  
 With firm belief,’ ” &c.

After thrice turning to the east, a prostration on the earth, fundry litanies and sanctuses, a benedicite pronounced with arms outstretched, &c., the chief personage in this ceremonial takes some unknown seed from almsmen, gathers all the ploughing instruments together, places on the beam incense, fennel, consecrated soap, and consecrated salt; then he is to take the seed, set it on the plough, and say—

“ Arch, arch, arch !  
 Mother of earth  
 Grant to thee, the omnipotent,  
 Eternal Lord,  
 Fields growing

And flourishing,  
Fructifying  
And strengthening,  
The rural crops  
And the broad  
Crops of barley  
And the white  
Wheaten crops,  
And all the  
Crops of earth,  
Grant the owner,  
God Almighty,  
And his hallows  
In heaven who are  
That his farm be fortified  
Gainst all fiends, gainst each one,  
And may it be embattled round  
Gainst baleful blastings every one  
With forceries may  
Through a land fow.  
Now I pray the wielder of all,  
Him, who made this world of yore,  
That there be none so cunning wife,  
That there be none so crafty man,  
Who shall render weak and null  
Words so deftly neatly said."

Then let one drive forward the plough, and cut  
the first furrow; then say—

"Hail to thee, mother earth,  
Mortals maintaining,  
Be growing and fertile  
By the goodness of God,  
Filled with fodder  
Our folk to feed."

Then take meal of every kind, and let one bake  
a broad loaf as big as will lie within his two hands,

and knead it with milk and with holy water, and lay it under the first furrow. Then say—

“Land filled with fodder  
Mankind to feed,  
Brightly blooming,  
Blessed become thou  
For the holy name  
Of him who heaven created,  
And this earth  
On which we live,  
May the God who made these grounds  
Grant to us his growing grace,  
That to us of corn each kind  
May come to good.”

Then say thrice “Crescite,” &c., and the Pater-noster thrice.

Nothing could be more singularly significant of an old village rite than this extraordinary survival of pagan fancies amidst Christian worship. It so happens that the whole formula has been preserved in these Anglo-Saxon writings, and that hence we can study it in its completeness, and not when it is broken up—as other old village rites are broken up—into the countless fragments which modern folk-lore presents to the student. It is just one of those examples of survival which supply the argument for a piecing together of the rites and ceremonies we are now considering into a connected whole, and saying that we have produced therefrom something like a picture of early village life. And if we turn to the traditional survival of this ancient custom, the manner in which folk-lore is split up and separated into detached fragments is very

curiously demonstrated. Having the custom as it was practised among our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, the following appear to be the forms of it, as it has come down by traditional observance. At the Yule-tide festival in Banffshire and Aberdeenshire, says Mr. Gregor,<sup>1</sup> a little water along with a handful of grass, or a small quantity of moss, was carried into the house, and placed on the hearth. The next example is even a nearer parallel to the original. The "Warrington Guardian" newspaper of 26th November, 1881, records that a woman asked the Vicar of Lower Gornal, in Staffordshire, to cut a turf four inches square from a grave in which lay a man who could not lie at ease because of a guilty conscience, and stated that the putting of the turf on the communion table would cause all the ghosts to disappear. And, finally, Mr. Gregor says that "when the plough was 'strykit,' *i.e.*, put into the ground for the first time in autumn or spring, to prepare the soil for the seed, bread and cheese, with ale or whisky, was carried to the field, and partaken of by the household. A piece of bread with cheese was put into the plough, and another piece was cast into the field 'to feed the craws.'"<sup>2</sup> Here, then, are three fragments of one original custom once more restored to their rightful place in English folk-lore. Let us see how it is represented in other lands. Among the agricultural customs of the Ambala district in Lahore, the Zamíndárs go to their fields

<sup>1</sup> "Antiquary," vol. v. p. 5; cf. Gregor's "Folk-Lore of N. E. of Scotland," p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> "Folk-Lore of N.E. of Scotland," p. 181.

with seven leaves of the akh (*Asclepias gigantea*), which they place on the harrow, and on the leaves some parched rice and sugar, and burn incense.<sup>1</sup> These two latter customs are very nearly identical, and they connect the field sacrifice with the household sacrifice. But, again, when the crops are ripe, and ready for the sickle, the people of this district of India first cut and bring home a load of every kind of grain, and offer it to the household gods.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the form of the custom as given in the superstition at Warrington, and in the old Anglo-Saxon record, is not so archaic as the Yuletide festival of Scotland. In the first we see the Church taking the place of the primitive house, and the altar that of the sacred hearth; but this appears to be the transference of deep-rooted custom from paganism to Christianity, which has not taken place in the purer Scotch custom.

The customs of the agricultural districts of England and Scotland singularly bring out their connection with an ancient house-religion. "Our most characteristic festive rejoicings," says Mr. Henderson, "accompany the harvest—the mell-supper and the kern-baby, usages which are by no means extinct among us." In some parts the festival takes place at the end of the reaping, not of the ingathering. "When the sickle is laid down, and the last sheaf of golden corn set on end, it is said that they have 'got the kern.' The reapers announce

<sup>1</sup> "The Roman-Urdú Journal," Lahore, vol. iii. (1880), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

the fact by loud shouting, and an image is at once hoisted on a pole, and given into the charge of the tallest and strongest man of the party. The image is crowned with wheat-ears, and dressed up in gay finery, a white frock and coloured ribbons being its conventional attire. The whole group circle round this harvest-queen, or kern-baby, curtsying to her, and dancing and singing; and thus they proceed to the farmer's barn, where they set the image up on high, as the presiding goddess of their revels, and proceed to do justice to the harvest-supper."<sup>1</sup>

Curious as this custom is, its full bearing upon the old house-religion is seen by what Mr. Henderson relates a little further on:—"Each cottage must at harvest-time have its own household divinity, and oaten cakes having formerly been the staple food of the North, these figures are commonly formed of oats. Such have I repeatedly seen in cottages on the Tweed side, elaborately decorated and enshrined at the top of the bink or dresser, with the family stock of big dishes ranged on either side. These, too, are kern-babies. I must add that throughout Northumberland, when the last cart of corn arrives at the stackyard gate, the driver leaves it standing there while he carries his whip to the mistress of the house, who must either drive in the load herself or give the man a glass of whisky to do it for her."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henderson's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 87. Cf. Brand's "Popular Antiquities," ii., p. 20 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Henderson, *ibid.* I must give in this note the following curious custom:—

"He shall know whether come will be deere or cheape for

A near parallel to this is to be found in India. The first cutting of corn, not taken to the threshing floor, but brought home to be eaten by the family, and presented to the family gods and Brahmans, is called Arwan. When the Arwan is brought home, the grain is taken out of the ear, mixed up with milk and sugar, and every member of the family tastes it seven times.<sup>1</sup>

Here in definite terms folk-lore tells us that the prayers for the harvest were presented to the household gods. Translating the modern term "devil" into its archaic equivalent, we have evidence of the same primitive worship in the custom still prevalent in England and Scotland, of leaving a corner of the field uncultivated for "the aul man" or devil.<sup>2</sup>

the present yeere, and in which of the monethes thereof. Let him choose out at aduenture twelue graines of corne the first day of Januarie, let him make cleane the fire harth and kindle a fire thereupon; afterward let him call some boy or girle of his neighbours, or of his owne house; let him commaund the partie to put one of these graines of corne vpon the harth made very cleane and hot; then he shall marke if the faide graine doe leape or lie still; if it leape a little, the corne shall be reasonably cheape; but if it leape very much, it shall be very cheape; if it leape toward the fire more or lesse, corne shall be more or lesse deere; if it lie still and leape not, then corne shall stand at one price for this first moneth: he shall do in like manner with the second graine for the moneth of Februarie, and so in order with the rest of the graines for the rest of the monethes as they follow."—SURFLET'S *Maison Rustique; or, The Countrie Farme*, 1600, p. 39.

<sup>1</sup> Elliot's "History, Folk-Lore, &c., of N. W. Prov. of India," i., p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Gregor's "Folk-Lore of North-East of Scotland," pp. 179,



Not less definitely connected with the hearth-worship is the old custom of carrying fire round houses, fields, &c., on the last night of the year, for the purpose of securing fertility and general prosperity.<sup>1</sup> This fire was no doubt taken from the sacred hearth. In the reign of Henry III. the ploughmen and other officers at East Monkton, between Warminster and Shaftesbury, were allowed a ram for a feast on the Eve of St. John the Baptist, when they used to carry fire round the lord's corn,<sup>2</sup> and Brand records that on the eve of Twelfth-day in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, fires used to be lit at the end of the lands in fields just sown with wheat.<sup>3</sup> Remembering, too, as evidence has already shown, how the church has in so many instances taken the place of the household altar, there are some customs incidental to the feast of Plough Monday which have an archaic origin in the primitive days of our ancestors. At Aylmerton in Norfolk, Blomefield tells us, there was a light in many churches called Plough-light, maintained by old and young persons

182; Henderson, "Folk-Lore of Northern Counties," p. 278; Forbes Leslie's "Early Races of Scotland," i., p. 152.

<sup>1</sup> Mitchell's "Past in the Present," p. 145. Compare the following curious customs of the Maya nations of America. "Before beginning the operation of weeding, they burned incense at the four corners of the field, and uttered fervent prayers to the idols."—BANCROFT'S *Native Races of the Pacific*, ii., p. 720.

<sup>2</sup> "Law Magazine and Review," vol. xiv., p. 350.

<sup>3</sup> "Popular Antiquities," i., p. 33. Compare the hallowing of the land described in the introduction to Sir George Dasent's "Burnt Njal."

who were husbandmen, before some image; and on Plough Monday they had a feast, and went about with a plough and some dancers to support it.<sup>1</sup>

To summarize somewhat the results of our researches thus far, let us consider for one moment the principles underlying early village institutions, and it will soon be seen what important influences these old beliefs were; how their results have lasted on into civilized society; and how they helped the development of a pure and law-protected village life.

And first the house. This was not the individual property of a villager, nor was it occupied simply by a villager and his wife and children. It was the common property of the village, was built, as we have seen, by the aid of the whole community, and was occupied by a group of individuals known as the family of ancient society. Under all these circumstances there was encouragement enough to the intrusion of strangers, and to the notion that home life was simply like any other branch of the community, communal in origin, and therefore open to all the unrestrained wants and desires of rough, uncultured barbarians. Against all this the house-religion, as I have traced it out in the preceding pages, turned a definite and powerful opposition, an opposition that set up the sanctity and sacredness of the house and all its surroundings, and hence allowed society to build up aggregations of families into clans, of clans into tribes, of tribes into nations.

Secondly, the culture of the land. The village

<sup>1</sup> Blomefield's "History of Norfolk," viii., p. 83.

community held lands in common. In their earliest stage, when the land upon which they had settled was unoccupied for a considerable extent around, their mode of cultivation was to clear a certain space in the forest by felling the trees, burn the undergrowth, cultivate the clearing for two or three years, and then move on to another clearing. A later stage was, as I have described it in the opening chapter, to have the village boundaries fixed, and every villager to possess certain rights in common, not individually, over arable land, pasture land, and forest land. It is easily conceivable how these communal rights might be abused unless a firm hand were kept upon the villagers. Prudence we know, by many examples, does not enter much into the actions of early mankind, but its place is supplied by fear—the fear of the spirit-world, that is. In this first stage of agriculture, how were the forests protected from the unsparing hands and unthinking minds of the primitive cultivators? By such influences as we find among the Hill Tribes of India. The Lakhimpur, Hunter says, have, like the Abars, a superstition which deters them from breaking fresh ground so long as their available fallow is sufficient, namely, a dread of offending the spirits of the woods by unnecessarily cutting down trees.<sup>1</sup> Have we not relics of this old fear in the “genius of the oak” recorded by Aubrey?<sup>2</sup> and in the superstition that to dream of a tree being uprooted in your garden is regarded as a death-warning to the

<sup>1</sup> Hunter's “Statistical Account of Assam,” i., 349.

<sup>2</sup> See *antè*, p. 17.

owner?<sup>1</sup> But it is recorded as a positive law of the village community in India, Germany, and their Hebrew parallel, where the cutting down of trees is prohibited as a religious offence.<sup>2</sup>

Thus then, when we apply to comparative folk-lore to unlock some of the lost knowledge treasures of early village life, we gain something more than a mere record of primitive ideas and customs. The clusters of homesteads which congregated together on lands belonging to the whole community, which were built by the whole community, which were occupied by groups of kindred men and women, were protected, each in its own inviolate secrecy, by the sanctity of the household spirit. They formed a sacred precinct which sheltered all the members of the community against the individual passions and rough-thought actions of men as yet untamed by civilization. Everything, says Dr. Hearn, done in the house or its precincts was private because it was holy; and it was holy because it was under the care of its own special house-spirit.<sup>3</sup> It is the acknowledged possession of this faith which marks the point of Aryan progress from savage society, which makes the home of the Aryan house-father a much more genial place than Sir George Cox has pictured it, "a den which its savage owner shares, indeed, with his mate and offspring, but which no other living being may enter except at the

<sup>1</sup> "Folk-Lore Record," i., p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> See an instructive passage on this curious subject in Fenton's "Early Hebrew Life," pp. 47-48.

<sup>3</sup> "The Aryan Household," p. 222.

risk of his life," a picture which might, indeed, be drawn from the savage counterparts of the folk-lore we have been considering, but which becomes brighter and brighter as we get to know that what the savage performed fitfully and fearfully, the early Aryan regulated into a system which bound men together in home life, in clan life, and finally in national life.





## CHAPTER VII.

### EARLY DOMESTIC CUSTOMS.



**IMPENETRABLE** as the house of primitive society was to the villagers as a body, guarded as it was by the enormous influences of the house-religion, yet it is not impossible to pull aside these obstacles by the aid of comparative folk-lore and to take a comprehensive, even if incomplete, sketch of some of the domestic usages that were performed therein.

The primitive household was made up of a family connected by blood, or assumed to be so, and consisting of several generations all living under one roof, worshipping at the common household altar, and obeying the head or chief. This communal family partook of the agricultural products of the village in proportion to its allotments in the village lands, and in turn distributed its share among the individual members. And the manners and customs of savage or of early Aryan society compared with the obsolete manners and customs, or the current superstitious practices of our own land, enable us to

ascertain the principle of the communal mode of living within the early village homestead.

In an extremely valuable contribution to the ethnology of the American Indian tribes, published by the United States Government, Mr. Morgan has dealt exhaustively with the subject of communism in living. Tracing through all its stages the law of hospitality, Mr. Morgan proceeds to deal with the usages and customs relating to the American Indian communism in goods and food. It is only necessary to quote one or two of the instances here collected together. The Creek Indians live in clusters of houses, each cluster containing a clan or family of relations who eat and live in common.<sup>1</sup> All the Indian tribes who hunt upon the plains observe the custom of making common stock of the capture.<sup>2</sup> During the fishing season in the Columbia river all the members of the tribe encamp together, and make a common stock of the fish obtained.<sup>3</sup> Among the Mandans, provisions were in common.<sup>4</sup> Among the Maya Indians the lands are held and wrought in common, and the products shared by all, their food being prepared at one hut, and every family sending for its portion.<sup>5</sup> The Iroquois had but one cooked meal each day. After its division at the kettle among the members of the household, it was served warm to each person in earthen or wooden bowls. They had neither tables, nor chairs, nor plates.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Morgan's "Houses and House-life of the American Aborigines," p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

These examples picked out from Mr. Morgan's very valuable work are sufficient to illustrate the North American custom. Turning to Australia, we meet with exactly the same evidence. An elaborate system of division was made according to the share of the hunter in the process of capture. In every case, however, whether large game or small, the cooked food was divided by the procurer into certain portions which were allotted by custom to various members of his family group, there being a common right to food in the family.<sup>1</sup> We doubtless have the same evidence in the following account of South African custom. An ox is slaughtered at every wedding, and consumed by the company; invited guests alone join in the dances, but anyone may help to consume the meat. Marriage feasts are those which most frequently occur, but generally speaking a feast takes place whenever there is beef to eat. If, for instance, a man has sacrificed an ox to propitiate or thank his spirits, his neighbours assemble to devour it; if he have killed a beast to celebrate his daughter's espousal, it will be consumed in the same way.<sup>2</sup> When a Kafir is travelling he generally finds entertainment among his own tribe.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Thomas says of the Central South African tribes:—"Food is often regarded as common property, and when one family has a good meal provided, their neighbours have no scruple in inviting themselves to a share. When a quantity of beer is made,

<sup>1</sup> Fison and Howitt's "Kamilaroi and Kurnai," p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Shooter's "Kafirs of Natal," p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.



or an ox slaughtered, at a certain house, all the villagers, and even those of neighbouring villages, will come together to partake of the feast."<sup>1</sup> Coming to the instructive customs of India, Sir John Phear tells us that it is the universal habit in Bengal, prevalent in all classes, for the members of a family to live joint, and to enjoy the profits of the property jointly.<sup>2</sup>

And now that the primitive household has been split up into the modern family in England, how do we find this communism in living represented? The guilds of the middle ages can be traced up to a tribal origin,<sup>3</sup> and one of their chief features is the common meal,<sup>4</sup> a plain trace of the ancient brotherhood of kinsmen, "joint in food, worship, and estate." Many of our manorial customs take us to the same pages of early village history. The tenants of many manorial communities were obliged to grind the corn at the common mill.<sup>5</sup> So, too, in some cases, they had the right to feast—to partake of the common meal, in fact. Thus in most of the manors of Glastonbury Abbey the bailiffs and chief tenants dined in hall on Christmas-day, and many other like instances occur.<sup>6</sup> The leets, like most other

<sup>1</sup> Thomas's "Central South Africa," p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> "The Aryan Village in India and Ceylon," p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Sullivan's "Introduction to Materials for Ancient Irish History," pp. ccvi. *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Brentano's Essay in Toulmin Smith's "Guilds," pp. lxx. *et seq.* Cf. Maine's "Early History of Institutions," p. 233; Spencer's "Political Institutions," pp. 554-560.

