

# **FOLK LORE IN LOWLAND SCOTLAND**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649151936

Folk lore in Lowland Scotland by Evelyn Blantyre Simpson

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**EVELYN BLANTYRE SIMPSON**

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# FOLK LORE IN LOWLAND SCOTLAND

## CHAPTER I

### BELTANE AND THE VANISHED RACES

"On the wind-swept moors and tranquil valleys I have felt, by some secret intuition, some overwhelming tremor of the spirit, that here some desperate strife has been waged, some primeval conflict enacted; an uncontrollable throb of insight, that here some desperate stand was made, some barbarous Thermopylae lost or won."  
—*House of Quiet.*

THE study of the folk lore of Lowland Scotland reveals to us in scanty uncertain glimmers some shadowy conception of the aboriginal inhabitants of what was in sober truth a stern and wild Caledonia. Ancient haunts of men have numberless tongues for those who know how to hear them speak. But it is not the uncouth monoliths like giant mile-stones, looming forth on heights and dark moorlands, but the place names our deluvian ancestors bequeathed to us, which guide us

to the knowledge from whence they had wandered to the north. Those that run may not read, but those who pause, and with careful patience clear away the dust of bygone ages, can decipher, despite the obstructions of centuries of progress, traces which, like a blazed trail, lead us beyond the even track of written history into the forest primeval of Scotland's story. Amid all our vaunted complicated civilisation is it not somewhat startling to find we, who consider ourselves so advanced in religious knowledge, adhere to usages descended to us from the sanguinary creed of our blue-wooded ancestors?

One chief and most abiding indication of their, and consequently of our, Oriental origin, are the relics left by these extinct races of their worship of the great lights of heaven. Fire has had a fascination for the human species from time immemorial. Naturally, those who were forced to dwell in the north craved the most for warmth, but whether the blaze is lit by a hearth-stone, or in the open under the roof of heaven, man, civilised or savage, is allured by and gathers round a fire. The glowing flames for the time being become the home centre. In far past ages the inhabitants of Scotland wielded weapons of