

assistance of child friends in one of the poorer parishes of a great industrial centre of the North. Others have come from friends in the busy towns of Lancashire; this from the windswept cliffs about Whitby; this from the smoky purlieus of Birmingham; this from a quiet vicarage in Westmorland; this from the streets of Coleraine, and this from within ken of the Broomielaw. Others have come from kindly helpers in Denmark, in France, in Holland, in Germany, in Switzerland. Most of the English games have been duplicated over and over again, and one week's post brought the same little stranger—a foreigner—from Charlottenburg, from Amsterdam, and also from Copenhagen. These duplications differ, indeed, in detail of word, and, it may be, of note, but the type and traditional form emerges and prevails.

Now as to the origins of the games themselves it is not easy to speak. Many of them are doubtless survivals of religious, civic, or domestic activities of an earlier time, discarded or outgrown by those who for ages had found pleasure in them, yet preserved and perpetuated by virtue of that ingrained conservatism which is so characteristic of all childhood. To the folklorist the games are a veritable treasure house of world-old fragments and reliques. Lady Gomme, in her fascinating writings on this theme, suggests that some of the games hark back to a civilization that was not merely Celtic, but actually pre-Aryan, and that the real and original significance of parts of the ritual is only to be found by a comparison with tribal customs still obtaining among the more primitive races of Asia or Africa.

And yet this is not so surprising when we remember that stone mauls were used as late as the Battle of Hastings (how curiously near this makes the Stone Age seem to be)—that the squares of our game of Hop Scotch have been found scored on ancient pavements recently bared in Rome near to, and co-eval with, the Colosseum itself—that the figures on the brazen facepieces of the very cart-horses in our street find their origin in the magic and nature worship of Egypt—that the great convivial and immortal strains to "He's a jolly good fellow" were brought to this country from the East by returned Crusaders, and are to this day, as one writer says, the only Western tune that is able to disturb the Oriental calm of the native Egyptian as he listens to the music of our Regimental bands in the squares of Grand Cairo. If these things of sight and sound and ritual have so successfully weathered the storm and stress of the centuries, is it so surprising that in our children's singing games there should be found traces of earth-worship, of well-dressing, of magic bread, of blood sacrifice, of courtship by ambassador, of marriage by capture, and a score of other things wholly unknown to the little singers themselves and but little suspected even by the elders who are looking on?

But how are we to account for the persistence of the games? Why, in the welter of modern things, have they refused to go down into silence? There have been competitors enough, there have been opposition, cold indifference, and even a cheap superciliousness. Schemes of breathing, organized games, new songs, fresh dances, and what not, by hosts of talented writers have been simply rained on us—yet, here we are dancing "On the Bridge of Avignon," or tripping "Round the Mulberry Bush" as blithely as ever.

They have stood the test, they live in their own right and the need of childhood. They live because the appeal of the old games is to something deep down and constant in the very fibre and fabric of child-being. They are of the earth, and the wind, and the home, and the heather, and all the gracious commonplaces of human life and circumstance. "For Heaven's sake," says Whitman, "give us songs that do not sound ridiculous in the open air." From this test both songs, words, and ritual emerge triumphant. They are children of the open air. The words express it, and dance and ritual are attuned to it. They persist, as does the beauty of the gorse and the lark's song.