<sup>5</sup> "Law Magazine and Review," xiv., p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

gatherings, ended with good cheer, which were known by the name of leet-ales or scot-ales. Besides leet-ales, however, there were church-ales, clerk-ales, bid-ales, and bride-ales, burial feasts, and wedding feasts, all of which are duly recorded among the popular antiquities of our land described in the well-known book of Brand's, and all of which, even in the fragmentary form in which they now appear before the student, take us back to the early communal household of primitive times, when England was occupied, as barbaric countries are now occupied, by people who had not advanced along the line of civilization and development.

There are, however, one or two examples of these survivals of the ancient communal family-meal in England which are, perhaps, worth giving some account of. It is curious to note how house-customs crop up again. The house-warming that is so general amongst us at the present day is no doubt a relic of the old communal feast, in which every villager took his share as of right;<sup>1</sup> and an exact parallel exists among the North American Indians, for festivals, we are told, are given in the Alaska villages on erecting a new house.<sup>2</sup> In Holstein, turning for a moment to Continental folk-lore, among the customs now obsolete was that of Fensterbier (window-beer), on making an additional

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gregor notes the custom in Scotland under the name of *boose-beatin*, or *fire-kinlin*, the latter name no doubt indicating the kindling of the sacred fire. "Folk-Lore of N. E. of Scotland," p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> "American Antiquarian," ii., p. 113.

window, or a new building, or even altering an old one, a festive dance accompanying the solemnity.<sup>1</sup> In Haisted's "History of Kent"<sup>2</sup> we find it recorded that the fishermen of Folkestone used to select eight of the largest and best whittings out of every boat when they came home from fishing; these eight were sold apart from the rest, and the money devoted to make a feast on every Christmas-day, which was called a Rumbald. The Welsh had an ancient custom called the Cymhortha, in which the farmers of the district met together on a certain day to help the small farmer plough his land, and each one contributed a leek to the common repast.<sup>3</sup>

Among the ancient Britons their chief meal was in the evening. Henry collects the following particulars from various Latin authorities. The guests sat in a circle upon the ground, with a little hay, grass, or the skin of some animal under them. A low table or stool was set before each person, with the portion of meat allotted to him upon it. If anyone found any difficulty in separating any part of his meat with his hands and teeth, he made use of a large knife that lay in a particular place for the benefit of the whole company.<sup>4</sup> Henry quotes from "Offian's Poems" (vol. i. p. 15) the following graphic picture:—"It was on Cromla's shaggy side that Dorglas placed the deer . . . A hundred youths collect the heath, ten heroes blow the fire; three

<sup>1</sup> "Literary Gazette," 1822, p. 882.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. iii., p. 380.

<sup>3</sup> Hampson's "Medii Ævi Kalend.," i., pp. 107 and 170.

<sup>4</sup> Henry's "History of Great Britain," i., p. 485.

hundred chufe the polished stones. The feast is smoking wide." <sup>1</sup> Remembering that the cooking by heated stones was the primitive practice (and we shall have something to say about this presently), we have here a curious example of a common meal.

Another very important contribution to the evidence of communism in living is contained in the history of the family chest. Perhaps there is no more ancient piece of furniture than the family chest, and I think I can give one or two notes which will show how it has originated in the necessities and customs of early village life.

Among the New Zealanders we find a sort of village chest. Polack says:—"In the *powaka* or village museum (boxes being the literal meaning) are placed the valuables of the community, fowling-pieces, esteemed garments and foreign implements, trinkets, powder, and similar articles equally valuable and of public utility." <sup>2</sup> And again, "These boxes are cut from the red pine . . . some of these boxes are heirlooms in a family." <sup>3</sup> This is parallel to the chests containing the personal chattels of the communal households of the North American Indians of Oregon. <sup>4</sup> Among the Neeah Indians each house is

<sup>1</sup> Henry's "History of Great Britain," i., p. 482.

<sup>2</sup> "Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders," i., p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> Page 229. Pinkerton says too: "Their clothes, arms, feathers, some ill-made tools, and a chest, in which all these are deposited, form all the furniture of the inside of the house." —PINKERTON, *New Zealand*, xi., p. 542.

<sup>4</sup> See "Contributions to North American Ethnology," i., p. 174.

occupied by several families, and chests of quite large size, and very neatly made, considering the tools employed, contained the personal chattels of the owners. I cannot help connecting this village- or communal-chest with the house-chest of the Hindus; one surely is the archaic predecessor of the other, and it wants only some more information from savage society to prove it. Among the Hindus, "according to the 'S'ilpa S'âtra'—the Tamil treatise before quoted—every house should have a box, technically termed *garbha*, in which to keep the family plate and jewels, and this box is kept in a certain part of the house astrologically determined upon."<sup>1</sup> Carrying on this archaic sequence to the Western branch of the Aryan family, I think we see a remnant of this primitive home furniture in "the chests for holding property which were used in England by all classes for many centuries, from the monarch, who carried them about in his progresses, to the poorest man who could afford to have a roof over his head." Mr. H. B. Wheatley supplies me with this last note, and refers me to the work of M. Jacquemart for some specimens of these chests; and I would refer to Mr. Syer Cuming's article on Church Chests in the "Journal of the Archæological Association" (xxviii., pp. 225-230). There are also some fine examples in the South Kensington Museum. The Anglo-Saxons made use of them as seats by day and beds by night. Then, again, among the Irish, one of the necessary articles pre-

<sup>1</sup> "Indian Antiquary," v., p. 233; Phear's "Aryan Village in India and Ceylon," p. 18.

presented at every wedding is the hutch or Irish chest.<sup>1</sup>

If we may thus connect the primitive village-chest with the Aryan house-chest, we have yet another link between the village home of ancient society and of modern; and these links, when all grouped together, help us to understand more explicitly the line of progress which civilization has made.

And so turning from the evidence of the primitive communal family meal to the usages incidental to it, the superstitions of the present day reveal to us much information as to the nature and structure of household utensils.

English folk-lore does not give us anything like what the practices of the Black Mountain peasantry give us. There at the Christmas feast—the primitive common meal—the iron fire-shovel, the low round table, the three-legged stools, and the one chair were removed from the neighbourhood of the hearth, and hidden away in any obscure corner,<sup>2</sup> a custom wonderfully significant of times when “iron” and “tables” were unknown. The folk-lore attached to iron and to furniture does not tell us anything of the times when these were unknown, but the folk-lore of stones, on the other hand, tells us of the time when they were going out of use. Dr. Mitchell records that the spindle whorls used in Scotland had become known to the natives of the

<sup>1</sup> “Kilkenny Arch. Soc.,” i., new series, p. 184. See also Brand’s “Popular Antiquities,” i., p. 461, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> “Macmillan’s Magazine,” January, 1881.

district where only one hundred years ago they were in full use, as adder stones.<sup>1</sup> Thus the old usage had become enshrined in popular superstition. In every part of Scotland these ancient tools and ancient weapons of similar kind are believed to assist the birth of children, to increase the milk of cows, to cure diseases of the eye, to protect houses from lightning, and other marvellous virtues.<sup>2</sup> In Ireland we have the following curious account of superstitions attached to celts and stone implements:—"These in the West of Ireland, but especially in the Arran Isles, Galway Bay, are looked on with great superstition. They are supposed to be fairy darts or arrows, and are called *saighead* [fyed], *anglicè* dart. They had been thrown by fairies, either in fights among themselves, or at a mortal man or beast. The finder of one should carefully put it in a hole in a wall or ditch. It should not be brought into a house or given to anyone, yet the Aranites are very fond of making votive offerings of them at the holy wells on the mainland. They carry them to the different patrons and leave them there; the reason for this I could not make out; they do not seem to leave them at the holy wells on the islands."<sup>3</sup> And so we carry the records of stone superstitions into England. Aubrey records the hanging of a flint that has a hole in it over horses that are hag-ridden.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Henderfon relates the use of "Irish stones" in

<sup>1</sup> "The Past in the Present," p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> "Folk-Lore Record," iv., p. 112.

<sup>4</sup> "Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme," pp. 28, 118.

Northumberland and the northern counties,<sup>1</sup> and the superstitions attaching to the flint "elf stones."<sup>2</sup> A writer in the "Journal of the Archæological Association" states as follows:—"A naturally perforated stone and a horn are frequently seen appended to the keys of the doors of stables and cow-houses and the gates of sheepfolds. Ask the groom or the cow-boy why those two things are selected in preference to any others, and they can give you no further reason than that they have ever been used for the purpose. Tell them that the perforated flint, the holy stone or hag-stone, is the talisman employed from the most remote period to guard the cattle from the attacks of the fiendish Mara, the ephialtes, or nightmare, and that the horn is the ensign and emblem of the god Pan, the protector of cattle, and hence regarded as a potent charm and fit appendage to the key of the stable and cow-house, and they will laugh you to scorn. They nevertheless unknowingly perpetuate the most archaic superstitions, and thus become auxiliary in preserving and illustrating the thoughts, rites, and practices of departed ages."<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Mitchell states that the stone celt is known as a thunderbolt in Brazil, Japan, Java, Burmah, Assam, among the Malays in Western Africa, and in many other countries, and cannot account for the iron-age man regarding as of celestial origin, and giving a god-like power to things manufac-

<sup>1</sup> "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> "Journ. Arch. Ass.," xii., p. 129.



tured by his predecessors in culture.<sup>1</sup> Is not the explanation to be sought for in the conservatism of custom? Expediency tells the iron-age man to use the iron knife, but regard for old usages supplies him with the superstition that he must not put it near the fire,<sup>2</sup> that it will cut the friendship between him and others if he gives it away, that it is an instrument of divination.<sup>3</sup> And we have a picture of the rarity and value of iron in the early periods of its age in the Lancashire omen peculiar to ladies who consider it lucky to find old iron, a horse-shoe or rusty nail being carefully conveyed home and hoarded up.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, irrespective of the archæological finds of stone celts, and the records of the stone age, folklore tells us of the old utensils used in the primitive household. But the superstitions leading us back to this early period of village life, are followed closely by usages which seem never to have broken away from prehistoric times. In Shetland the "knockin' stane" is still found in common use. It consists of a large stone, often a boulder, with a cup-like excavation on one side. Into this cup the barley is placed after being well dried; and it is then struck repeatedly and steadily by a wooden mallet. As the blows fall, many of the grains start out of the cup, but a woman or child, sitting oppo-

<sup>1</sup> "The Past in the Present," p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Tylor's "Early History of Mankind," p. 275.

<sup>3</sup> Aubrey's "Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme," pp. 25, 92, 93.

<sup>4</sup> "Choice Notes, Folk-Lore," p. 61.

fit the man who wields the mallet, keeps constantly putting them back.<sup>1</sup> Anything ruder than this way of making pot-barley, says Dr. Mitchell, could not easily be found. And the commentary upon this remark is, that the self-same process is found to be going on among savage peoples. Mr. Hutchinson relates that in one of the courtyards of the little town of Gurowa there were three ladies pounding Indian corn in a large wooden mortar, each keeping a remarkable rhythmical accuracy of time in bruising with her pestle, so as to chime in and not be at variance with the stroke of her companions.<sup>2</sup> And Mr. Abbott, in his recent book on "Primitive Industry," has devoted a whole chapter to the consideration of the mortars and pestles of the North American Indians. This pounding of barley in Scotland, and corn in Africa and America, with the mortar and pestle, is paralleled by the curious quern, or hand-mill, by which the inhabitants of the house ground their own meal. These querns, in Scotland, are found in hut circles, eirde-houses, crannogs, and brochs, and they certainly may belong to the pre-historic, if not to the stone period. Yet they are not only still in use in many parts of Scotland—most numerous in Shetland, Orkney, and the Hebridean islands—but are also still employed by the savage races of many parts of the world.<sup>3</sup> Turn again to some modes of cooking food, the knowledge of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mitchell's "The Past in the Present," p. 44; cf. Kelly's "Indo-European Folk-Lore," p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Hutchinson's "Narrative of the Niger," p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Mitchell's "The Past in the Present," p. 33.

which is derived from Scottish literature, and from actual practice still followed in some remote parts of Scotland, and possibly in some districts of cultured England. These customs are thus related. Dr. Mitchell quotes from an old book that the Scots in time past used to seethe the flesh of the animal they killed in the skin of the beast, filling the same with water; and Froissart tells us of their cooking their beef in skins stretched on four stakes.<sup>1</sup> The Irish did the same thing; they seethed pieces of beef and pork with the unwashed entrails of the beasts in a hollow tree, lapped in a raw cow's hide, and so set over the fire.<sup>2</sup> In Andrew Boorde's "Introduction of Knowledge," edited by Mr. Furnivall for the Early English Text Society, the following curious description of hide boiling is to be found:—"They wyll eate theyr meat fyttyng on the ground or erth. And they wyl sethe theyr meat in a beastes skyn. And the skyn shall be set on manye stakes of wood & than they wyll put in the water and the fleshe. And than they wyl make a great fyre vnder the skyn betwyxt the stakes, & the skyn wyl not greatly bren. And whan the meate is eaten, they, for theyr drynke, wil drynk vp the brothe."<sup>3</sup>

The following account is quoted by Henry from Offian's "Poems" (vol. i., p. 15 note): "A pit lined with smooth stones was made; and near it stood a heap of smooth flat stones of the flint kind. The

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121; also Tylor's "Primitive Culture," i., p. 40, quoting from Buchanan.

<sup>2</sup> Tylor's "Primitive Culture," i., p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Page 132.

stones as well as the pit were properly heated with heath. They laid some venifon in the bottom and a stratum of stones above it; and thus they did alternately until the pit was full. The whole was covered over with heath to confine the steam."<sup>1</sup>

Then there is another custom on all fours with the stone ovens—cooking by means of hot stones. Dr. Mitchell tells us that this practice is still extant in Scotland.<sup>2</sup> The Irish drank milk warmed with a stone first cast into the fire,<sup>3</sup> and there seems to be little doubt but that the custom has survived in English folk-lore. In Wiltshire the bakers, as Aubrey relates, take a certain pebble which they put in the vaulture of their oven, which they call the warning stone; for when that is white, the oven is hot.<sup>4</sup> This, surely, must refer back to times when heated stones were the usual means of cooking food. In the "Folk-Lore Record" (vol. iii., p. 286), Mr. Peacock, writing to Dr. Tylor, relates that when his second daughter was born—twenty-three years ago—his wife watched the nurse washing the baby. She poured soft water from the ewer into the basin, having first put the poker into the fire to make it red-hot. The nurse then plunged the glowing poker into the basin, and heated the water by that means. Mrs. Peacock asked her why she did not heat the water in the ordinary way, and was informed that soft water

<sup>1</sup> Henry's "History of Great Britain," i., p. 482.

<sup>2</sup> "The Past in the Present," p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> Tylor's "Primitive Culture," i., p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Aubrey's "Natural Hist. of Wiltshire," p. 43.

made hot in this manner had fine healing qualities, and gave strength to children. The practice was continued by the nurse from day to day until the navel healed. His wife has since seen the same thing done in cottages in his neighbourhood, and has ascertained that it is a prevailing custom. The matter, says Mr. Peacock, seems interesting when taken in connection with the facts collected as to *stone-boiling*. It is not safe to jump hastily to conclusions, but it seems to me not improbable that we have here a case of survival. The old way of heating water has long been discarded for the practical purposes of life, but, for the newly born, the ancient and therefore sacred method may have been retained.

