DYER THOMAS THISELTON

THE GHOST WORLD

Thomas Dyer

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T. F. Thiselton Dyer
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CHAPTER I
THE SOUL'S EXIT

In the Iliad,[1] after the spirit of Patroclus has visited Achilles in his dream, it is described as taking its departure, and entering the ground like smoke. In long after years, and among widely scattered communities, we meet with the same imagery; and it is recorded how the soul of Beowulf the Goth 'curled to the clouds,' imaging the smoke which was curling up from his pyre. A similar description of the soul's exit is mentioned in one of the works of the celebrated mystic, Jacob Boehme,[2] who observes: 'Seeing that man is so very earthly, therefore he hath none but earthly knowledge; except he be regenerated in the gate of the deep. He always supposeth that the soul – at the deceasing of the body – goeth only out at the mouth, and he understandeth nothing concerning its deep essences above the elements. When he seeth a blue vapour go forth out of the mouth of a dying man, then he supposeth that is the soul.' The same conception is still

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[1] xxiii. 100; Keary's *Outlines of Primitive Belief*, p. 284.

[2] *The Three Principles*, chap. xix. 'Of the Going Forth of the Soul.'

extensively believed throughout Europe, and the Russian peasant often sees ghostly smoke hovering above graves. The Kaffirs hold that at death man leaves after him a sort of smoke, 'very like the shadow which his living body will always cast before it,'[3] reminding us of the hero in the Arabian romance of Yokdnan, who seeks the source of life and thought, and discovers in one of the cavities of the heart a bluish vapour – the living soul. Among rude races the original idea of the human soul seems to have been that of vaporous materiality, which, as Dr. Tylor observes,[4] has held so large a place in modern philosophy, and in one shape or another crops up in ghost stories. The Basutos, speaking of a dead man, say that his heart has gone out, and the Malays affirm that the soul of a dying man escapes through the nostrils.

Hogarth has represented the figure of Time breathing forth his last – a puff of breath proceeding from his mouth; and a correspondent of 'Notes and Queries'[5] relates that, according to a popular belief, a considerable interval invariably elapses between the first semblance of death and what is considered to be the departure of the soul, about five minutes after the time when death, to all outward appearances, has taken place, 'the last breath' may be seen to issue with a vapour 'or steam' out of the mouth of the departed. According to some foreign tribes, the soul was said to dwell mainly in the left eye; and in New Zealand men

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[3] Letourneau's *Sociology*, p. 252.

[4] *Primitive Culture*, 1873, i. p. 457.

[5] 1st S. ii. p. 51.

always ate the left eye of a conquered enemy. At Tahiti, in the human sacrifices, the left eye of the victim was always offered to the chief presiding over the ceremony. It was further believed in New Zealand that 'in eating the left eye they doubled their own soul by incorporating with it that of the conquered man. It was also thought by some people in the same archipelago that a spirit used to dwell in both eyes.'[6]

The supposed escape of the soul from the mouth at death gave rise to the idea that the vital principle might be transferred from one person to another; and, among the Seminoles of Florida, when a woman died in childbirth, the infant was held over her face to receive her parting spirit. Algonquin women, desirous of becoming mothers, flocked to the bed of those about to die, in the hope that they might receive the last breath as it passed from the body; and to this day the Tyrolese peasant still fancies a good man's soul to issue from his mouth at death like a little white cloud.[7] We may trace the same fancy in our own country, and it is related[8] that while a well-known Lancashire witch lay dying, 'she must needs, before she could "shuffle off this mortal coil," transfer her familiar spirit to some trusty successor. An intimate acquaintance from a neighbouring township was sent for in all haste, and on her arrival was immediately closeted with her dying friend. What passed between them has never fully transpired;

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[6] Letourneau's *Sociology*, p. 257.

[7] Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, i. p. 433; Brinton's *Myths of the New World*, p. 253.

[8] Harland and Wilkinson's *Lancashire Folk-lore*, 1867, p. 210.

but it is asserted that at the close of the interview the associate received the witch's last breath into her mouth, and with it her familiar spirit. The powers for good or evil were thus transferred to her companion.'

