

FOLK-LORE SCRAP-BOOK.

A VOODOO FESTIVAL NEAR NEW ORLEANS. — A reporter of the New Orleans "Times-Democrat," June 24, 1896, gives an account of an expedition in search of the Voodoo orgies said to be still occasionally kept up in that city on St. John's Eve. The writer says that, although twenty years ago any person might easily have witnessed the dances, in these later years the celebration has taken on so much secrecy that the police are incredulous of the existence of any such thing. A physician, however, who had occasion to treat a colored female servant, was able to obtain from her directions as to the locality of the meeting, and in company with this person describes his adventures, the scene being on Bayou St. John. The reporter affirms that he was able to witness the ceremonies from concealment in neighboring rushes. These rites consisted in building a large fire, in dance on the part of a central personage, the destruction of a black cat, and its devouring raw. The scene concluded with an orgie, in which the savage actors ended by tearing off their garments. Such is the theatrical description, given with various adornments, and with the words of a song said to be chanted on the occasion: "Au joli cocodri — Vini gro cocodri — Mo pas ouar cocodri zombi! — Yo! Ya! Colombo!"

SUPERSTITION RELATING TO CROSSED FEATHERS. — It is somewhat singular to find in a French journal, a recent number of "Le Journal d'hygiène" (our correspondent does not furnish indications as to the number), mention of a superstition said to belong to the population of a town in Michigan, of Dutch extraction, named Graafschap. In case of sickness resisting all efforts of physicians, the difficulty is attributed to the machinations of a devil supposed to reside in feathers. The feather pillows and feather beds of the village are then examined, and, if any feathers are found crossed, these are thrown into the fire, as connected with the diabolical agency. In one of these examinations, the wind having dispersed the feathers, consternation resulted; and at the time of the writer's observation it was usual to plunge into boiling water any hen or goose found to exhibit on its body crossing feathers. So gravely states the French correspondent.

 NOTES AND QUERIES.

CERTAIN CANADIAN SUPERSTITIONS. — The following sayings were jotted down while teaching one summer in a Canadian settlement in the far West. They are a very provincial people. I found Irish, Scotch, and French Canadians coming from widely separated parts of Canada to have the same accent and use the same words, phrases, and sayings. There seems to be something distinctively Canadian about their use of food stuffs, manner of cooking, keeping house, plan of buildings, and general appearance of their farms.

Their folk-tales are mostly Irish and Scotch. They believe in luck and lucky and unlucky days ; signs and dreams ; charms, omens, and presentiments. Friday is considered an unlucky day and many will not begin any work on that day. Wednesday is thought to be a lucky day. For a woman to call on New Year's Day brings bad luck. To have three lights burning on a table at the same time is a sign of bad luck. A common saying among them is, —

A whistling girl and a crowing hen
Always come to some bad end.

In this case the hen should be killed because it foretells bad news. To kill a cat or break a mirror foretells seven years of bad luck.

A curious belief among them is that pork will shrink in cooking if the animal is killed when the moon is on the decline. Therefore every one kills pigs when the moon is new.

Then they believe in dreams. To dream of muddy water foretells trouble or sickness ; to dream of fire is a sign of hasty news. One woman tells me that when she dreams of fire she always hears of a death in the direction of the fire. To dream of those who are dead insures news from far-off living friends. They say that "dreams go by opposites."

One old Irish lady whom I knew always took three sips of water in the name of the Trinity as a charm for hiccoughs. She also used a charm for nose bleed which I cannot now recall. For a bird to fly against a window is an ill omen, or for a black cat to come to one's house.

Many of their sayings in regard to marriage are peculiar. A bride should not work on her own wedding dress ; she should take some salt on her wedding journey to insure good luck. For the bride to carry silver during the ceremony is a safeguard against poverty. As is everywhere common, she should also wear —

Something old and something new
Something borrowed and something blue.

It is a common belief among the Irish that some are born to see the supernatural. Many of their sayings and beliefs in regard to sickness, death, and burial are peculiar. They believe that if a person who is dangerously ill is better on Sunday it is a sure sign he is going to die. A limp corpse foretells another death. A Scotch and Irish Canadian woman told me she never knew this sign to fail. They say that deaths are more liable to occur on Saturday night. No one could tell why, but all thought such to be the case. An Irishman to whom I am indebted for much of my information told me that when his grandfather was dead a woman of the neighborhood who had a child with a birthmark on its face came to the house and wished to rub the hand of the dead man over the mark. After doing so the mark disappeared. My Irish friend believed that a corpse possesses some healing virtues. He also told me that the "Ban-shees," little women who are always combing their hair, follow those of pure Celtic stock and cry when one is going to die. The friends of the person can hear them, but no one else. One of their sayings is : —

Happy is the corpse that the rain rains on,

believing that such a person is in heaven. They say that the next funeral will come from the direction of the side of the grave on which they first strike when filling it after the coffin is lowered. An old lady whom I knew had her shroud made for several years before she died, and always entertained visitors by showing it.

Alice M. Leeson.

FOREST RIVER, NORTH DAKOTA.

FOLK-MEDICINE AMONG PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS. — In households which pin their faith to the skirts of medical science, this is indeed a trying time. Not so, however, among the Pennsylvania Germans, for they are, if not superior to, at least independent of all schools of medicine old and new.

In every community where dwell these descendants of the Fatherland are found several elderly women who practise the art of "powwowing." As a usual thing, each person cures one special disease, keeping the method of treatment a profound secret.

Powwowing proper consists in the secret use of an incantation or charm, accompanied by appropriate movements. These charms are highly valued and may not be lightly dealt with. They lose their virtue if a woman tells them to another woman, but a woman may tell them to a man or a man to a woman. As I know but one man who powwows, one must believe that Pennsylvania Dutch women, unlike their sisters, are able to keep a secret.

The method of treatment is as follows: In curing a case of erysipelas, for instance, the practitioner, if she may be so called, enters the patient's presence with a skein of red woollen yarn. With this she takes careful measurements about the head, chest, and limbs. During the process she "says words" — that is, repeats the charm in an undertone, so low that neither patient nor bystanders can distinguish their meaning. As the names of the Trinity usually form a part of the charm, I judge this is why it is so called.

She then takes the red woollen threads, on which the measurements are indicated by knots, and smokes them in a barrel over a fire, after the primitive fashion of curing hams — curing her patient at the same time.

Should the patient fail to recover, he may be subjected to another mode of treatment. Erysipelas is also called wild fire. The method of treatment as given to me is thus: —

"Take fire and pass around three times, saying each time these words: 'Tame fire, take away wild fire.' Say them morning, night, and morning."

There are those who "blow out" burns, as it is called. This is firmly believed in by many people who claim to be otherwise free from superstition.

"The blessed Virgin went over the land.

"What does she carry in her hand?

"A fire-brand.

"Eat not in thee. Eat not further around. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

So saying these words, stroke slowly three times with your right hand