There cannot be any doubt, I think, but what Mr. Peacock is right in his conjecture that boiling by heated iron is a survival from boiling by heated stone. The variation of this curious survival of primitive custom takes another shape in Scotland, a live coal being thrown into the water in which the new-born infant was being washed.<sup>1</sup>

Here, undoubtedly, we have a parallel state of affairs to that which Mr. Peacock has referred to. For ordinary purposes, and in ordinary circles of life, the old way of heating had been long discarded. But the nursery at the time of childbirth is not an ordinary circle of life. To resort to the traditional means of obtaining the desired process of boiling is therefore a proceeding in strict accord with the circumstances, and it is in this way that folk-lore hands down to us the relics of primitive times in

<sup>1</sup> Gregor's "Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland," p. 7.

our own fatherland. Of course, in turning to the researches of archæologists, we meet with evidence of the stone-boiling mode of cooking among the buried remains of the earliest races of Britain. Thus, among other instances, at Finkley, near Andover, quantities of charred flints were dug up, indicating that the inhabitants had practised stone-boiling.<sup>1</sup> Further evidence can be adduced from the many sites for flint-working observable on the low hills overlooking the watercourses of North Hampshire.<sup>2</sup> But whereas we naturally expect archæology to bring to light such remnants of primitive life, because they exist without contact with advancing civilization, we pause to consider what is meant by that persistence of custom which brings down side by side with knowledge and science, superstition and blind adherence to what has gone before.

These practices all seem to be simple and primitive enough without any reference to the customs of savage people. But in addition to the evidence carried by the customs themselves, there is ample means at hand for identifying these old customs of England, and Scotland, and Ireland with the existing customs of savages. Thus the Hottentots boil their victuals in leathern sacks, and their water by means of heated stones.<sup>3</sup> The Esquimaux used birchwood tubs, filling the vessel with water and casting in red-hot stones; and such was the practice

<sup>1</sup> "Suffex Arch. Coll.," xxiv., p. 163; see also "Kilkenny Arch. Soc.," ii., p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> "Suffex Arch. Coll.," xxiv., p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> Lubbock's "Prehistoric Times," p. 339.

also of the Indians of California.<sup>1</sup> In Vancouver Island, whale-blubber and pieces of seal are prepared for food by being boiled in a wooden dish, into which hot stones are thrown to heat the water. Another mode of cooking is to cover the fire with stones, on which water is sprinkled, and the fish placed, mats saturated with water being thrown over all.<sup>2</sup> The cooking goes on in a corner of the house. Hot stones are put, by means of wooden tongs, into large wooden boxes containing a small quantity of water. When the water boils, the blubber of the whale, cut into pieces about an inch thick, is thrown into these boxes, and hot stones are added until the food is cooked.<sup>3</sup> In Fiji the ovens are holes or pits sunk in the earth, sometimes eight or ten feet deep, and fifty feet in circumference, and in one of these several pigs and turtles, and a large quantity of vegetables can be cooked. The oven is filled with firewood, on which large stones are placed and the fire introduced. As soon as the fuel is burnt out, the food is placed on the hot stones, some of which are put inside the animals to be cooked whole. A thick coat of leaves is now rapidly spread over all, and on these a layer of earth about four inches thick. When the steam penetrates this covering it is time to remove the food.<sup>4</sup>

Among the Malagasy the vapour-bath is much used for the sick. The patient is seated over a large

<sup>1</sup> "Transactions of the Ethnological Society," i., p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Sproat's "Scenes and Studies of Savage Life," p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Williams's "Fiji and the Fijians," i., p. 147.

earthen or other pan, containing water, spreading over him several large native cloths, and they produce the quantity of steam required by casting pieces of iron or stones heated red-hot, into the water.<sup>1</sup> The South Sea islanders place the patient in a sort of open-bottomed chair, which is fixed over a pile of stones heated red-hot and covered with herbs and grass saturated with water.<sup>2</sup>

In Hawaii, near the south end of the house, which was quite open, was the fire-place. The oven was a hole in the earth, three or four feet in diameter, and nearly a foot deep. A number of small stones were spread over the bottom, a few dried leaves laid on them, and the necessary quantity of sticks and firewood piled up and covered over with small stones. The dry leaves were then kindled. When the stones were red-hot, they were spread over with a stick, the remaining firebrands taken away, and when the dust and ashes or the stones at the bottom had been brushed off with a green bough, the taro, wrapped in leaves, was laid on them till the oven was full, when a few more leaves were spread on the taro; the hot stones were then placed on these leaves, and a covering, six inches thick, of leaves and earth spread over the whole. In this state the taro remained to steam or bake about half an hour. Sometimes the natives boil their food on heated stones, or roast it before the fire; but these ovens are most generally used for cooking their several kinds of vegetables.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellis's "History of Madagascar," i., p. 223.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Ellis's "Missionary Tour through Hawaii," p. 186.



The Malagasy methods of dressing food are few. The most important part of their cookery consists in preparing their rice, which is generally boiled in a large round earthen or iron pot with a very broad base; which is placed on the stones fixed in the hearth in the centre of the house.<sup>1</sup> The method of cooking crab-apples in Vancouver's Island, is to place them in a hole dug in the ground, over which green leaves are placed, and a fire kindled above all.<sup>2</sup> In Kalat they bake bread of millet in large balls with a heated stone in the centre.<sup>3</sup>

Among the North American Indians the custom has survived as a sacred, not an ordinary custom. The ceremony of roasting the festival dog whole is yet observed by some tribes, who dig a pit and fill it with heated rock, the animal being enveloped and the pit covered with earth to retain the steam. The dog feast being a sacred feast, the oven would consequently be held in reverential esteem.<sup>4</sup>

To conclude these examples of the primitive customs of cooking food, I will turn to some of the Polynesian stories as related by Sir George Grey. "A great meeting of all the people of his tribe was held by Manaia to remove a tapu, and when the religious part of the ceremony was ended, the women cooked food for the strangers. When the ovens were opened, the food in the oven of Kuiwai, the wife of Manaia, was found to be very much under-

<sup>1</sup> Ellis's "History of Madagascar," i., p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Sproat's "Scenes and Studies of Savage Life," p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> "Journ. Asiatic Soc. of Bengal," xii., p. 478.

<sup>4</sup> "Traditions of De-Coo-Dah," by W. Pidgeon, p. 26.

done, and Manaia was very angry with his wife, and gave her a severe beating, and cursed, saying, 'Accursed be your head; are the logs of firewood as sacred as the bones of your brother, that you were so sparing of them as not to put into the fire in which the stones were heated enough to make them red-hot? Will you dare to do the like again? If you do, I'll serve the flesh of your brother in the same way, it shall frizzle on the red-hot stones of Waikorora.'"<sup>1</sup> And, again, we come across the following passage elsewhere:—"They had prepared ovens to cook the bodies in, and these were all lying open ready for their victims, and by the sides of the ovens they had laid in mounds the green leaves, all prepared to place upon the victims before the earth was heaped in to cover them up, and the firewood and the stones were also lying ready to be heated."<sup>2</sup>

Thus far then the primitive family life as we know it must have existed amongst our ancestors, because sufficient traces of it are to be found in modern superstitions and old customs. But is there nothing to identify the personal fancies and ideas of the individual member of the family? can we not hit upon some traces of the English savage? To these questions the study of comparative folk-lore does not turn an unheeding ear, and the few examples which I collect together in the following

<sup>1</sup> Grey's "Polyneesian Mythology," p. 162-3.

<sup>2</sup> Grey's "Polyneesian Mythology," p. 172. I must content myself with a reference to Taylor's "Te Ika a Maui, or New Zealand," p. 503, for an account of the stone ovens in New Zealand, and to p. 504 for the same custom in South Australia.

pages may be considered as typical of what may come by still further research.

A group of superstitions in reference to the human hair show a remarkable extension of similar customs in all parts of the world, but I will just mention one or two instances out of the many that crowd upon one in order to illustrate the connection between the primitive society of Britain and its folk-lore survivals, with the savage society of modern times. In various parts of the world, says Sir John Lubbock, a mysterious connection is supposed to exist between the cut lock of hair and the person to whom it belonged.<sup>1</sup> Thus in India, in dangerous sickness the hair is sometimes cut off and offered to a deity, as in old Greece.<sup>2</sup> In Grey's "Polyneesian Mythology" we read:—"Whakatau landed on the coast, and before eating anything offered the prescribed sacrifice of the hair and a part of the skin of the head of one of his victims to the gods; and when the religious rites were finished he eat food."<sup>3</sup> In New Zealand cutting the hair was done with much ceremony and repeating many spells; the operator was made *tapu* for his services. When the hair was cut a portion was thrown into the fire, and a *karakia* was uttered to avert the bad effects of thunder and lightning, which were supposed to be occasioned by this potent operation.<sup>4</sup> In one place the most sacred day of the year was that appointed

1 "Prehistoric Times," p. 471.

2 "The Indian Antiquary," v., p. 21.

3 Grey's "Polyneesian Mythology," p. 120.

4 Taylor's "New Zealand," p. 206.

for hair-cutting;<sup>1</sup> and Shortland says, the hair cut from the head was deposited on some sacred spot of ground.<sup>2</sup> Well, in England we have the selfsame idea at work in the superstitions connected with the hair. Its sudden loss is prognostic of the loss of children, health, or property.<sup>3</sup> If a person's hair burn brightly when thrown into the fire, it is a sign of longevity; on the other hand, if it smoulder away, it is a sign of approaching death.<sup>4</sup> Some further illustrations I must quote from Mr. Henderson's book. Among the lower orders in Ireland it is held that human hair should never be burnt, only buried, because at the resurrection the former owner of the hair will come to seek it. Neither should it be thrown carelessly away, lest some bird should find it and carry it off, causing the owner's head to ache all the time the bird was busily working the hair into its nest. "I knew how it would be," exclaimed a Suffex servant one day to her mistress, "when I saw that bird fly off with a bit of my hair in its beak, that flew out of the window this morning while I was dressing. I knew I should have a clapping headache, and so I have."<sup>5</sup>

A remedy current in Sunderland for whooping-cough belongs to the same group of parallels. The crown of the head is shaved, and the hair hung upon a bush or tree, in firm belief that the birds

<sup>1</sup> Taylor's "New Zealand," p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> "Traditions of New Zealand," p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Henderson's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

carrying it away to their nests will carry away the cough along with it. A similar notion lies at the root of a mode of cure practised in Northamptonshire and Devonshire alike. Put a hair of the patient's head between two slices of buttered bread, and give it to a dog. The dog will get the cough, and the patient lose it, as surely as scarlet fever is transferred from a human being to an ass by mixing some of the hair of the former with the ass's fodder.<sup>1</sup> The folk-lore connected with hair is too extensive, however, to examine further.

Two curious charms, very nearly parallel in English folk-lore and New Zealand custom may be recorded here. The following charm for toothache is copied *verbatim et literatim* from the fly-leaf of a Common Prayer-book once belonging to a Suffex labourer:—"As Peter sat weeping on a marvel stone Christ came by and said unto him, Peter, what ailest thou? Peter answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God, my tooth eaketh. Jesus said unto him, Arise, Peter, and be thou hale, and not the only but all them that carry these lines for my sake shall never have the tooth ake.—Joseph Hylands, his book."<sup>2</sup> This, as a word-charm, is not very far removed from the following charm as practised in New Zealand:—

"An eel, a spiny back,  
True indeed, indeed; true in sooth, in sooth,  
You must cut the head  
Of said spiny back."

<sup>1</sup> Henderfon's "Folk-Lore of Northern Counties," p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

“ He tuna, he tara  
 Pu-ano-ano, pu-are-are.  
 Mau e kai i te upoko  
 O taua tara-tu.”<sup>1</sup>

In Shetland, says Mr. Henderson, the following words are used to heal a burn :—

“ Here come I to cure a burnt fore,  
 If the dead knew what the living endure  
 The burnt fore would burn no more.”<sup>2</sup>

The Suffex charm for the same purpose is different, and can only be used with good effect on Sunday evening. Mrs. Latham says that a poor person of that county who was severely scalded peremptorily refused to see a doctor or try any remedy till Sunday evening came round. She then sent for an old woman, who “ bowed her head over the wound, crossed two of her fingers over it, and, after repeating some words to herself, huffed or breathed quickly on it.” The words were as follows :—

“ There came two angels from the north,  
 One was Fire and one was Frost.  
 Out Fire, in Frost,  
 In the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”<sup>3</sup>

But this is not far removed, in *motif* at all events, from the following New Zealand charm :—

“ What caused the burn ?  
 Fire caused the burn.  
 Fire kindled by whom ?  
 Fire kindled by Mahu-ika [the goddess of fire].  
 Come and fetch some (fire), spread it out,

<sup>1</sup> Shortland's “ New Zealanders,” p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> “ Folk-Lore of Northern Counties,” p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> “ Folk-Lore Record,” i., p. 35.

To be a slave to dress food for both of us.  
 Small burn, large burn,  
 Burn be crufted over with skin.  
 I will make it sacred,  
 I will make it effective." <sup>1</sup>

I will now enumerate one or two miscellaneous superstitions which belong to this division of our subject. In Polynesia, if the long-legged spider drops down from above in front of you or in your bosom, it is a good sign, foreboding either presents or strangers; if he drops on either side, or behind you, the sign brings you no good.<sup>2</sup> And in England, a spider descending upon you from the roof is a token that you will soon have a legacy from a friend. In Ireland the saying is, if a spider be found running over the dress or shawl of a woman, the garment will soon be replaced by a new one.<sup>3</sup> Again, the Polynesian notion is, if you have a ringing sound in your ears, it is a sign that you are spoken evil of by some one: if in the right ear, by a man; if in the left ear, by a woman: sometimes it indicates approaching sickness.<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, the well-known English omen, if the right ear tingles you are being spoken well of, if the left ear some one is speaking ill of you.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shortland's "New Zealanders," p. 134; Taylor's "Te ka a Maui; or, New Zealand and its Inhabitants," p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> Fornander's "Polynesian Race," i., p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> Henderfon's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> Fornander's "Polynesian Race," i., p. 239.

<sup>5</sup> Henderfon, *loc. cit.*, p. 113. One cannot tell if these two Polynesian omens have been derived from European sources, certainly the parallel is remarkable enough for such a cause.

We now come to the nursery, and here we step upon the very threshold of archaic customs and superstitions. Mothers have told children stories that were no longer believed in in the dining-hall or drawing-room; they have quietly performed customs and practised superstitious observances with their children when they could not or would not do so upon the grown-up members of their family. There is thus represented in the childhood of the present generation many of the faiths and beliefs of the childhood of the nation.

Innumerable almost are the customs attending childbirth. The hour and day of an infant's birth are as much a matter of solicitude to the Chinese female as to the wife-woman of our own North Country hamlets. Thus, in China, title and degree will be the lot of him who is born at noon. The child who makes his appearance between nine and eleven o'clock will have a hard lot at first, but finally great riches. Toil and sorrow will be the lot of the unlucky babe who first sees the light between three and five.<sup>1</sup> If the Chinese lay great stress upon the hour, we in England attribute to the day a talismanic influence over the future of the new-born child. Thus—

“Monday's child is fair of face,  
 Tuesday's child is full of grace,  
 Wednesday's child is full of woe,  
 And Thursday's child has far to go.

“Friday's child is loving and giving,  
 And Saturday's child works hard for its living;

<sup>1</sup> Dennys' "Folk-Lore of China," p. 8.



But the child that is born on the Sabbath-day,  
Is blithe and bonny, good and gay."<sup>1</sup>

And, in Yorkshire, children born during the hour after midnight have the power through life of seeing the spirits of the departed.<sup>2</sup> Among the Karens, children are supposed to come into the world defiled, and that defilement is removed by a long process, which ends in the child being named;<sup>3</sup> and our Northern folk-lore is unanimous, says Mr. Henderson, in bearing witness to the power of baptism.<sup>4</sup>

In Astor, till the child receives a name, the woman is declared impure for the seven days previous to the ceremony. In Ghilgit, twenty-seven days are allowed to elapse till the woman is declared pure. Then the bed and clothes are washed, and the woman is restored to the company of her husband and the visits of her friends.<sup>5</sup> Curious as all this is, it meets with a close parallel in Scotland. The Reverend Walter Gregor says:—"Strict watch was kept over both mother and child till the mother was churched and the child was baptized, and in the doing of both all convenient speed was used. For, besides exposure to the danger of being carried off by the fairies, the mother was under great restrictions till churched. She was not allowed to do any kind of work, at least any kind of work more than the most simple and necessary. Neither was she permitted to enter

<sup>1</sup> Henderson, *loc. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> "Journ. Asiatic Soc., Bengal," xxxv. (2), pp. 9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Henderson's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> "Indian Antiquary," i., p. 11.

a neighbour's house, and had she attempted to do so, some would have gone the length of offering a stout resistance, and for the reason that, if there chanced to be in the house a woman great with child, travail would prove difficult with her."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Livingstone records that amongst the Bakaa and Bakwain tribes, a child which cuts its upper front teeth before the lower ones is put to death. Such a practice also exists at Aboh and Old Kalabar, on the West Coast of Africa;<sup>2</sup> and, in England, the cruel custom has doubtless survived in the superstitious omen that, if a child tooth first in its upper jaw, it is considered ominous of death in infancy.<sup>3</sup>

A curious little piece of folk-lore is common alike to China and England, namely, the widespread superstition against rocking an empty cradle.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Henderfon records a caution against rocking a cradle when it is "toom," or empty, and cites on the subject the following fragment:

"THE TOOM CRADLE.