In order that the soul, as it quits the body, may not be checked in its onward course, it has long been customary to unfasten locks or bolts, and to open doors, so that the struggle between life and death may not be prolonged – a superstition common in France, Germany, Spain, and England. A correspondent of 'Notes and Queries' tells how for a long time he had visited a poor man who was dying, and was daily expecting death. Upon calling one morning to see his poor friend, his wife informed him that she thought he would have died during the night, and hence she and her friends unfastened every lock in the house; for, as she added, any bolt or lock fastened was supposed to cause uneasiness to, and hinder, the departure of the soul.[9] We find the same belief among the Chinese, who make a hole in the roof to let out the departing soul; and the North American Indian, fancying the soul of a dying man to go out at the wigwam roof, would beat the sides with a stick to drive it forth. Sir Walter Scott, in 'Guy Mannering,' describes this belief as deep rooted among 'the superstitious eld of Scotland;' and at the smuggler's death in the Kaim of Derncleugh, Meg Merrilies unbars the door and lifts the latch, saying —

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[9] 1st S. i. p. 315.

Open lock, end strife,
Come death, and pass life.

A similar practice exists among the Esquimos, and one may often hear a German peasant express his dislike to slam a door, lest he should pinch a soul in it. It has been suggested that the unfastening of doors and locks at death may be explained by analogy and association. Thus, according to a primitive belief, the soul, or the life, was thought to be tied up,[10] so that the unloosing of any knot might help to get rid of it at death. The same superstition 'prevailed in Scotland as to marriage. Witches cast knots on a cord; and in a Perthshire parish both parties, just before marriage, had every knot or tie about them loosened, though they immediately proceeded in private to tie them each up again.'[11] Another explanation suggests that the custom is founded on the idea that, when a person died, the ministers of purgatorial pains took the soul as it escaped from the body, and flattening it against some closed door – which alone would serve the purpose – crammed it into the hinges and hinge openings; thus the soul in torment was likely to be miserably squeezed. By opening the doors, the friends of the departed were at least assured that they were not made the unconscious instruments of torturing the departed.[12]

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[10] Cf. 'Nexosque resolveret artus,' Virgil on the death of Dido. Æneid iv. 695.

[11] See Dalyell's *Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, p. 302, and *Notes and Queries*, 1st S. iv. p. 350.

[12] *Ibid.* i. p. 467.

There is a widespread notion among the poor that the spirit will linger in the body of a child a long time when the parent refuses to part with it, an old belief which, under a variety of forms, has existed from a primitive period. In Denmark one must not weep over the dying, still less allow tears to fall on them, for it will hinder their resting in the grave. In some parts of Holland, when a child is at the point of death, it is customary to shade it by the curtains from the parents' gaze, the soul, it is said, being detained in the body so long as a compassionate eye is fixed upon it. A German piece of folk-lore informs us that he who sheds tears when leaning over an expiring friend increases the difficulty of death's last struggle. A correspondent of 'Notes and Queries' alluding to this superstition in the North of England writes: 'I said to Mrs. B – , "Poor little H – lingered a long time; I thought when I saw him that he must have died the same day, but he lingered on!" "Yes," said Mrs. B – , "it was a great shame of his mother. He wanted to die, and she would not let him die; she couldn't part with him. There she stood fretting over him, and couldn't give him up; and so we said to her, 'He'll never die till you give him up,' and then she gave him up, and he died quite peacefully."'[13]

Similarly, it is not good to weep for the dead, as it disturbs the peace and rest of the soul. In an old Danish ballad of Aage and Else, a lover's ghost says to his mistress:

> Every time thou weepest, for each tear in that flood,

[13] 1st S. iii. p. 84.

The coffin I am laid in is filled with much blood.

Or, as another version has it:

Every time thou'rt joyful,
And in thy mind art glad,
Then is my grave within
Hung round with roses' leaves.

Every time thou grievest,
And in thy mind are sad,
Then is within my coffin
As if full of clotted blood.

