

**FOLK-LORE RELICS
OF EARLY VILLAGE
LIFE**

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Folk-Lore Relics of Early Village Life by George Laurence Gomme

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GEORGE LAURENCE GOMME

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OF
EARLY VILLAGE LIFE.

BY
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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