"Oh! rock not the cradle when the babie's not in,  
For this by old women is counted a sin;  
It's a crime so inhuman it may na' be forgi'en,  
And they that wi' do it ha' lost sight of heaven.

"Such rocking maun bring on the babie disease,  
Well may it grow fretty that none can it please,

<sup>1</sup> Gregor's "Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland," pp. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> "Transactions of the Ethnological Society," i., p. 337.

<sup>3</sup> Henderfon, "Folk-Lore of Northern Counties," p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Dennys' "Folk-Lore of China," p. 13, and Henderfon's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," pp. 18, 19.

Its crimfon lip pale grows, its clear eye wax dim,  
Its beauty grow pale, and its vifage wax dim,  
“ Its heart flutters faft, it breathes hard, then is gone,  
To the fair land of heaven.” \* \* \* \*

The belief thus expreffed holds its ground in the fouthern counties of Scotland, particularly in Selkirkfhire. Rocking the toom cradle is often deprecated in the counties of Durham and Yorkfhire on another ground ; it is faid there to be ominous of another claimant for that place of reft.

In Suffex they exprefs this notion in the couplet—

“ If you rock the cradle empty,  
Then you fhall have babies plenty.”

Chinefe nurfes in the South of China have precifely the fame belief. A little four-year-old girl, who is a very intimate acquaintance of mine (fays Dr. Dennys), not long ago, began rocking the cradle in which her newly-born fifter was ufually laid to fleep. An Amah, who faw her, rufhed at the child, exclaiming, “ You no makee rock fo fafhion! That baby b’long die, f’pofie rock.” As it happened, the infant did die, as was fully expected by the medical attendant ; but, of courfe, the Amah found in the anticipated fact a verification of her prediction ; and farther inquiry has fatisfied me that the fuperftition is identical with, and quite as widefpread as our own.<sup>1</sup>

In China, a pair of troufers of the child’s father are put on the frame of the bedftead in fuch a way that the waift fhall hang downward, or be lower than the legs. On the troufers is ftuck a piece of

<sup>1</sup> Dennys’ “ Folk-Lore of China,” p. 13.

red paper, having four words written upon it, intimating that all unfavourable influences are to go into the trousers, instead of afflicting the babe. A package of seed, rush (such as is used for candle-wicks), cat's and dog's hair, onions or garlic, a pair of chopsticks, and some charcoal is, in Fuhkien, tied up with red string, in a piece of red paper, and suspended on the outside of the door where the mother is lying.<sup>1</sup> All this is for the protection of the child from the influences of the spirit world. In Scotland, the danger of being carried off by the fairies was ever present to the mind of the anxious mother; and Mr. Gregor records the exact parallel to the Chinese custom of hanging up a pair of trousers at the foot of the bed, as a preservative against the influences of the fairies.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Napier also has a word to say upon the subject, and he adds the additional information that coral beads are hung round the necks of babies to preserve them from the effect of the evil eye.<sup>3</sup>

Whether the picture produced by the study of the various phases of belief which have been detailed in the previous pages, is sufficiently vivid to have brought the reader to stand in imagination at the threshold of the primitive home, I do not know, but I would still claim his attention one moment longer. That threshold before which we lingered so long, and over which we have now stepped, has still another connection with olden days when we

<sup>1</sup> Denny's "Folk-Lore of China," p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Gregor's "Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland," p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Napier's "Folk-Lore of West of Scotland," p. 36.

stand upon it in the act of leaving. As in entering a house one must be careful to put the "right foot" foremost, a piece of superstition which even Dr. Johnson is said to have carefully practised,<sup>1</sup> and which the Malagasy also adhere to;<sup>2</sup> so in leaving a house, if we can trust to the accuracy of our authorities, and the non-imposition of European influences, we meet with similar ideas in England and Polynesia. Henderfon records the piece of English folk-lore<sup>3</sup> which is exactly parallel to the following. If, starting on a journey, you were called after, or called back by somebody, it was a bad sign.<sup>4</sup> If starting away from a place, and having actually proceeded some distance from the house, however short, you turned back after something forgotten or left, it was a bad sign.<sup>5</sup> Again, if issuing from the house you see or meet a hare, it is an evil omen in India,<sup>6</sup> among the Arab tribes, the Laplanders, and the Namaquas, a South African tribe,<sup>7</sup> as it was in Scotland, and is among the Cornish miners of England,<sup>8</sup> and, indeed, in almost all parts of Great Britain. A Yorkshire fisherman will not put out to sea if on leaving his cottage he meets a woman,<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henderfon's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> "Folk-Lore Record," ii., p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 117, and see also Gregor's "Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland," p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Fornander's "Polynesian Race," i., p. 238.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> "Indian Antiquary," v., p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Henderfon's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 204.

<sup>8</sup> Tylor's "Primitive Culture," i., p. 109.

<sup>9</sup> "Notes and Queries," 5th ser., ii., p. 183.

and a Hindu would consider a Brahmin widow an evil omen for his journey.<sup>1</sup> These, perhaps, may be considered the accidents of folk-lore, but they furnish instructive materials to close our examination of primitive house-life in Britain.

We have now gathered up some considerable remnants of the home-world of primitive society in Britain. It is not a home-world like that of modern days, because it contains within itself nearly all that is now transferred to the State. It had its own chief, its children, and slaves; it had its own means of providing food and clothing for its inmates, and, above all, it had its own religion and its own temple. From such an organization as this has been built up, bit by bit, the State organization. At every step in the progress of the State the primitive household was despoiled of some of its old-world elements. We have to talk of folk-lore, not of actual custom, or actual house-worship; we have to talk of the village church, not of the house-temple; we have to talk of superstitious omens and beliefs, not of the belief in protecting spirits; we have to appeal to the legal force of the protective police, not of the religious force of the local gods. If, therefore, with all this difference between us and those to whom folk-lore properly belongs, we have come across, or left unconsidered, some imperfect analogies between English folk-lore and primitive custom, the imperfection is the result of the filtration of ages through which folk-lore has passed in its journey to modern days.

<sup>1</sup> "Indian Antiquary," v., p. 21.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE VILLAGE MARRIAGE.



IN a previous chapter detailing the connection of the house-gods with the gods of agriculture, some evidence was afforded of the relationship of the homestead to the village in primitive society. That relationship had definite and established principles to support it, and if in the present volume it were intended to carry forward the researches into other branches of primitive society, there would be many important facts to mention, illustrating this subject. One group of facts, namely, those relating to the village marriage, I propose explaining in the present volume, because, perhaps more than any other subject, that of marriage bears out the principles and associations which have been placed before the reader in connection with those other branches of early village life already considered; and because, having already dealt with the house customs of marriage, wherein the bride is delivered over, so to speak, by the community at large, to the individual

house, it will be well to continue the narrative of the ancient marriage institution and go outside the house, and see how the primitive villagers acted in regard to, and what ideas they associated with, the marriage of one of their members.

The leading principle with which we must approach the subject is, that outside the house in primitive society, individuality became merged in the general communal principles of the villagers. Ceremonies that now have no relation to any one beyond each family, were in primitive times the business of the whole community. Village feasts and customs that now interest a class only, and are kept up for pleasure and enjoyment, were once important events in the history of the community, and imposed duties and attention from all members. Thus marriages, births, and deaths were matters which concerned the community almost as much as they did the family more nearly interested in them. In all these matters we must never lose sight of the fact that man in his primitive state was not recognized individually, did not hold personal property, did not belong to his community on account of his own choice of location, but on account of his birth within it.

Now this communal principle of social life has existed from the earliest times down to historical times. It exists among the lowest types of society, and it existed among the types which have developed into modern civilization. There are instances of social groups where everything appears to be held in common, where only mere personal articles, such



as bow and arrow, the ornaments and scanty clothing, are held as individual property.<sup>1</sup> At a new stage of development, as among pastoral tribes, we meet with certain classes of property only held in common, certain other classes having become the property of the individual owner. As a final stage, as among agricultural tribes, we have a communal property of the cultivated lands and an individual property in the homestead. Thus, throughout all the stages of primitive society, there exist forms, suitable to each particular stage, of a community of property, and roughly these may be divided as follows:—first, a community of all things; secondly, a community of flocks and herds, and animals of the chase; thirdly, a community of agricultural lands. And a further important stage of this principle of social life is represented by the survival to a remarkable degree of the agricultural community, and the results of the agricultural community, in all the civilized societies of the Western world. Even when we first come upon this primitive community in early Europe, nay, in early Britain, it is remarkably complete in its primitive features. Every community was practically interdependent. It had its own food grounds, its own cattle, its own means of making clothing, and neigh-

<sup>1</sup> The savage, says Mr. Spencer, lacks the extended consciousness of individual possession, and under his conditions it is impossible for him to have it. Beyond the few rude appliances ministering to his bodily wants, the primitive man has nothing that he can accumulate—there is no sphere for an acquisitive tendency (Spencer's "Principles of Sociology," i., p. 68).

bouring communities were generally considered with jealousy, if not with hatred, and warlike animosities. All these facts are demonstrable of our own land. They cannot be stated now at length, but the researches of Sir Henry Maine in England and Von Maurer and Gneist in Germany, bring together a body of proof which takes back many English local customs to the primitive village community, in its most normal state, for the only possible explanation of their origin.

Sir John Lubbock observes that it is very remarkable indeed how persistent are all customs and ceremonies connected with marriage.<sup>1</sup> We have now existing amongst us customs and ceremonies that can be traced down from primitive times; and although many writers have dealt with this subject very thoroughly, and from different points of view, it appears to me that there is one important aspect of it that has been altogether lost sight of, and that is its connection with early village life. Professor Max Müller says:—"To the present day, marriage, the most important of civil acts, the very foundation of civilized life, has retained the religious character which it had from the very beginning of history."<sup>2</sup> But this is, in reality, only half a truth.

<sup>1</sup> "Origin of Civilization," p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Lectures on the Science of Religion, "Macmillan's Magazine," June, 1870, p. 697. It is curious to observe the significant researches of Thrupp on the Anglo-Saxon wife. He endeavours to demonstrate the non-religious characteristic of the ceremony by pointing out the struggle the Church underwent to get the marriage ceremony out of the hands of the bride's father, who of old performed it! The bride's father

From the beginning of *Aryan* history there has been a sanctification of the giving up by the community of its rights over one of its daughters; there has been, in other words, an encroachment of the house-religion into the domain of village rights. We have seen how the ritual of the house-religion, upon the introduction of a new daughter-in-mate, exercised its own peculiar influence on the minds of primitive man. But the marriage rite ended at the house-altar; it began, and possessed most significance and exercised far more ancient ceremonies in the village far away from religious ritual and wholly within the influence of social ritual. Nothing appears to me to be a more important result of the study of comparative folk-lore than the many indications it gives of the extension of the house-religion, the absorption of older village rites into a newer family religion: already, in the case of agriculture, this has been pointed out; in the case of marriage, the process is very nearly the same.

In treating of the many marriage customs, therefore, as they exist in England at present, it is necessary to bear in mind that, if they are to be traced up to archaic times for their origin, they must be traced from a standpoint very different to the purely family aspect which at present surrounds them. We must break through that family and personal idea altogether, and in its place think of marriage as an institution of the community. By was, of course, the House-priest, and the ritual which Thrupp could not obtain from historical sources we have obtained from folk-lore. (See Thrupp's "*Anglo-Saxon Home*," pp. 50-57.)

this means we shall have explained to us many hitherto unexplained customs connected with marriages, and we shall be able to group them into sections having an historical relationship to one another, and ultimately leading us to the same ground we have already occupied in other branches of comparative folk-lore.

Ancient law tells the student that the members of the primitive community, so soon as it appears upon the borderland of civilization, were bound together by the closest ties of blood or fictitious relationship, and of common interests and duties. In all things (says Mr. Fenton<sup>1</sup>), the villager must consider the rights of his fellows—he must assist his fellows, even in family matters. Reciprocal aid and succour, extended even to marital duties. It was necessary to rear good men for the community,<sup>2</sup> and this question was relegated, not to individual choice, but to communal necessities and advantages. The marriage of one of the daughters of the community, or the marriage of one of its sons, was a matter, therefore, of public consideration, and hence of public ratification. How clearly this notion exists even among Aryan people is best seen by a reference to Plato. Professor Jowett says:—<sup>3</sup>

“In forming marriage connections, Plato sup-

<sup>1</sup> “Early Hebrew Life,” p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> That primitive Aryan society was strongly founded upon the necessity of succession to the house is shown by many authorities, but see a summary in Hearn’s “Aryan Household,” p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> Jowett’s “Plato,” iv., Introduction, p. 114.

poses that the public interest will prevail over private inclinations. There was nothing in this very shocking to the notions of Greeks, among whom the feeling of love towards the other sex was almost deprived of sentiment or romance. Married life is to be regulated solely with a view to the good of the State. The newly-married couple are not allowed to absent themselves from their respective *syssitia*, even during their honeymoon; they are to give their whole mind to the procreation of children." Sir John Lubbock says from the evidence of savage society, that marriage was, in fact, an infringement upon communal rights; the man retaining to himself, or the man and woman mutually appropriating to one another, that which should have belonged to the whole tribe.<sup>1</sup>

Such, in brief, are the initial facts which will help us to rightly group some marriage customs which appear in parallel lines in England and among savage tribes. Of course they are kept up in modern England, and have been kept up for centuries, without any thought of their archaic meaning, and it is only now by comparing them with primitive thought and primitive social forms that we are able to add to them in the pages of scientific research what they have long lost in actual fact.

What I say, then, is that, as in questions of property, as in questions of the individuality of each member of the community, the social group acted collectively, so, in questions of birth, of death, of

<sup>1</sup> "Origin of Civilization," p. 71.

marriage, the social group acted collectively. Infanticide, so prevalent among savage races, was a group-act, and was carried out, not at all by the feelings of individual cruelty, but by the necessities of the community. So, again, with homicide: the practice of killing the aged and infirm was not the result of individual cruelty, but of communal action; and the many remarkable instances of funeral ceremonies being an important portion of the legal succession to property and household chieftainship, come within the same category. In exactly the same way I classify the various customs of marriage—the individual, having no special powers of his own, acted on behalf, and in accordance with, the wishes of the community. I conceive that by this classification we can arrive at many stages of development in marriage customs, just as we arrive at many stages of development in the social group; and as the communal group stands at the threshold of English history, so I conceive that the marriage customs of England stand there too, and go with the history of the village community right back into the earliest life of man.

As my theory of the connection between the marriage customs of civilized Britain and those of the savage world to a considerable extent reconstructs a new theory of the origin of marriage, about which so much has been written, my examples must illustrate three distinct divisions—(1) the commencement of marriage wholly as a group-act; (2) the development of the group-act—which we find represented partly by the marriage custom, and partly by

the rights of husband and wife; and (3) the survival of the group-act—in which we find a keeping-up of customs that are explainable only by reference to the two former stages. Throughout these three stages the institution of marriage has maintained its distinctive characteristics as a group-act, not as a personal or family act. In the communal stage, by which term I may, perhaps, designate the first-mentioned division, the whole tribe marries a whole set of wives. In the marital stages, which may designate the two next divisions, the group-act is represented by the whole tribe assisting either to capture a wife, or to purchase a wife for any one of its members, and consequently joining, as of right, in the ceremonies and festivities which gradually grew up around the marriage ceremony.