A German song tells us how a sister wept incessantly over her brother's grave, but at last her tears became intolerable to the deceased, because he was detained on earth by her excessive weeping, and suffered thereby great torment. In a fit of desperation he cursed her, and in consequence of his malediction, she was changed into a cuckoo, so that she might always lament for herself.[14] Mannhardt relates a pretty tale of a young mother who wept incessantly over the loss of her only child, and would not be comforted. Every night she went to the little grave and sobbed over it, till, on the evening preceding the Epiphany, she saw Bertha pass not far from her, followed by her troop of children. The last of these was one whose little shroud

[14] Kelly's *Indo-European Folk-lore*, pp. 127-128.

was all wet, and who seemed exhausted by the weight of a pitcher of water she carried. It tried in vain to cross a fence over which Bertha and the rest had passed; but the fond mother, at once recognising her child, ran and lifted it over. 'Oh, how warm are mother's arms!' said the little one; 'but don't cry so much, mother, for I must gather up every tear in my pitcher. You have made it too full and heavy already. See how it has run over and wet all my shift.' The mother cried again, but soon dried her tears.

We may compare a similar superstition among the natives of Alaska, when, if too many tears were shed by the relatives during the burial ceremonies, it was thought that the road of the dead would be muddy, but a few tears were supposed just to lay the dust.[15] The same idea is found in a Hindu dirge: 'The souls of the dead do not like to taste the tears let fall by their kindred; weep not, therefore;' and, according to the Edda, every tear falls as blood upon the ice-cold bosom of the dead. We may trace the belief in Ireland, and Sir Walter Scott says[16] it was generally supposed throughout Scotland that 'the excessive lamentation over the loss of friends disturbed the repose of the dead, and broke even the rest of the grave.'

The presence of pigeon or game feathers is said to be another hindrance to the exit of the soul; and, occasionally, in order to facilitate its departure, the peasantry in many parts of England will lay a dying man on the floor. A Sussex nurse once told the

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15 Dorman's *Primitive Superstitions*, p. 43.

16 In a note to *Redgauntlet*, Letter xi.

wife of a clergyman that 'never did she see anyone die so hard as Master Short; and at last she thought – though his daughter said there were none – that there must be game feathers in the bed. So she tried to pull it from under him, but he was a heavy man, and she could not manage it alone, and there was none with him but herself, and so she got a rope and tied it round him, and pulled him right off the bed, and he went off in a minute quite comfortable, just like a lamb.'[17] In Lancashire, this belief is so deep-rooted that some persons will not allow sick persons to lie on a feather-bed; while in Yorkshire the same is said of cocks' feathers. Shakespeare alludes to the practice where Timon says[18]—

> Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads.

And Grose remarks: 'It is impossible for a person to die whilst resting on a pillow stuffed with the feathers of a dove, for he will struggle with death in the most exquisite torture.' This is also a Hindu and Mohammedan belief, and in India 'the dying are always taken from their beds and laid on the ground, it being held that no one can die peaceably except when laid on mother earth.'[19] In Russia, too, there is a strong feeling against the use of pigeon feathers in beds.

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[17] *Folk-lore Record*, i. pp. 59-60.

[18] *Timon of Athens*, iv. 3.

[19] Henderson's *Folk-lore of Northern Counties*, pp. 60-61.

The summons for the soul to quit its earthly tenement has been thought to be announced, from early times, by certain strange sounds, a belief which Flatman has embodied in some pretty lines:

> My soul, just now about to take her flight
> Into the regions of eternal night,
> Methinks I hear some gentle spirit say,
> 'Be not fearful, come away!'

Pope speaks in the same strain:

> Hark! they whisper, angels say,
> 'Sister spirit, come away!'

And in 'Troilus and Cressida' (iv. 4), the former says:

> Hark! you are called; some say, the Genius so
> Cries 'Come!' to him that instantly must die.

As in days gone by so also at the present time, there is, perhaps, no superstition more generally received than the belief in what are popularly known as 'death-warnings,'[20] reference to which we shall have occasion to make in a later chapter.

