

## GAMES OF CHILDREN

SURVIVALS, AS A RULE, OF ANCIENT RITES AND CUSTOMS.

"London Bridge" Possesses an Exceedingly Sinister Significance, and "Hopscotch" Originated in the Old Myth of the Minotaur's Labyrinth.

It is a fact that English boys and girls in their plays and pastimes are the unconscious keepers of the archaic archives of our forebears. Children are instinctive conservatives. They play the old games and repeat the old rhymes century after century with little if any variation.

"Blind man's buff," for example, a survival of the rites peculiar to the worship of Odin, the sightless deity, is played today exactly as it was played 2,000 years ago.

So, too, is "tag," which was originally a fragment of a sacred pantomime or miracle play, portraying the old, old story of Diana and her nymphs.

In "London bridge is broken down" we are treated to the entire ritual of the foundation sacrifice, that widespread hideous custom which decreed that a living child must be sacrificed to the god of the structure ere it could be expected to stand firm.

First, it will be remembered, the children urge alternative measures. "London bridge is broken down," cry the two leaders, standing with uplifted hands clasped so as to form an arch, beneath which the other little players race as if in dread.

"Build it up with bricks and mortar," is the reply.

"Bricks and mortar will mold away." "Build it up with penny loaves, with gold and silver, set a man to watch all day, set a dog to bark all night," and the rest of it.

Then, lastly, the hands are unclasped, the "arch" falls, catching one of the players, preferably a little girl, in its mock descent, after which all the children shout in unison: "Hurrah! Hurrah! Now 'twill last for aye and a day, with a fair lady."

An allied game is called "threading the needle." A chain of children pass under an arch formed by the uplifted joined hands of two other children, one being eventually taken prisoner in the usual way. Sussex children say this "makes the wheat grow." French children cry in unison while racing under the arch: "Oats, oats, oats! May the good God prosper you!"

Here we get a relic of the immolation of the meriah, or sacred sacrificial victim, to the corn god of the ancients, a custom once everywhere prevalent, and continued until quite lately at Benin city, in India, and elsewhere.

"Hopscotch" is an old game. Its germ was almost certainly the labyrinth and the well high universal myth of the Minotaur. Afterward, on the introduction of Christianity, the labyrinth was abandoned, to be replaced by the ground plan of the basilica, the earliest Christian church.

The players divided it in seven parts, as they believed heaven to be divided, and placed paradise in the position of the altar, the inner sanctum of their earthly church. The whole game came then to represent the progress of the soul from earth to heaven through various intermediate states, the name given to the last "court" being invariably "paradise" or its equivalent.

Well worship, one of the earliest and most widespread of religious cults, is symbolized in many games, notably in the one where the children sing:

Draw a pail of water  
For a lady's daughter.

The seesaw movement of the players at the beginning of this ancient and still popular game is intended to represent the raising of the water from the well. Next is announced the arrival of the devotee, "my lady's daughter," collecting flowers for decking the well (shrine), making a cake for presentation to the god (or goddess) of the well, offerings of jewelry, and so on. It can be by no means chance that a game played by rustic village children today duplicates step by step each detail of the ritual of the primitive well worshippers.

It is the same with almost all the genuine old children's games. Everywhere can be traced degenerate, fragmentary survivals of the social life, ceremonies and religious practices of our early ancestors.

"Here we go round the mulberry bush," for instance, is a survival of tree worship. "Cat cradle," played practically by all savage and civilized peoples the world over, has its hidden significance of horrid rites. It is a commonplace, the important part played in black magic by string, cords and knots.

But it is the so-called matrimonial games that throw the most lurid light on the social manners and customs of our prehistoric savage forefathers.

"Here we come gathering nuts in May" symbolizes that earliest form of sexual union, marriage by capture. In this game, as played to this very day on many a British village green, there enters absolutely no element of love or courtship. The object of each male child is to obtain possession of a female child by brute strength, and he always tries his luck or his skill "on a cold and frosty morning," of course.

In those dim, faraway days there were no roads. Across the frozen morasses into the wildest recesses of the swampy "forest primeval" he could

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under such atmospheric conditions bear his bride in safety.

"Kiss in the ring" brings us down to a far later date. The evolution of marriage has reached the point at which choice or selection becomes the dominant factor, although there is still the pretense of running away, the feigned resistance to capture and its concomitant betrothal.

Still more modern is the game known as "knights from Spain," in which one had stands out pre-eminently from the others.

"I am a gentleman come from Spain; I've come to court your daughter Jane," chants the child suitor, to which the "mother" of the assembled girls makes reply:

"My daughter Jane is yet too young To listen to your forward tongue."

There is much more in the same style, but it ends up with the chorus, sung by both sides (all the children) in unison:

"Let her be young or let her be old It's for her beauty she must be sold."

Here we get, of course, marriage by purchase, which everywhere superseded in course of time marriage by capture and which is not even yet by any means entirely extinct.