In producing evidence of the communal stage of marriage rites, as I have ventured to term it, it will only be necessary to draw attention to one or two examples from savage society. In one special instance—that of the *Australians*—we shall have the advantage, not often to be obtained, of using the results of the labours of a scientific observer of the manners and customs of uncivilized people. No one can proceed far in the study of the travels of the ordinary missionary or explorer without feeling that too often their contributions to science are marred by a want of knowledge of some of the principles of anthropology. This ignorance has its advantages, of course, in the genuineness of the simple narrative of an observer; but occasionally one loses sight of this advantage in the impatience caused by getting

hold of only half a fact, and knowing that the other half ought to have been told too, and that now it is too late to recover it. But neither of these considerations affect the important work of Messrs. Fison and Howitt, on the "Kamilaroi and Kurnai," from which I take the following evidence of the group-act of primitive marriage. I transcribe the whole account, because it seems to answer all requirements of this branch of my subject, without one word of explanation or commentary from me :—

"Marriage is communal. Every Kumite is theoretically the husband of every Krokigor in the same generation as himself. Every Kroki is theoretically the husband of every Kumitegor in his own generation. It is not hereby asserted that marital rights are actually exercised to this extent at the present day ; but they exist, and are acknowledged, even now-a-days, to a certain extent. Relationship is consequently that of groups of individuals to other groups. All Kumites and Kumitegors of the same generation are looked upon as brothers and sisters. So, also, are all Krokis and Krokigors of the same generation. Every Kumite is looked upon as joint father to all Krokis and Krokigors in the generation next below his own. So, also, with the other relationships. The regulation given above is the ancient rule. Present usage is that every Kumite, for instance, takes as many Krokigor wives as he can get and keep ; but the old rule makes itself felt still, asserting the tribal right in the women, who are now, nominally at



least, the property of the individual. Thus, among tribes which are organized like the Kamilaroi, friendly visitors from other tribes are accommodated with temporary wives from the proper classes, and no man can refuse to furnish his quota from his own harem. This seems to be the most extensive system of communal marriage the world has ever known. It could have held its own in no other part of the globe; for nowhere else, if we except an isolated tribe here and there, have the aborigines been so completely shut out from external impulse. Australian marriage—taking into account, for the present, those tribes only which have the Kamilaroi organization—is something more than the marriage of group to group within a tribe: it is an arrangement extending across a continent, which divides many widely-scattered tribes into intermarrying classes, and gives a man of one class marital rights over women of another class in a tribe a thousand miles away, and speaking a language other than his own. That relationship is of group to group seems to be a fair inference from what has already been shown as to communal marital rights. As to both marriage and relationship, it is the group alone that is regarded. The individual is ignored. He is not looked upon as a perfect entity. He has no existence save as a part of a group, which, in its entirety, is the perfect entity. It is not the individual Kumite who marries the individual Krokigor: it is the group of males called Kumite which marries the group of females called Krokigor. Hence the son of this marriage is not the individual Krokigi, but the

group Kroki: its daughter is not the individual Krokigor, but the group Krokigor. This son and this daughter—*i.e.*, group Kroki and group Krokigor—are brother and sister, and this relationship binds every member of the groups. So, also, with the other degrees.”<sup>1</sup>

Nothing could be clearer than such evidence as this. Still there is something of the kind to be found elsewhere, and that, too, from authors who did not have the scientific guidance that assisted Messrs. Fison and Howitt's researches. Aristotle says that some tribes of Upper Africa have their wives in common, but yet their children are distinguished by their likenesses to their parents.<sup>2</sup> There are the Nafamonians, mentioned by Herodotus (iv. 172), and the Aufeans (*ib.* 180), and the Agathyrsi (*ib.* 104). “The Agathyrsi have their women in common, that so they may be all brothers, and, in virtue of their relationship, they may be free from all envy and mutual hatred.” Pliny relates the same of the Garamantes (“Hist. Nat.,” v. 8).

The Peruvians could not select their own wives. This was done for them by the Government. So also with the Maori: the wife is chosen by the Runanga, or council of the place, without the parties having anything to do with it, beyond giving their consent.<sup>3</sup> “In Ceylon,” says a writer in

<sup>1</sup> “Kamilaroi and Kurnai,” by Fison and Howitt, pp. 51-57. See also Farrer's “Primitive Manners and Customs,” p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> “Politics,” bk. ii., cap. iii.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor's “Te Ika a Maui; or, New Zealand,” i., p. 43.

"Asiatic Researches," "a whole family goes in a body to ask a girl in marriage; the more numerous the family, the greater title it has to the girl. It is the whole family that marries; consequently the children belong to the whole family, in the same way as the lands, which are never divided."<sup>1</sup> Among the Andamaners (says Sir John Lubbock), any woman who attempted to resist the marital privileges claimed by any member of the tribe was liable to severe punishment.<sup>2</sup>

These are some examples of the evidence as to the communal stage of primitive marriage. The same kind of evidence is to be obtained from the custom of the Ashimadek clans, whereby every infant is suckled by turn by every nursing-mother of the clan.<sup>3</sup> Another very significant custom, showing how clearly the marriage is a marriage, not to individuals, but to the house-group, is to be found among the western Kunnivers, one of the hill tribes of the Piney Hills of India. In the case of an estate devolving on a female, which is likely to occur from the default of male issue, she is prohibited marriage, but undergoes the ceremony of being betrothed to some part of the dwelling. She is, however, allowed to have offspring by one of the tribe, and upon him, if a male, the estate devolves.<sup>4</sup>

We now come to the second, or, as I have called it, the marital stage. We do not get direct evidence

<sup>1</sup> "Asiatic Researches," vii., p. 425.

<sup>2</sup> "Origin of Civilization," p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Biddulph's "Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh," p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> "Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal," 1835, iv., p. 665.

of the group-act here, but it is represented by many significant customs, which show that when society had advanced far enough to proclaim that the wife ceased to be the common property of the tribe, her equivalent in money or cattle, her rights and privileges, were still considered the common property of the tribe. Among the Ahts of Vancouver's Island, the purchase of wives is made in public, and great ceremony is observed when a chief's wife is purchased. Grave tribal discussions as to the purchase-money, the suitability of rank, and all the benefits likely to follow, accompany any such proposal of marriage. On the heralds or criers giving notice that distinguished visitors are at hand, every person in a native encampment comes out, and squats down, covered with a blanket to the chin. On the question being asked where the visitors are from, and what is wanted, a speaker rises in one of the canoes, and addresses the natives on shore in a loud voice. He gives the name, titles, and history of the expectant husband. At the end of the speech, a canoe is paddled to the beach, and a bundle of blankets is thrown on land. Contemptuous laughter follows from the friends of the woman; and thus, with speeches and additional gifts, many hours are occupied, until finally the woman is brought down to the shore, stripped to her shift, and delivered to her lover.<sup>1</sup>

In South Africa, when a young woman is about to be married, she is placed in a hut alone, and anointed with various unguents, and many incanta-

<sup>1</sup> Sproat's "Scenes and Studies of Savage Life," pp. 100, 101.

tions are employed, in order to secure good fortune and fruitfulness. Here, as almost everywhere in the South, the height of good fortune is to bear sons. They often leave a husband altogether if they have daughters only. After some days, the bride elect is taken to another hut, and adorned with all the richest clothing and ornaments that the relatives can either lend or borrow. She is then placed in a public situation, saluted as a lady, and presents made by all her acquaintances are placed around her. After this she is taken to the residence of her husband, where she has a hut for herself, and becomes one of several wives. Dancing, feasting, and drinking on such occasions are prolonged for several days. In cases of separation, the woman returns to her father's family, and the husband receives back what he gave for her.<sup>1</sup>

Feasting generally accompanies every Malagasy marriage. When the preliminaries are determined and a good or lucky day fixed, the relatives of the bride and bridegroom meet at the houses of the parents of the respective parties. The relatives or friends of the bridegroom accompany him to the house of the bride. They pay or receive the dowry, which being settled, he is welcomed by the bride as her future husband; they eat together, are recognized by the senior members of the family as husband and wife, a benediction is pronounced upon them. . . They then repair to the house of the bridegroom and again eat together, similar benedictions are pronounced over them by the senior

<sup>1</sup> Livingstone's "South Africa," p. 412.

members of the family or the head man of the village, who is usually invited to the ceremony. If, as is generally the case, the houses in which the parties have met is below the hill on which the village is built, the bride is placed on a sort of chair under a canopy, and borne on the shoulders of men up the sides of the hill to the centre of the village. Occasionally the bridegroom is carried in the same manner. The relatives and friends follow in procession, clapping their hands and singing as the bearers ascend. On reaching the village they halt at what is called the parent-house, or residence of the officer of the government; a *hasina*, or piece of money, is given to the attending officer for the Sovereign, the receiving of which is considered a legal official ratification of the engagement.<sup>1</sup>

I take these examples to be typical of the group-act. Clearly all have a right to take part in the ceremony, and although this right loses something of its legal aspect in its social bearings, the feasting and its accompanying joyousness cannot quite hide the group-act. On arriving at the third stage of the development of marriage customs, where the group-act may be found to have survived in the village-act of modern society, we find ourselves met at the very beginning by curious and, I think, complete evidence.

But here we may ask, How does English custom coincide with this state of things? We approach the answer through the medium of a custom of the New Mexicans. Bancroft relates of them

<sup>1</sup> Ellis's "History of Madagascar," i., pp. 166, 167.

that among the laws particularly deserving of mention is one according to which no one can sell or marry out of the town until he obtains permission from the authorities.<sup>1</sup> Now substituting for this the facts of English village-life and its long process of development from the village community, and we come back to exactly the same state of things. The lord of the manor in England has in most instances aggregated to himself the functions of the old village authorities, and from this I cannot but think we have the origin of the lord's sanction to his tenant's marriage in feudal times. The process of development is unquestionably difficult to trace back, but looking at the whole question by the light which comparative jurisprudence sheds upon our village history, we then perceive the difficulties vanish.

The subject is important enough to look at a little closely. From some interesting papers in the "Law Magazine and Review" (vol. xiv.), on the rights, disabilities, and usages of the ancient English peasantry, I have collected some very significant

<sup>1</sup> "Native Races of America," i., p. 547. Pritchard ("Physical Hist. of Man," ii., p. 92) gives us another form of this state of things:—"The king of Dahomeh has a monopoly of all the women of his empire: a subject can only obtain a wife by the bounty of his Sovereign, to conciliate which he must make a largess of 20,000 cowries, and in conformity with the ancient African custom must, besides, roll himself in the dust before the gate of the royal palace. All newly-born children belong to the king as the offspring of a flock to the proprietary of the soil. Children are taken from their parents, and receive a kind of public education."

evidence of my interpretation of the village marriage. At Swincombe, in Oxfordshire, the bondman could not get a husband for his daughter, and could not take to himself a wife without the lord's permission. This is the ordinary feudal form, but although this may be considered but meagre evidence of primitive life, there are other customs which by analogy take us to the times we are dealing with. At Southfleet, Frindsbury, Wouldham, and other places in their neighbourhood, we are told, a tenant who wished to give his daughter in marriage had to announce the marriage to the warden or bailiff of the village, and to invite him to the wedding; the girl could not be married to anyone out of the manor without the lord's goodwill; an heiress could not be married even to a neighbour without the lord's consent. A tenant at Haddington paid no fine on the marriage of his daughter within the manor, but he paid two shillings for leave to give her in marriage to a stranger (p. 36). Is not this legalized folk-lore? At all events, is it not feudalized primitive custom? It is important to note that the fine is always paid by the bride's father or the person who stood in the place of her father. All these belong to the department of marriage customs, just as much as the popular customs we shall note further on, the only difference being that in these cases the lord who took upon himself the position of village authority found it an advantage to retain the customs as his right, whereas other customs have been retained by the villagers as a part of their social enjoyments.



Well, then, we are now face to face with the marriage ceremony in England as a relic of an ancient group-act, as a relic, that is, of early village life, and not as a matter of family or personal interest irrespective of the claims of fellow-villagers. We have, I think, already established the initial evidence by identifying the sanction of the manorial lord with the sanction of the early village authorities, this sanction pre-supposing a property in the women of the village. We must now travel beyond this stage to some customs that have never become a part of the manorial law, but have always remained with the village, unsanctioned, of course, but still kept up by the persistence of popular adherence to old manners and customs.

Always bearing in mind the original group-origin of marriage customs, we come first upon the ceremony of bride-capture, so well known to savage society. Mr. McLennan, it is well known, traces the custom to the primitive law that prevented men marrying women of their own tribe, and so compelled them to capture wives from other tribes. But be this as it may, the practice of bride-capture is a communal action, not a personal one, nor a family one. In almost all cases (says Mr. McLennan) the form of capture is the symbol of a group-act, of a siege or pitched battle, or an invasion of a house by an armed band. On the one side are the kindred of the husband, on the other the kindred of the wife.<sup>1</sup> As civilization progresses the kindred of both husband and wife belong to the same village,

<sup>1</sup> "Primitive Marriage," pp. 444-5.

and the capture is reduced from actual fact to a mere ceremony, but still the original communal action is kept up. There is no occasion, of course, to go through the extraordinary cases of bride-capture to be met with in all parts of the world—they have been collected and commented upon by Mr. McLennan, Sir John Lubbock, and Mr. J. H. Farrer. And so, without stopping at all to relate the savage customs, we at once pass to English examples. They are here represented only as the survival of the primitive village ceremony. We see the village in its group-aspect taking the part of bride or bridegroom, and I shall be able to relate some peculiar relics of this distinctly village ceremony.

Let us first of all see the ceremony of bride-capture itself. Sir Henry Piers says, "In the Irish marriages, especially in those countries where cattle abound, the parents and friends on each side meet on the side of a hill, or, if the weather be cold, in some place of shelter, about midway between both dwellings. If agreement ensue, they drink the agreement bottle, as they call it, which is a bottle of good usquebaugh, and this goes merrily round. For payment of the portion—which is generally a determinate number of cows—little care is taken. The father or next of kin to the bride sends to his neighbours and friends *sub mutua vicissitudinis obtentu*, and every one gives his cow or heifer, and thus the portion is quickly paid. Nevertheless, caution is taken from the bridegroom on the day of delivery for restitution of the cattle, in case the bride die

childless within a certain day, limited by agreement; and in this case every man's own beast is restored. Thus care is taken that no man shall grow rich by frequent marriages. On the day of bringing home, the bridegroom and his friends ride out and meet the bride and her friends at the place of meeting. Being come near each other, the custom was of old to cast short darts at the company that attended the bride, but at such distance that seldom any hurt ensued. Yet it is not out of the memory of man that the Lord of Hoath, on such an occasion, lost an eye."<sup>1</sup>

Then from Wales we have this form of the custom. "The bridegroom, on the morning of the wedding, accompanied with a troop of his friends, as well equipped as the country will allow, comes and demands the bride. Her friends, who are likewise well mounted on their merlins (the Welsh name for a little mountain horse), give a positive refusal to their demands, whereupon a mock scuffle ensues between the parties. The bride is mounted on one of the best steeds behind her next kinsman, who rides away with her in full career. The bridegroom and his friends pursue them with loud shouts. It is not uncommon to see on such an occasion, two or three hundred of these merlins, mounted by sturdy Cambro-Britons, riding with full speed, crossing and jostling each other, to the

<sup>1</sup> Vallency's "Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis," i., p. 122, 1786, No. 1, "Description of Westmeath," by Sir Henry Piers, written A.D. 1682, quoted in McLennan's "Primitive Marriage," pp. 314-5.

no small amusement of the spectators. When they have pretty well fatigued themselves and their horses, the bridegroom is permitted to overtake his bride. He leads her away in triumph, as the Romans did the Sabine nymphs. They all return in amity, and the whole is concluded with festivity and mirth.”<sup>1</sup>

These instances are tolerably complete in their general outline—the ceremony of bride-capture being unquestionably a part of the marriage festival, and the village aspect of the whole ceremony being strongly instanced. We will now turn to some less distinctive forms of bride capture, where it is represented by some symbolic act of contention between the two parties, where the original form, in fact, has been influenced by civilized custom and has thus undergone development.

The northern counties of England have (says Mr. Henderfon) some exclusively local wedding customs. A wedding in the Dales of Yorkshire is indeed a thing to see; nothing can be imagined comparable to it in wildness and obstreperous mirth. The bride and bridegroom may possibly be a little subdued, but his friends are like men bereft of reason. They career round the bridal party like Arabs of the desert, galloping over ground on which, in cooler moments, they would hesitate even to walk a horse—shouting all the time, and firing volleys from the guns they carry with them. Next they will dash along the road in advance of the party, carrying the whisky-bottle, and compelling everyone they

<sup>1</sup> “Letters from Snowdon” [anonymous], 1770.

meet to pledge the newly-married pair. In the higher parts of Northumberland as well as on the other side of the Border the scene is, if possible, still more wild. In Northumberland the men of the party all start off from the church door on horse-back, galloping like madmen through mofs and over moor, till they reach the place where the wedding breakfast is to be held, and he who arrives first may claim a kiss of the bride. Such a wedding is called "a riding wedding," and the race to the young couple's new home after the marriage "running the braise, or brooze." In rural parts, too, of the county of Durham, the bridal party is escorted to church by men armed with guns, which they fire again and again close to the ears of bride and bridesmaids, terrifying them sometimes not a little. At Guisborough, in Cleveland, these guns are fired over the heads of the newly-married couple all the way from church.<sup>1</sup>

The customs in Scotland, as related by Mr. Gregor, are full of interest.

Two men, called the *sens*, were despatched from the house of the bridegroom to demand the bride. On making their appearance a volley of fire-arms met them. When they came up to the door of the bride's home they asked,

"Does —— bide here?"

"Aye, faht de ye wint wee ir?"

"We wint ir for ——," was the answer.

"Bit ye winna get ir."

"But we'll tack ir."

<sup>1</sup> Henderson's "Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties," p. 37.

“ Will ye come in, an taste a moofu o’ a dram till we see about it? ”

And so the *sens* entered the house, and got possession of the bride.

Both parties arranged their departure from their respective homes in such a way as to arrive at church about the same time—the bride’s party always having the preference. Each party was accompanied by pipers, and a constant firing of guns and pistols was kept up.