It has been urged again, that at the hour of death the soul is, as it were, on the confines of two worlds, and hence may possess

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[20] See Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, i. p. 145.

a power which is both prospective and retrospective. In 'Richard II.' (ii. 1), the dying Gaunt exclaims, alluding to his nephew, the young and self-willed king:

> Methinks I am a prophet, new inspired,
> And thus expiring do foretell of him.

Nerissa says of Portia's father in 'Merchant of Venice' (i. 2): 'Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men at their death have good inspirations.' This idea may be traced up to the time of Homer,[21] and Aristotle tells us that the soul, when on the point of death, foretells things about to happen; the belief still lingering on in Lancashire and other parts of England. According to another notion, it was generally supposed that when a man was on his death-bed, the devil or his agents tried to seize his soul, if it should happen that he died without receiving the 'Eucharist,' or without confessing his sins. In the old office books of the Church, these 'busy meddling fiends' are often represented with great anxiety besieging the dying man; but on the approach of the priest and his attendants they are represented as being dismayed. Douce[22] quotes from a manuscript book of devotion, of the time of Henry VI., the following prayer to St. George: 'Judge for me when the most hedyous and damnable dragons of helle shall be redy to take my poore soule and engloute it into theyr infernall

[21] *Iliad*, ii. 852.

[22] *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, 1839, pp. 324-326.

belyes.' One object, it has been urged, of the 'passing bell' was to drive away the evil spirit that might be hovering about to seize the soul of the deceased, such as the king speaks of in 2 Henry VI. (iii. 3):

> O, beat away the busy meddling fiend,
> That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul,
> And from his bosom purge this black despair.

We may find the same idea among the Northern Californians, who affirmed that when the soul first escaped from the body an evil spirit hovered near, ready to pounce upon it and carry it off.[23]

It is still a common belief with our seafaring community on the east coast of England, that the soul takes its departure during the falling of the tide. Everyone remembers the famous scene in 'David Copperfield,' where Barkis's life 'goes out with the tide.' As Mr. Peggotty explained to David Copperfield by poor Barkis's bedside, 'People can't die along the coast except when the tide's pretty nigh out. He's a-going out with the tide – he's a-going out with the tide. It's ebb at half arter three, slack water half an hour. If he lives till it turns he'll hold his own till past the flood, and go out with the next tide.' In the parish register of Heslidon, near Hartlepool, the subjoined extract of old date alludes to the state of the tide at the time of death: 'The xith daye of Maye, A.D. 1595, at vi of ye clocke in the morninge, being full water, Mr.

[23] Dorman's *Primitive Superstitions*, p. 40.

Henrye Mitford, of Hoolam, died at Newcastel, and was buried the xvi daie, being Sondaie. At evening prayer, the hired preacher made ye sermon.' Mrs. Quickly in 'Henry V.' (ii. 3) speaking of Falstaff's death says: "A made a finer end and went away an it had been any christom child; 'a parted even just between twelve and one, even at the turning o' the tide.' In Brittany, death claims its victim at ebb of the tide, and along the New England coast it is said a sick man cannot die until the ebb-tide begins to run. It has been suggested that there may be some slight foundation for this belief in the change of temperature which takes place on the change of tide, and which may act on the flickering spark of life, extinguishing it as the ebbing sea recedes.

CHAPTER II
TEMPORARY EXIT OF SOUL

Many of the conceptions of the human soul formed by savage races arose from the phenomena of everyday life. According to one of the most popular dream theories prevalent among the lower races, the sleeper's soul takes its exit during the hours of slumber, entering into a thousand pursuits. Now, as it is well known by experience 'that men's bodies do not go on these excursions, the explanation is that every man's living self, a soul, is his phantom or image, which can go out of his body and see, and be seen itself, in dreams.'[24] In the opinion of the savage, therefore, dreams have always afforded a convincing proof of the soul's separate existence, and Dr. Tylor considers that 'nothing but dreams and visions could ever have put into men's minds such an idea as that of souls being ethereal images of bodies.'