The worldwide custom which decreed that the bride should make and bake some dainty for her spouse on the wedding eve is faintly symbolized in the favorite old Kentish singing game:

(Polly) made a pudding so nice and sweet, And (Johnnie) got his knife and cut it round so neat.

Saying, "Taste, love, taste, love, don't say nay, For tomorrow-morrow-morrow is our wedding day."

Our bought wedding cake is of course an unsentimental survival of this pretty custom.

But perhaps the most interesting from the ethnologist's point of view of all children's games is that where the players sing the old familiar refrain, commencing:

Sallie, Sallie, water, Sprinkle in the pan, Cry Sallie, cry Sallie, For a young man.

Here "water" is not the surname to Sallie, but actual water, as the context, "sprinkle in the pan," plainly shows. It is a relic of water worship, which everywhere has to do with love, marriage and children. "Cry" does not mean to weep, but to "cry" aloud her wish (for a young man), as the town "crier" to this day "cries" things or as children "cry" forfeits.

Note that it is the girl now that makes known her need of a husband. The game is, in fact, a survival of the matriarchate of our remote pre-Celtic progenitors, that strange, little understood custom which gave to the women the privilege of wooing, of ruling, of inheriting, and relegated man to an altogether subordinate position in the communal homestead.—Pearson's Weekly.

COLOR BLIND PEOPLE.

Their Affliction Causes Them to Do Queer Things at Times.

A well known oculist, while discussing some of the various defects of the human eye which are not noticeable to the ordinary observer, had this to say about color blind people:

"The world must be a curious place to color blind people, of whom there are forty males and three females to every thousand persons. Some are blue-yellow blind, and everything

seems either red, green or gray to them. Others are red-green blind, and all things appear to them to be yellow, blue or gray of various shades, and others again perceive no distinction of color at all, but the whole world wears an unchanging aspect of dull gray.

"To these last a visit to a picture gallery would reveal merely a collection of engravings or photographs. But the two former have the compensation of seeing their own two colors much more brightly than ordinary people.

"The color blind do extraordinary things at times. An officer of the navy went one day to buy material for a coat, vest and trousers. He bought a blue coat and red trousers, believing them of the same color. A British admiral painted a landscape and was very proud of his performance, but he made the tree red, thinking it the same color as green. When he purchased a pair of trousers he chose green ones, suspecting them to be brown.

"An architect's pupil, being directed to copy the picture of a brown house, made the house green, the sky scarlet and the roses blue.

"A postoffice clerk was always short in his accounts because he could not distinguish the different colored stamps, and a sedate Quaker has been known to buy a green coat for himself and a red gown for his wife, thinking they were both brown.

"If you see a man in the street with a preposterous display of colors, charitably believe him to be one of the color blind.

"Just why the eyes of women are less defective in the matter of distinguishing colors than those of men is one of the things in nature that are unexplained. The construction is the same, yet woman's superiority in matching colors has always been recognized even where man has had the advantage of long experience."—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.

Winter Fodder In Kashmir.

In Kashmir they have a novel method of putting fodder up for winter use. The country lies in a valley among the Himalayas. The chief industry of the people consists in raising fine wool and in making this into fabrics which have carried the name of the country all over the world. As in winter snow lies some five or six yards deep, supplies of hay are hung among the branches of trees, where they are easily reached by the flocks of sheep.

Nothing In It.

Two men were lashing the air violently and hurling epithets at each other.

"Hold on," said a passerby to his companion. "Let's wait and see the scrap."

They stood and watched for a moment until it became evident that one of the disputants was afraid and the other "dassent."

"Come on," said the companion. "It's only a scrap of conversation."—Brooklyn Eagle.

What Did She Want Him to Say?

Stately—May I have a kiss before I go?

Miss Weary—If I give you one will you really go?—Judge.

A Country Problem.

The hen remarked: "This haunting fear Offends my family pride.

If eggs remain thus scarce and dear, It means race suicide."—Washington Star.

In a Bad Way.

"He seems to be absentminded."

"Awful. He hasn't enough memory To forget things."—Puck.

Hopelessly Shy.

"I fear I am too diffident."

She sighed, "No ever win. They always tell me I am shy Whenever I come in."—New York Herald.

The Exception.

'Tis the unexpected always happens—unless you expect a collector.—Yale Record.

Wait For the Collector.

In "giving the devil his due"

Be careful or else you will rue it. Just wait till the bill comes to you; Don't go to the devil to do it.

Over-Work Weakens Your Kidneys.

Unhealthy Kidneys Make Impure Blood.

All the blood in your body passes through your kidneys once every three minutes.

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It used to be considered that only urinary troubles were to be traced to the kidneys, but now modern science proves that nearly all constitutional diseases have their beginning in kidney trouble.

If you are sick you can make no mistake by first doctoring your kidneys. The mild and extraordinary effect of Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, the great kidney remedy, is soon realized. It stands the highest for its wonderful cures of the most distressing cases and is sold on its merits by all druggists in fifty-cent and one-dollar sizes.

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