After the ceremony at the church, the procession was again formed, led by the bride, supported by the two *sens*. Then followed the bridegroom, supported by the bride’s two best maidens; and with music and the firing of guns and pistols the two parties, now united, marched along the ordinary road to the home of the bridegroom.<sup>1</sup>

This firing of guns as a survival of actual fighting is also to be met with in primitive society. Among the Dards of India when the bridegroom has to go for his bride to a distant village he is furnished with a bow. On arriving at his native place he crosses the breast of his bride with an arrow and then shoots it off. He generally shoots three arrows off in the direction of his home. At Aftor the custom is sometimes to fire guns as a sign of rejoicing.<sup>2</sup>

In Mr. Napier’s “ Folk-Lore in the West of Scotland,” we have the following variation of the custom :—

<sup>1</sup> Gregor’s “ Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland,” pp. 91-2.

<sup>2</sup> “ Indian Antiquary,” i., p. 12.

“ There were two companies, the bride’s party and the bridegroom’s party. The bride’s party met in the bride’s parents’ house, the best man being with them. . . . At the time appointed the bride’s party left first, followed immediately by the groom’s party. . . . On coming within a mile or so of the young couple’s house, where the mother of the young goodman was waiting, a few of the young men would start on a race home. This race was often keenly contested, and was termed *running the brooze* or *braize*. The one who reached the house first and announced the happy completion of the wedding, was presented with a bottle of whiskey and a glass. . . . The best man went with the bride to the minister. His duty was to take charge of the bride and hand her over to the bridegroom. In this now obsolete custom, I think we may find a still further proof that the management and customs of the marriage procession were founded on the old practice of wife-capture. The best man is evidently just the bridegroom’s friend, who, in the absence of the bridegroom, undertakes to protect the bride against a raid until she reaches the church, when he hands her over to his friend the bridegroom” (pages 48, 49, 51).

Sir W. Scott, in describing the marriage of Lucy Ashton, probably alludes to the custom of protecting the bride in the following speech of the boy bride’s-man, Henry Ashton:—“ I am to be bride’s-man, and ride before you to the kirk, and all our kith, kin, and allies, and all Bucklaw’s are to be mounted and in order, and I am to have a . . . sword-belt

. . . . and a dagger." I may add to this the mention of "the discharge of pistols, guns, and muskets, to give what was called the bridal shot" immediately after the ceremony.<sup>1</sup>

Best, in his "Rural Economy in Yorkshire in 1641" (Surtees Society), devotes a chapter to "Concerning our Fashions att our Country Weddinges," and says: "Soe soone as the bride is tyred, and that they are ready to goe forth, the bridegroom comes and takes her by the hand, and sayth, 'Mistress, I hope you are willinge,' or else kisseth her before them, and then followeth her father out of the doores; then one of the bridegroome his men, ushereth the bride, and goes foremost . . . The bridegroome and the bride's brothers or freinds tende att dinner; hee perhapps fetcheth her hoame to his howse aboute a moneth after, and the portion is paide that morninge that she goes away. When the younge man comes to fetch away his bride, some of his best freinds, and younge men his neighbours, come alonge with him, and others perhaps meete them in the way" (page 117).

Reverting to what has been said about the savage custom of bride capture—that it is distinctively a group-act—I think there cannot be any doubt that the group-act of savage society has here survived in the village-act of English society. I shall give some further instances of the village nature of the marriage customs of England, but I think none are so perfect as these bride-capture examples; alike by their nature and by their permanence in English

<sup>1</sup> "Bride of Lammermoor," cap. xxvi.



custom they illustrate forcibly what we have been all along trying to establish, that English folk-lore carries us back by sure lines to the primitive village-life of our ancestors.

Coming a step nearer to more general customs, we still see distinctly asserted the village aspect of the archaic marriage ceremony. Take, for instance, the invitations to the wedding festival. Among the tribes of Northern India, on the day before the marriage every household in the valley is asked, and as the sun sets at least one man and woman from every house must appear, else it will be presumed that some deadly hatred parts the families.<sup>1</sup> Is not this the equivalent of the group-act? All the villagers, or at all events the representatives of every house, are bound to attend, and this binding attendance at the village marriage tells us equally with bride capture and manorial sanction that the village exercised its old group-act long after the house-religion had encroached upon it, and had declared some sort of individual ownership in the homestead as against communal ownership in the village. Let me give an instance of this wide and general assembling of the village from other than Aryan people. The number of guests present at the marriage festivities of the Kaffirs is sometimes very great. At the marriage of chiefs of high rank, they amount to thousands. On such occasions the greater portion of the tribe assembles, and all the other chiefs within one or two days' journey are expected either to attend in person, or send their racing oxen. To

<sup>1</sup> Gover's "Folk Songs of Southern India," p. 125.

neglect to do either would be considered an affront. The bridegroom and his friends provide the slaughter cattle for the feast; but the guests bring their own milch cows and milkfacks. From four or five to fifty head of cattle are slaughtered, according to the wealth and rank of the parties.<sup>1</sup>

In Scotland we meet with distinct evidence of this assembly of the whole village, and it may be presumed that it is not, as a rule, specially mentioned by the collectors of folk-lore, because it apparently had not much to do with the question. However, Mr. Gregor's example is sufficiently strong to bear out the parallel to the customs just noted in primitive society.

“On an evening shortly before the marriage day, or on the evening before the marriage, the bride and bridegroom set out in company, often hand in hand, to invite the guests. The bridegroom carries a piece of chalk, and if he find the door of any of his friends' houses shut, he makes a cross on it with his chalk. This mark is understood as an invitation to the marriage. A common form of words in giving the invitation is: “Ye ken faht's adee the morn at twal o'clock. Come our, an fefs a' yir oofe wi ye,” or, “Come ane, come athegeethir.” The number of guests is usually large, ranging from forty to a hundred or a hundred and twenty. On the morning of the marriage day, the bride, after being decked in bridal array, goes the round of her own friends in company with her ‘best maid,’ and repeats her invitation to such as she wishes to be of

<sup>1</sup> Maclean's “Kaffir Laws and Customs,” p. 51.

her party. The bridegroom, accompanied by his 'best man,' does the same, and repeats his invitation to those he wishes to be of his party."<sup>1</sup>

In Westmoreland, and probably the whole north of England, it was usual to invite all the country, far and near, to these Bridewains or bidden weddings; and at the appointed time preparations were made for a general feast. Each of the company gave something to the bride, who sat with a plate upon her knee to receive the company. After the marriage ceremony they all mounted their horses and had a race for a ribbon and a pair of gloves.<sup>2</sup>

Jollie, in his "Manners and Customs of Cumberland," published in 1811, relates almost the same facts, the friends of the bride and bridegroom, and "often their neighbours" being invited to the wedding.<sup>3</sup>

In Ireland a house with three contiguous compartments is selected for a wedding; the reason of this is to preserve a distinction between the classes of company expected. The best apartment is reserved for the bride and bridegroom, the priest and piper, and the more opulent and respectable guests, as the landlord, his family, and the neighbouring gentry, who are always invited, and generally attend on these occasions. The second apartment is appropriated for the neighbours in general; and the third,

<sup>1</sup> Gregor's "Folk-Lore of North-East of Scotland," pp. 97, 98.

<sup>2</sup> Hampson's "Medii Ævi Kalendarium," p. 289.

<sup>3</sup> See Jollie's "Manners," &c., pp. 39, 40.

or an outhouse, is devoted to the reception of buck-haugh, fhulers, and other beggars.<sup>1</sup>

To this same custom of inviting all the community to be present, can be referred the origin of our church appeal to the congregation upon giving out the banns of marriage for the ascertainment of any just cause or impediment against the marriage. The voice of the primitive community here speaks through its modern representative. A custom in St. Kilda illustrates this.

“In St. Kilda,” says Martin, “when any two of them have agreed to take one another for man and wife, the officer who presides over them summons all the inhabitants of both sexes to Christ’s Chapel, where being assembled, he inquires publicly if there be any lawful impediment why these parties should not be joined in the bond of matrimony? And if there be no objection to the contrary, he then inquires of the parties if they are resolved to live together in weal and woe, &c.?”<sup>2</sup> This ceremony is here performed under the village officer—a fact which indicates the ancient village right now transferred to the church.

Then we have parallel instances of the circuit of the village being made, in Scotland, Russia, and Southern India; and this, again, is a relic of the group-act.

In one, if not more, of the villages, says Mr. Gregor, when the marriage takes place in the home of the bride, after the rite is concluded, the whole

<sup>1</sup> Croker’s “Researches in the South of Ireland,” p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> Pinkerton, iii., p. 717.

of the marriage party makes the circuit of the village.<sup>1</sup>

In Ruffia, too, it may be mentioned that the bride is accustomed to go the round of the village with a woman who calls for the sympathy of her hearers for the young girl, whose care-free existence is about to be exchanged for the troubles and anxieties of married life,<sup>2</sup> and the key-note seems to me to be supplied from South-Eastern Ruffia, where, on the eve of marriage, the bride goes the round of the village, throwing herself on her knees before the head of each house, and begging his pardon.<sup>3</sup> The Indian custom is as follows :—

The “*divendra vimānan*,” or covered car, is invariably used in marriage ceremonies as the peculiar vehicle for the conveyance of the bride and bridegroom around the village. The traditions record that the people emigrated five centuries ago in these “*divendra vimānan*.”<sup>4</sup>

Lastly, there is the custom of holding great assemblies of sports and games at weddings, which again brings the marriage ceremony within the category of a village institution. Brand gives plenty of examples of this, but the best example comes from Ireland, where it is connected with another curious custom. In King’s County, Young records that it was the custom for a number of country neighbours, among the poor people, to fix upon

<sup>1</sup> Gregor’s “Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland,” p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Farrer’s “Primitive Manners and Customs,” p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> “Indian Antiq.,” iii., p. 289.

some young woman that ought, as they think, to be married; they also agree upon a young fellow as a proper husband for her; this determined, they send to the fair one's cabin to inform her that on the Sunday following "she is to be horfed," that is, carried on men's backs.<sup>1</sup> She must then provide whisky and cider for a treat, as all will pay her a visit after mass for a hurling match. As soon as she is horfed the hurling begins, in which the young fellow appointed for her husband has the eyes of all the company fixed upon him. If he comes off conqueror, he is certainly married to the girl; but if another is victorious, he as certainly loses her, for she is the prize of the victor. These trials are not always finished in one Sunday, they take sometimes two or three, and the common expression when they are over is, that "such a girl was goal'd." Sometimes one barony will hurl against another, but a marriageable girl is always the prize.<sup>2</sup> The peculiar significance of the marriage being initiated by the "neighbours" and not by the two lovers is very remarkable.

One other important feature of the primitive village marriage must be mentioned, the marriage gift. On the occasion of a wedding in Lancashire, each guest either sent or presented some offering of money or food.<sup>3</sup> In this is to be recognized the common meal, so important an item of primitive society, as

<sup>1</sup> This custom is to be met with among the North American Indians. See "American Ethnology," iii., 354.

<sup>2</sup> Pinkerton, iii., p. 860.

<sup>3</sup> Harland and Wilkinson's "Lancashire Folk-Lore," p. 264.

we have already seen. In a previous chapter it has been noted how the community at large built the house for the newly-married couple; and, in addition to these acts of the community, so curiously and significantly preserved in modern local customs, there is the general contribution to the domestic necessities of the new owners of a homestead. The marriage gift, as known to the higher grades of society, has little in common, perhaps, with the primitive original from which it is derived; but if we turn, as folk-lore always bids us turn, to the poor and to the outlying districts of our island-home, we find the clue to this primitive original. There are many examples known to folk-lore where the bride and bridegroom begin life upon the accumulated contributions of fellow-villagers. Already from the Irish example quoted above from Sir Henry Piers we have some evidence of this; but, perhaps, one of the most curious examples and one most perfect in detail is that supplied from an old journal of the time of Charles II., extracts from which have been printed in Transactions of the Kilkenny Archæological Society. I quote the following *verbatim et literatim* :—

“ The very better sort of old Irish that are under some cloud or indeed in tolerable good condition are wont upon the matching of a daughter, in order to it, to go up and down and beg for a twelve-month beforehand after this manner to rayse her porcōn.

“ 1°. The person to be married, sometimes her mother, w<sup>th</sup> her a sort of gentlewoman, a speaker,

two to drive the cattle, and a waiting mayde, hard to be distinguished from her mistress with a dragged taylor, these all enter the house, sit down on the stools and benches according to their distinctions without uttering one word for above an hour or two. Then the attendant speaker riseth and after a salute or honour made, he or she after a short introduction by the way of a speech desire a Coonagh sprea, which being interpreted is an help for a porcōn, viz. something to bring about a marriage. So lately a person of quality, but not of condition gott for her daughter seven or eight score collops (head of cattle so called), the vulgar are afraid to deny and give each a cow or yearling, calf, sheep, or the like. The scullogues or comōn fort also mump, but not with the same formality and procure sheep, lambs, piggs, geese, turkeys, &c. Yett with them a marriage is never completed untill they have an iron pott, gridiron, hutch, an Irish chest so called, and a caddow or rugg or blanket. The giving of ten shillings English answers a collop.”<sup>1</sup>

To conclude the interesting and instructive subject of marriage ceremonies, I will note some analogies between savage and English customs which cannot be grouped under the headings already given; they represent the straggling scraps of the primitive village customs which have come down to us without any definite place in the group-act.

Among the Bajantri Korawa, in marrying, at the hour pronounced to be fortunate, the bride and bride-

<sup>1</sup> “Kilkenny Arch. Soc.,” i. (N.S.), pp. 183, 184.



groom smeared with turmeric are seated on the ground, and a circle drawn with rice around them. For five days the musicians attend before the door, and the whole concludes by the neighbours gathering round and sprinkling a few grains from the rice circle over the couple.<sup>1</sup>

I have particularly recorded this curious custom because Mr. Lang, in mentioning the custom of the ancient Greeks daubing their naked bodies with clay and dirt in the Dionysiac mysteries, quotes a custom from Australia and Africa very similar to the Greek, and then observes :—" Will any one say that the dirty practice of the Greeks was an invention of their own civilization, and that black fellows and negroes retain this, and not much else, from a culture which they once shared with Aryans? Or is it not more probable that a rite, originally savage, was not discarded by the Greeks as they passed from savagery to civilization? This example has not, to my knowledge, any counterpart in modern folk-lore."<sup>2</sup> Asking exactly the same questions about the daubing of the bridegroom among the migratory tribes of Central India, I will add the counterpart in modern folk-lore.

On the evening before the marriage, says Mr. Gregor, there was the "feet-washing." A few of the bridegroom's most intimate friends assembled at his house, when a large tub was brought forward and nearly filled with water. The bridegroom was

<sup>1</sup> "Journal Asiatic Soc. of Bengal" (Migratory Tribes of Central India), xiii., pt. i., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to "Folk-Lore Record," ii.

stripped of shoes and stockings, and his feet and legs were plunged in the water. One seized a besom, and began to rub them lustily, while another was busy besmearing them with foot or shoe-blackening, and a third was practising some other vagary.<sup>1</sup> If the washing of feet is to be considered, there are many parallels, one of which I may perhaps mention. Among the Koragars the bride and bridegroom take a cold water bath.<sup>2</sup>

The Afghans have a custom, common in Wales, where it is called "bundling." The Afghans call it "Namzad bazee," or "betrothal game."<sup>3</sup>

It was formerly a custom observed both in France and England for the man to give the woman he espoused a betrothing-penny as earnest-money of her purchase. One of these small pieces of silver is figured in the "Archæologia" (vol. xvii., p. 124). It is inscribed with the words "*Denirs de foy pour epouser ;*" and on one side is engraved a heart between two hands, and on the other two *fleurs de lis*. This appears something like the bride-price of ancient society. But without going into this widespread custom, the form of it above mentioned is to be found elsewhere than in England. Among the Coorgs the bride being led in to her father's kitchen and placed upon a chair, the bridegroom, among other ceremonies, "gives her a little money."<sup>4</sup> Among the Koragars also many customs

<sup>1</sup> "Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland," p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> "Indian Antiq.," iii., 196.

<sup>3</sup> "Journ. Asiatic Soc., Bengal," xiv., p. 447.

<sup>4</sup> Gover's "Folk Songs of Southern India," p. 127.

are similar, and the bridegroom gives the bride "two silver pieces."<sup>1</sup>

It is customary at a marriage in South China for the bride to present her husband with a pair of shoes. Now, in a work published in 1640 (England), mention is made of an ancient custom, "when at any time a couple were married the sole of the bridegroom's shoe was laid on the bride's head,"<sup>2</sup> and no doubt the gift and the action embody a similar idea—the power of the husband.

In China marriages are forbidden between people of the same family-name, and the same idea is expressed in old rhyme:—

"If you change the name and not the letter,  
You change for the worse and not for the better."<sup>3</sup>

I now wish to gather up the various customs with which we have been dealing in their separate state, and see if there is not some historical answer to the question—how do we know that these items, now scattered over many different districts in all parts of the British Isles, may be grouped together as relics of an original village marriage? It may be said that the instances of bride capture do not fit in with the instances of invitation to the whole village, with the parade round the village, with the marriage gifts, and so on—that if the one has descended from the original village ceremony, the others must have been

<sup>1</sup> "Indian Antiquary," iii., p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> Dennys' "Folk-Lore of China," p. 18. See Thrupp's "Anglo-Saxon Home," pp. 51, 52.

<sup>3</sup> Dennys' "Folk-Lore of China," p. 19, and Henderson's "Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland," p. 41.

derived from other sources. But without staying to answer these propositions by any theoretical restoration of the village ceremony, I think I can answer it at once by an historical restoration. I shall have to go to the village of Lorraine for this typical village marriage, but there is no scientific objection to this. My proposition is, in short, that while we have succeeded in gathering together many of the lost features of the village marriage as it once existed in England, this restoration has left the picture in a somewhat patchwork condition. We have not been able to put our finger upon a perfect or very nearly perfect example of the village marriage, but have simply gathered up from various isolated districts many of its most essential features. But here the right to bind these many isolations together, and to call them a unity, is not given to us from English folk-lore. Step on to the neighbour-land of France, however, and see what we meet with there. It comes to us in the shape of a narrative by an eye-witness of a rural wedding in Lorraine, the complete record of which I have reprinted in the "Folk-Lore Record," vol. iii., as it appeared in its original form in the "Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine." This is truly a remarkable ceremony. It gives the real picture of all that has been previously said, and places at once in full completeness the marriage ceremony as an original village institution—a part of the village politics and as essentially a public act of interest to all the members of the community as any other branch of the village life. We meet with almost all the features I have treated of, and as I

place it in an abridged form in its place here as a relic of the primitive village life of the Aryan world, it will be found to fit in admirably with all that we know of that distinctive and strongly vital organization. I will go through the Lorraine example stage by stage as it is given in the original, and it will soon be seen how it gathers together many of the isolated customs we have been speaking of.

The parents of the bride, their daughter, the bridegroom, and their immediate relatives, proceeded together to give the invitation to neighbours. This was accomplished in the following manner:—The father of the bride first attached to the mantelpiece a sprig of laurel, bedecked with blue and scarlet ribbons, called *l'exploit*, or letter of invitation; and next he courteously handed to each of the household a cross, composed of blue and scarlet ribbons, which formed, as it were, the cards of admission, and were to be worn at the marriage by the males at their button-holes and the females in their caps. Then the good man, in set terms, solicited the pleasure of the presence of the master and mistress of the house, with all their *company*—that is to say, all their relations, friends, and servants—to the “*benediction, the feast, the dance, and all subsequent festivities* ;” but, notwithstanding the comprehensiveness of this invitation, which is repeated at every decent establishment in the village, custom requires that only two individuals of a family shall avail themselves of the bridefather’s liberality. All the parties then bowed and curtsied, and retired.

Towards evening, on the day before the marriage,

the bride's mother assembled in her house three of her neighbouring gossips, matrons who were rigid conservators of ancient usage, of apt memory, and undoubted fluency of diction, six or seven maidens, and double the number of stalwart youths, who formed the body-guard of the bride, with the all-important *Bazoulan*.

When the destined defenders of the bride withdrew into the farmhouse, they forthwith closed all the doors and windows, and barricaded every place of entry with drawers, tables, chairs, planks, stools, and logs of wood, as if the peaceful dwelling had been an important outpost, fortified so as to detain an invading force until the arrival of the main body of an army. As soon as this was accomplished, the distant noise of singing, laughing, firing of guns, and shouting, accompanied with stirring marches on several rustic instruments, announced the approach of the band of the bridegroom, who came in the guise of the Paladins of old to win his bride by doughty deeds of arms.

Suddenly the minstrels struck up a *pas de charge*, the stormers poured into the yard with one wild "Hurrah," under cover of a general discharge of musketry; and the scene was acted in such an admirable manner that a stranger, unaware of the true facts, would have thought the farmhouse was in real danger from a band of lawless, desperate marauders.

When the opposing camps were thus fairly in presence of each other, a lull took place; and one of the band representing at once, herald, bard, and

spokesman of the bridegroom, came out from the ranks, marched majestically with all the pomp and pride of office to the house-door, and called a parley, which being granted, the *Bazoulan* ascended to the loft at the top of the house, which is used universally in French farms as a depôt for grain, and on his opening a small trap for the admission of light in the large door, through which the sheaves are pitched or hoisted up, the following dialogue ensued in the quaint patois and antique poetical expressions of the country, which it is impossible adequately to translate :—

*Bridegroom.* My good, kind friends, dear fellow parishioners and gossips, open your hospitable doors to your poor brethren, presently in absolute distress.

*Bazoulan.* Who are you, firrah, who take the liberty of calling us your fellow parishioners? Go thy way, malapert, for we know thee not.

*Bridegroom.* Fair Sir, we are good men and true, but in much misery and great trouble for the nonce. Have pity on us for the sake of the Virgin Queen. The snow falls fast; we have toiled our weary way so long and far that our shoes are utterly worn out, and our bleeding feet are freezing to the ground. Open, I pray you, maidens sweet, lest you would behold a band of pilgrims perish from destitution at your doors.

*Bazoulan.* Ah, ah! and you think to come round us with your quirks so easily! Away with ye, thieves and robbers as ye are! Carry your idle tales elsewhere, for we are upon our guard, and ye come not within our doors to-night. (This firm

affeveration was received with a shout of applause from the valorous defenders.)

*Bridegroom.* Take pity on us still, kind Sirs, though your sharp wit has perceived we are not pilgrims as we assumed to be. We are honest labourers, who have had the ill-luck to find some game on the squire's preserves; the keepers and the constables are in hot pursuit of us, and close upon our heels, and should you not admit us we shall linger out the remainder of our days in jail.

*Bazoulan.* How know we that ye are what ye say? You have told us one untruth already.

*Bridegroom.* Open a window or a door, and we will show you the fat buck we have killed.

*Bazoulan.* Are you there with your schemes, my master? Not quite such a fool as that, though! Show me the game, that I may see the truth of what ye say.

At this point of the discussion a young man of great height and herculean form came forth from the group, and lifted up to the loft-door a heavy iron spit, on the top of which a plucked and roasted goose was impaled, ornamented with several devices of straw and ribbons interweaved. The *Bazoulan*, however, was not to be betrayed into any demonstration of confidence by opening the loft-door through which the assailants might have entered by a *coup-de-main*, but he quietly passed his arm out of the round air-hole through which he had been speaking, affected to touch the goose with his hand, cried out that it was neither buck, nor doe, nor partridge, quail nor rabbit, and indignantly bade



the besiegers carry their false sayings to some other market.

This was supposed to tax the temper of the bridegroom over much; the spit and goose were instantly withdrawn; the herald announced that since the doors were not opened to them of free good-will, they would fight their way in forthwith; the bridegroom's band raised a shout of exultation at the course proposed, another volley of fire-arms rent the air, the *Bazoulan* laughed derisively, closed the little trap-door with a bang, and scrambled down the stairs to the kitchen; whereupon the youths and maidens joined hand-in-hand, stamping and dancing to their own voices; the parents of the bride and their attendants screamed defiance to the invaders with all the power of their shrilly lungs. On the other hand, the besiegers pretended to be imbued with all the ferocity incidental to a night-assault upon a town devoted to the atrocities of pillage; they fired innocuous blank cartridges through the locks, battered the walls with heavy beams of wood, shook the outside blinds with the greatest violence, shouting all the while with the greatest energy, but still the garrison made good their defence, and the fortress was intact. Had any one of the bridegroom's party been able to penetrate through an unguarded avenue into the house, and place the spit upon the hearth, the *Bazoulan* would have surrendered at discretion, the bride been yielded up, a willing captive, to her future lord, and the play been effectually played out; but in this instance no precaution had been neglected, and, amidst all the

duft, excitement, noise, and smoke, no one dared to violate the usages that had been handed down for centuries from fire to son, until the precise moment for resorting to friendly force should have arrived.

At length the simulation of assault was thought to have been carried far and long enough; the herald of the bridegroom's party called a truce, the *Bazoulan* accepted it, and, mounting again to his old post in the granary, taunted his enemies with their failure in attacking his fortified position, and then, affecting to take pity upon them, proposed terms, by a strict compliance with which they should gain admittance into the farmhouse. Thus was the convention entered into—

*Bridegroom.* What must we do to gain admission to your hearth? Speak, noble commandant.

*Bazoulan.* You must sing a verse or a line of a song unknown to us in this house, and which none in it can go on with in reply.

*Bridegroom.* Be it so, my friends; and now for the trial of our skill:—"Six months ago, in the sweet spring-time——"

"As I roamed o'er the meads so green," the *Bazoulan* broke in with a stentorian voice. Why, fellow, you are laughing at us when you sing such a common strain.

*Bridegroom.* "A bonnie maiden of high degree——"

*Bazoulan.* "Fell in love with a lowly youth." Pass on to another, good man, for we stop you in that at the very first line.

*Bridegroom.* Will this do, then? "From the market of Nantes, as I returned——"

*Bazoulan.* "Tired to death with the wearisome way." As old as our grandmothers! Something newer, I pray you.

*Bridegroom.* "Adown the banks of the golden Loire——"

*Bazoulan.* "With Phyllis as I strayed." Go to, go to; the little children sing it at our doors.

In this manner the cantatory strife lasted a full hour, and possibly might have endured throughout the night, for the antagonists were admirably skilled in these ancient lays chanted by "the spinsters and the knitters in the sun," their memories were wonderfully accurate and their repertoires seemed inexhaustible. Occasionally the *Bazoulan* would permit his opponents to go through twenty or thirty verses of some old romance without interruption, and then, when the bridegroom and his companions were congratulating themselves upon their victory, he would come in with the first line of the last strophe, and jeeringly tell the singer that he need not fatigue himself again with singing so long a song. The bridegroom perceived at last that he could not win, so he acknowledged himself vanquished with a good grace, and the adverse groups proceeded to the "Chant of the *Livrées*," which is always sung in solemn, dirge-like time. It commences in the following manner by the basses without the house:—

"Open, Marie, for a husband young  
Cometh thy love to win ;

The rain falls fast, and the winds blow cold,  
Open, and let him in."

To which the women in the interior replied:—

"My father's away, and my mother in bed—  
I prithee no longer stay;  
You cannot come in at this hour of the night,  
Germain, go hence away!"

The men then took up their first three lines of the first verse, varying the fourth line by naming one of the presents—a neckerchief, &c.—that the bridegroom had prepared for his beloved, until the whole of the articles composing the humble *corbeille* of the bride were gone through—ribbons, aprons, a gold cross, dresses, laces, and even pies; but still the matrons remained inexorable until the bridesmen had recourse to the first couplet again, when, at the mention of the word "husband," all the females uttered a simultaneous cry; and it was decided that the bridegroom should come in.

Immediately the "defenders of the hearth" ranged themselves across the room immediately opposite the door, the girls withdrew with the bride to another room; the farmer, his dame, and her gossips, formed a *corps de reserve* before the fireplace, the *Bazoulan* removed the light cross-bar of wood that fastened the door, threw it wide open, and the assailants rushed tumultuously, speaking in military fashion, into the body of the place.

The point of honour involving the victory was to place the goose upon the hearth; so the standard-bearer, surrounded by his body-guard, strove manfully to gain his object, and the champions of the

defence battled as lustily to defeat his end. With the exception of abstaining from blows given with the clenched fist or open hand, it was, to all intents and purposes, a veritable combat; the young men exerted their muscular powers to the fullest extent in accomplishing their object; they pushed, wrestled, struggled, and occasionally threw each other down; some at times were pressed so hard against the wall that they could scarcely breathe; the hands of several bled freely from coming in rude contact with the sharp-pointed spit, which bent like an aspen twig within the vigorous grasp of both the assailants and defenders; until in accordance with a preconcerted plan the bridegroom's herald stole unobserved from the room during the "steady current of the fight," mounted the stairs to the loft, secured the door, scrambled upon the roof, descended the wide chimney without being perceived by the garrison, whose backs were necessarily placed towards it; and as at the very moment he appeared the tall standard-bearer tore his spit with one gigantic effort from the hands of those who clutched it, and extended it above their heads towards the herald, the latter snatched the goose from off it, and, with a yell of triumph, placed it upon the hearth.

As with the magic wave of an enchanter's wand the noisy strife was hushed. The goal was gained, the shaft had hit its mark, and the goose rested peacefully upon the hearth between the massive andirons where none dared to touch it. One of them seized a small sheaf of straw, placed a few stalks round the bird, and lighted them, making pretence

to roast it, according to the infallible routine prescribed on these occasions.

In the meantime, four low figures, dressed alike in white like sheeted ghosts, were smuggled mysteriously into one corner of the room surrounded by the bride's godmother, her aunts, and the other girls, placed upon a bench, where they were instantly covered with a large white cloth. These "phantoms pale" were the bride and three of her young companions selected from their being precisely of the same stature as herself; and the peaks of their caps of ceremony were adjusted exactly to the same height, the object being to render it impossible for the bridegroom to distinguish one from the other of the girls in the further trial he was to undergo before he should be deemed to have fairly won his bride.

These preparations being made, the *Bazoulan* marshalled all the young men in a semicircle with the bridegroom in the centre, somewhat in advance, and marched them slowly towards the bench on which the girls were seated. Arrived there, he placed a small osier switch in the bridegroom's hand, directing him to touch with it the figure beneath the cloth he thought his future wife, informing him at the same time that if he were successful on the first essay he would be entitled to lead off the ball with her, and be her partner without change; but if he failed he must remain contented with dancing with other maidens through the night.

After a slight hesitation the enamoured farmer recommended himself to his patron faint, extended

the wand, and had the happiness to touch the bride's forehead; she immediately threw the cloth from her, and was led by him into the centre of the room to commence the dance, which lasted without intermission until the bell of the village clock struck midnight, and then all the guests withdrew to their respective homes.

At eight o'clock the following morning the parties invited to the marriage assembled, arrayed in all their best, at the bridegroom's farm, and all having partaken of a hearty breakfast, the bridegroom proceeded to the bride's house, and led back his blushing bride in triumph to his own. The *cortége* was then formed, headed by a band of rural musicians, and proceeded to the church.

The religious rites differed in no wise from those invariably performed at weddings, except that at a particular period of the service the bridegroom placed thirteen pieces of silver in the bride's hand; this ceremony is styled "the Offering." The procession then returned to the bridegroom's farm, where a substantial liberal repast was prepared, and dancing, singing, and rustic games constituted the festivities until the witching hour of night again summoned the revellers to depart.

On the third morning of these peculiar customs the friends and relations of the newly-married couple met at breakfast, and then commenced the ceremony of "the cabbage," the most singular of all the primitive customs of Lorraine: it was the crowning ceremony of the mystic "cabbage." A rural band of musicians marched at the head of the

procession at a stately, funereal pace, towards the kitchen-garden of the young wife's parents. Next came the "gardener," carrying a spade and wicker-basket filled with earth, seated in a hand-barrow, borne on the shoulders of four strong men; his wife followed, accompanied by the elders of the village, and then came the guests who were bidden to the wedding, two and two. When the garden was attained, the beds of cabbages were carefully inspected, the council of the ancients was held to determine the superiority of the plants; and when one of Patagonian dimensions was selected, the "Pagan" attached his cord to the stem, and retired as far back as the extent of the rope would permit him, whilst the "wife" remained by the "cabbage" to guard against its sustaining injury in its removal from the bosom of its mother earth.

During this operation, which was conducted with the greatest care, so as not to injure the cabbage-roots, the visitors and children amused themselves with pelting each other, in a jocular manner, with small clods of earth, styled the "baptism of the soil," which every person must go through at weddings, were he a bishop or prince of the blood royal; and at the end of a quarter of an hour, at a given signal, the "gardener" pulled the cord, and the cabbage was received unharmed in the "wife's" apron, amidst the vociferous shouts of the spectators.

The basket was then brought, and the cabbage planted in it with the utmost mock solemnity; the earth was pressed gently round its roots. It was



sustained in a perfectly upright position by three sticks, tied with bafs, in the fame way as florists support their choicest flowers; rofy-cheeked apples, on the tops of other sticks, and sprigs of thyme and laurel, covered with ribbons and little flags, were stuck around it, and it was placed in the barrow, which was again hoisted on the men's shoulders, whilst the "Pagan" walked by the side, to see that no mishap befell it in its transmission to the bridegroom's house.

But when the procession arrived at the bridegroom's door, an imaginary obstacle to their entrance presented itself. The bearers of the barrow feigned to tremble and bend beneath their burden, and to come to a sudden halt, then they advanced and recoiled, as if some powerful but invisible hand repelled them; whilst the guests uttered words of advice and encouragement, such as "Gently now, lads,—the gate is too narrow. A little to the right! Now with a will, and altogether! that's it!" &c.

This is typical of the last load of wheat of an abundant harvest, styled the *gerbande*, crowned with flowers and ribbons, being drawn by the oxen from the field, and passing with difficulty through the triumphal arch at the entrance of the farmer's full stack-yard.

When this obstacle was supposed to be overcome the "Pagan" looked around him attentively to find the highest point of the premises—chimney, dove-cot, or gable-end—on which he was bound to place the basket with the cabbage, at the risk of even breaking his neck in the attempt. In this instance

the roof of the house was attained; and the earth in the basket having been moistened with a jug of wine, the cabbage was left to the influence of the skies, with a final shout and the discharge of all the fire-arms in the band.

Similar forms were observed in digging up and transplanting a vegetable from the bridegroom's garden, and carrying it to the former residence of his wife; for much importance is attached to the flourishing or immediate decadence of the humble plant, as in it is involved, according to the matronly legendary lore, the happiness of the newly-married pair, in so far as it may be constituted by the presence of numerous future little smiling faces round their ample hearth.

What are we to say of this curious and comprehensive rural wedding? That it is essentially a village ceremony is the main feature of its characteristics. We have here in this one single example the bride-capture, where the village took the part of the bride or the bridegroom; we have the significant defence of the hearth, and, if I mistake not, the sacrifice of the goose there; we have the bride-price; we have the defence of the bridegroom's threshold; we have the "baptism of soil," and the peculiar ceremony of the cabbage which initiated the bride into her new home. All this is set forth in peculiar exactitude, and it helps to reclaim to their lost home the many fragments into which the village marriage in England has been broken by the course of ages.

How clearly all these customs may be resolved into a species of village law, and hence as relics of early village law, may be seen by a glance at some of the rural laws of courtship and marriage in some of the less important European States. Thus we are told that "they are by no means the same throughout Bavaria. Indeed, each district, and sometimes each village, has its own matrimonial code, as it has its especial sumptuary laws, and its inhabitants would no more venture to defy the one than they would dare to infringe the other. But a certain similarity of ideas pervades the whole arrangement. In the first place, the bride is not supposed to be an active, scarcely a consenting party in the negotiations, which are indeed of a most business-like kind, and are usually committed by the bridegroom to a person hired for the purpose—a professional best-man, whose office, the insignia of which is a hooked stick, is to obtain the bride and her dowry, to invite the guests to the wedding, also to obtain from them as many gifts as possible for the new *ménage*, and the course of the festivities on the days both preceding and following the marriage, for wedding feasts in rural Bavaria sometimes drag their long course over a whole week. A very common preliminary of marriage in these districts is for the lover or his best-man to offer the maiden a cup of wine. If she accepts, which she never does except under protest, her consent is considered to be given. It is thought a special sign of ill-luck if any of the wine is spilt on this occasion. It is also a common superstition that it is unlucky for a girl to accept an offer of

marriage made under a roof, so the would-be bridegroom, or his representative, has to catch her with his beaker of wine in the open. Before the marriage is decided on, a visit of inspection is made to the houses of the bride and bridegroom's relatives by the parents of each. This is a very solemn matter, and involves not only the future of the young couples, but the credit of two entire families, and an amount of scrubbing and scouring, mending and setting to rights, which we can but dimly imagine, and which certainly does much to try both the sinews and the tempers of the two future mothers-in-law. During these visits it is usual for the best-man to be in attendance, and to enliven the scene by a running commentary on the blessings and advantages of the life matrimonial."

There is not much more to say now of these customs of to-day and of days far back in the past. The relics of early village life which I have attempted to collect together in these pages in illustration of the many remarkable parallels between English folk-lore and savage custom have consistently borne towards one centre point—the building up of the old Aryan house-faith. As in agricultural matters nature-worship gave way to the house-religion, so in social matters the communal marriage gave way to the family marriage, and that, too, through the influence of the house religion. The remarkable grouping of marriage customs proclaims that the house-faith penetrated into the old communal life, and established a point beyond which community of life was not to go. The village rites

of the marriage ceremony as gathered together in this chapter are purely social in all their aspects; the link that connects them with the religious marriage ceremony of to-day (with which they have apparently so little to do) is that portion of the ancient rite which was enacted before the house-altar, the sacred hearth; and this portion was wrung from the purely communistic life of primitive man by the encroachment of the worship of the domestic hearth, the chiefest and brightest feature in early village life. If, therefore, these short chapters of a very important and extensive subject enable us to give a certain distinctiveness to our retrospection of ages long since gone by, if with the fragments we have examined and placed together, we have been able to restore a mosaic-like portion of the picture of past times, there appears to be very good ground for hoping that still further researches into the subjects here dealt with, and into subjects not dealt with though equally belonging to early village life, will enable us gradually to complete and make perfect a portion of history which has hitherto been lost to us. But it must ever be borne in mind that this history has no other records than what it has received from the undying memories, the steadfast faith, the superstitious reverence of generation after generation who have remembered and believed and feared all that their fathers had remembered and believed and feared.





## INDEX.



- BYSSINIAN** customs, 80.  
Afghan custom, 220.  
African customs and superstitions, 18, 87-88, 104, 110, 114, 119, 154, 180, 183, 196, 198-9, 211.  
Agni, god of fire, 91.  
Agriculture, house gods as gods of, 124-151.  
Alfriston church, legend of, 45.  
American Indian customs and superstitions, 64, 80, 89, 97, 114, 117, 153, 156, 158, 171, 200-201.  
Ancestors, worship of deceased, 85.  
Andamaners, customs of, 197.  
Anglo-Saxon customs, 138-142, 188.  
Animal sacrifice, 116, 118, 119, 120.  
Arrowheads, flint, used in savage society, 5.  
Aryan folk-lore, 124-6.  
Ashes, divination by, 95.  
Assins, house-burial among, 114.  
Athlone, custom at, 76.  
Australian customs, 154, 193-196.  
Banns of marriage, 214.  
Bassam, Great, foundation sacrifice in, 25.  
Bafutos, customs of, 110, 127.  
Bees, death of owner told to, 137.  
Birth customs, 107-113, 137, 166-167, 178-180.  
Black Mountain customs, 134, 160.  
Boddus, Hebrides evil spirit, 100.  
Boggart, 100.  
Breedon church, legend on building of, 43.  
Bride-cake, 81.  
— capture, 204-210, 224-230.  
— price, 220.  
Bridewains, 213.  
Brownies, 94.  
Brownsover church, skeleton found in, 35.  
Brüd, fairy so called, 95.  
Building a house, ceremony of, 60-62.  
Bundling, custom so called, 220.

- Burial (house-), 113-117.  
 Burmah, foundation sacrifice in, 28.  
 Burn, charm for, 176.  
 Burnley Cross and the demon pigs, legend of, 43-44.
- Cabbage, ceremony of the, 233.  
 Californian customs, 104.  
 Cambridgeshire, skeleton found in Snailwell church, 36.  
 Candlemas day custom, 95.  
 Cashel, rock of, legend of, 40-41.  
 Celtic land deities, 130.  
 Ceylon customs, 197.  
 Changeling (fairy), 112-113.  
 Charm, New Zealand, 128, 175.  
 Chest, the family, 158-160.  
 Chicken sacrifice, 26.  
 Chimney, used in folk medicine, 120.  
 Chinese customs and superstitions, 78, 80, 103, 117, 178, 181, 220.  
 Christmas day customs, 99, 133-136, 143. See "Yule."  
 Church-building legends, 41-48.  
 — foundations, skeletons found, 35, 36.  
 Civilization, 73.  
 Classification of folk-lore, 10.  
 Clavie, festival of the, 98.  
 Clegg Hall, Lancashire, legend of, 48-49.  
 Cluricaun, 100.  
 Coal, live, for heating water at birth, 167.  
 Cock, sacrifice of, 26, 49.  
 Communism in living, 153-158.  
 Cooking customs, 165-172.
- Corn, divination as to price of, 145-146.  
 Cornish superstitions and customs, 69, 96, 117.  
 Cradle superstition, 180-181.  
 Cumberland, courtship in, 79.  
 — house building in, 23.  
 Cymhortha, custom so called among the Welsh, 157.
- Dahomans, house burial among, 114.  
 Daubing customs, 219.  
 Dayak customs, 25, 26.  
 Death in house, 64, 70.  
 Death of owner told to yoke horses, 137.  
 Demeter, worship of, 130.  
 Devonshire customs, 37-39, 175.  
 Disease, cures of, 117-121.  
 Divination by ashes, 95.  
 Domestic customs, 152-184.  
 Drayton's "Nymphidia," quoted, 92.  
 Dumfriesshire, house building in, 22.
- Ears, ringing found in, 177.  
 Earth, god of the, 17.  
 — deities, 127-132.  
 Easter Sunday, fires not allowed to go out, 97.  
 Esquimaux customs, 168.  
 Essex legend, 41, 42.  
 Ethelbert, reception of Augustine, 68.
- Fairies, entrance into house prevented, 77.  
 Fairy lore, 91-95.  
 Family, Aryan, 126.  
 Family god. See "House."  
 Fantees, house burial among, 114.



- Fausset collection of antiquities, 5.
- Feet-washing at marriages, 219.
- Field deities, 130.
- Fijian customs, 29, 80, 114, 169.
- Fire (household) worship, 85-123.  
— carried round houses, &c., 147.
- Folk-lore, scientific aspect of, 2-12.
- Font (new) baptism at, is fatal, 36.
- Food, common right to, 153-158.
- Foot (right) superstition, 183.
- Foundation sacrifice, 24-58, 126.
- France, foundation sacrifice in, 26.
- Galam, human sacrifice in, 27.
- Geoffrey of Monmouth, 32.
- Ghost story, 37-39.
- Gift at marriage, 216-217.
- Gilds, primitive origin of, 155.
- Gloucestershire customs, 147.
- Goblin, 100.  
— builders, legend of, 44-45.
- Goods, common holding of, 153-158, 187.
- Greeks, sacredness of threshold among, 74.  
— birth ceremonies, 107.  
— marriage customs, 190-191.
- Hair, superstitions connected with, 173-175.
- Hare, meeting a, 183.
- Harvest customs, 144-145.
- Hawaii customs and superstitions, 21, 62, 118, 170.
- Heart, embalmed, buried in wall, 39.
- Hearth, worship at, 85.
- Hearthstone, burial of bottle of pins under, 37.
- Hebrew custom, 150.
- Hephaestus, the Greek god, 88.
- Herefordshire custom, 137, 147.
- Herrick (Robert) quoted, 83, 99.
- Hills, the abode of fairies, 17.
- Hindu customs, &c., 17, 28-29, 60, 62, 72, 90, 104-105, 126, 136, 138, 143-144, 146, 149, 155, 159, 173, 179, 197, 208, 211, 219, 220.
- Homestead, occupation of, 59-71.
- Horse-shoe, nailed at threshold, 78.
- Hottentots, customs, 168.
- House in early society, 148, 150.  
— building of, 21-23.  
— foundation sacrifice, 24-58.  
— superstitions connected with building, 59-71.
- House-religion, 72-123.  
— influence of, on agricultural deities, 131-151.  
— on marriage rites, 189.
- House-warming, 156.
- Human sacrifice, 25, 27, 28, 31-33, 132.
- Indian beliefs or superstitions. See "American," "Hindu."
- Inveraven Castle, legend of, 46.
- Invitation to weddings, 211, 223.
- Irish customs, 135, 161, 165, 166, 204, 213, 215, 217.
- Iron knife, superstitions concerning, 163.

- Japan, family gods in, 88.  
 — foundation sacrifice in, 27-28.  
 Johnson (Dr.), superstitious practice by, 183.  
 Journey, starting on, superstition concerning, 183.
- Kaffir superstitions and customs, 64, 154.  
 Kelly's "Curiosities of Indo-European folk-lore," 3.  
 Kern baby, 145.  
 Khands, deities of, 132.  
 Kobbold, 100.
- Ladder, unlucky to go under, 8.  
 Lanarkshire customs, 99.  
 Lancashire customs, 23, 163.  
 Land custom, 138-144.  
 — in early society, 149.  
 — deities, 127-132.  
 Lang (A.), on the study of folk-lore, 4-6.  
 Lapland customs, 106, 183.  
 Leicestershire church building legend, 43.  
 Lithuania, domestic god in, 90.  
 Log festivals, 133-136.  
 Lorraine, marriage ceremony in, 222-236.  
 Lyme Regis, felling of wood ashes at, 99.
- Madagascar customs, 62, 65, 108-110, 134, 169, 171, 199.  
 Manorial customs, 155, 201-202.  
 Magic in buildings, 68.  
 Man, Isle of, customs, 67, 77, 95, 97, 135.  
 Marriage customs, 79-84, 102-106, 185-239.  
 Maulai, death ceremonies among the, 115.
- May Day customs, 98.  
 Meal, common, 155.  
 Medicine, folk-, 117-121.  
 Meg Merrilies, 70.  
 Merlin, tradition of, 31-33.  
 Mortars and pestles, 164.
- Nature worship, 126.  
 Neolithic man, house burial among, 115.  
 New Zealand customs and superstitions, 27, 50, 63, 64, 74, 86, 88, 96, 104, 114, 128, 132, 158, 172, 173, 175, 176.  
 Nicobar islanders, house building of, 61.  
 — house gods, 89.  
 Norfolk customs, 147.  
 Northamptonshire customs, 175.  
 Northumberland customs, 84.
- Oak, felling of, 17.  
 Oran, traditional sacrifice of, 33.  
 Orissa, house-building in, 61.  
 Ovaherord, customs of, 119, 134-136.  
 Overchurch, legend of, 46-48.
- Potted stone, 84.  
 Peruvian customs, 114, 196.  
 Picts, foundation sacrifice among, 30.  
 Pigeon, stuffed, in cure of disease, 119.  
 Pins in witchcraft, 120.  
 Pipe, unlucky to give light for, 98.  
 Ploughing customs, 137, 140, 143, 144.  
 Plough Monday, 147-148.  
 Poles, marriage custom of, 106.

- Polynesian customs and superstitions, 17, 18, 27, 76, 85, 104, 171, 173, 177, 183.
- Pounding of corn, 163-164.
- Quern, 164.
- Rice thrown over bride's head, 80.
- Robin Goodfellow, 92, 93.
- Roman, ancient, customs, 77, 107.
- Roumanian legend, 51-57.
- St. Botulf, legend of, 129-130.
- St. Bridget, custom connected with, 77.
- St. Columba, tradition of, 33.
- St. Guthlac, legend of, 128-129.
- St. Oswald, legend of, 43.
- St. Patrick, legend of, 40-41.
- Samoans, house sacred to family god, 85.
- fire kindled at death, 115.
- Samoyeds, folk-tales of, 5.
- Scotland, customs and superstitions of, 120, 130, 143, 145, 156, 164, 165, 166, 174, 179, 181, 182, 207, 209, 212.
- Scrambling, custom of, at birth, 109.
- Settlement of the village, 16-23.
- Shetland customs, 163.
- Short-bread, plate of, thrown over bride's head, 80-81.
- Shropshire customs, 147.
- Siam, foundation sacrifice in, 28.
- Siberia, customs in, 103.
- Site of village, choice of, 127.
- Skeleton found in church foundations, 35, 36.
- Snailwell church, skeleton found in, 36.
- Somersetshire superstition, 120.
- South Sea islanders, 170.
- Spider omen, 177.
- Sports and games at marriages, 215.
- Stone-boiling, 166-168.
- Stones, folk-lore of, 160.
- Survival, the doctrine of, 3-6.
- Suffex customs, 37, 82, 174, 181.
- Tables, put away, at Christmas time, 160.
- Temple in Teutonic mythology, 17.
- Threshold, superstitions concerning, 75-85.
- Toothache charm, 175, 180.
- Torches used at funerals, 117.
- Trees, place of, in religious systems, 17-18.
- superstition respecting cutting down of, 149.
- Troufers, fathers', to protect child from fairies, 182.
- Udimore church, legend of, 45-46.
- Vancouver Island customs and superstitions, 64, 105, 169, 171, 198.
- Victoria, aborigines of, superstitions of, 90.
- Village community, typical instance of, 12-14.
- Waldron church, legend of, 45.
- Wales, customs, 205, 220.
- Warwickshire, skeleton found in Brownfover church, 35.
- Wendover church, legend of, 45.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Wiltshire custom, 166.                              | Yorkshire customs, 36, 82, 179,<br>181, 206.     |
| Witchcraft, protection of thresh-<br>hold from, 78. | Yule log, 99.                                    |
| Woman, ill luck at meeting,<br>183.                 | Yule tide customs, 133-136,<br>143.              |
| Word charm, 175.                                    | Zulu beliefs or superstitions.<br>See "African." |
| Yoke-horses, death of owner<br>told to, 137.        |  |