Thus the Dayaks of Borneo believe that in the hours of sleep the soul travels far away, and the Fijians think that the spirit of a living man during sleep can leave the body and trouble some one else. But Mr. E. im Thurn, in his 'Indians of Guiana' (344-346), gives some very striking instances of this strange phase of superstitious belief: 'One morning, when it was important to me to get away from a camp on the Essequibo River, at which I

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[24] Tylor's *Anthropology*, 1881, p. 343.

had been detained for some days by the illness of some of my Indian companions, I found that one of the invalids, a young Macusi Indian, though better in health, was so enraged against me that he refused to stir, for he declared that, with great want of consideration for his weak health, I had taken him out during the night, and had made him haul the canoe up a series of difficult cataracts. Nothing could persuade him that this was but a dream, and it was some time before he was so far pacified as to throw himself sulkily into the bottom of the canoe. At that time we were all suffering from a great scarcity of food, and, hunger having its usual effect in producing vivid dreams, similar events frequently occurred. More than once the men declared in the morning that some absent men whom they named had come during the night, and had beaten, or otherwise maltreated them; and they insisted on much rubbing of the bruised parts of their bodies.'[25]

Another evidence in savage culture of the soul's having its own individuality, independently of the body, is the fact that a person through some accident may suddenly fall into a swoon, remaining to all outward appearance dead. When such a one, however, revives and is restored to consciousness, the savage is wont to exclaim that he died for a time until his soul was induced to return.

Hence Mr. Williams informs us[26] how the Fijians believe, when anyone dies or faints, that the soul may sometimes be

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[25] See further instances in Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, i. pp. 440, 441.

[26] *Fiji and the Fijians*, i. p. 242.

brought back by calling after it; and in China, when a child is at the point of death, the mother will go into the garden and call its name, thinking thereby to bring back the wandering spirit. On this account divination and sorcery are extensively employed, and certain 'wise men' profess to have a knowledge of the mystic art of invoking souls that for some reason or other may have deserted their earthly tenement.[27]

The Rev. W. W. Gill, in his 'Myths and Songs from the South Pacific' (171-172), gives a curious instance of the wandering of the soul during life. 'At Uea, one of the Loyalty Islands, it was the custom formerly, when a person was very ill, to send for a man whose employment it was to restore souls to forsaken bodies. The soul doctor would at once collect his friends and assistants, to the number of twenty men, and as many women, and start off to the place where the family of the sick man was accustomed to bury their dead. Upon arriving there, the soul doctor and his male companions commenced playing the nasal flutes with which they had come provided, in order to entice back the spirit to its old tenement. The women assisted by a low whistling, supposed to be irresistibly attractive to exile spirits. After a time the entire procession proceeded towards the dwelling of a sick person, flutes playing and the women whistling all the time, leading back the truant spirit. To prevent its possible escape, with their palms open, they seemingly drove it along with gentle violence and

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[27] See Sir John Lubbock's *Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man*, 1870, p. 141.

coaxing. On entering the dwelling of the patient, the vagrant spirit was ordered in loud tones at once to enter the body of the sick man.'

In the same way, too, according to a popular superstition among rude tribes, some favoured persons are supposed to have the faculty of sending forth their own souls on distant journeys, and of acquiring, by this means, information for their fellow creatures. Thus the Australian doctor undergoes his initiation by such a journey, and those who are not equally gifted by nature subject themselves to various ordeals, so as to possess the supposed faculty of releasing their souls for a time from the body. From this curious phase of superstition have arisen a host of legendary stories, survivals of which are not confined to uncivilised communities, but are found among the folk-tales of most countries. Mr. Baring Gould,[28] for instance, quotes a Scandinavian story in which the Norse Chief Ingimund shut up three Finns in a hut for three nights so that their souls might make an expedition to Iceland, and bring back information of the nature of the country where he was eventually to settle. Accordingly their bodies soon became rigid, they dismissed their souls on the errand, and on awakening after three days, they gave Ingimund an elaborate description of the country in question. We may compare this phase of belief with that which is commonly known in this country as second sight.[29]

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[28] *Werewolves*, p. 29.

[29] See Chapter on Second Sight.

Among the Hervey Islanders, Mr. Gill says: 'The philosophy of sneezing is that the spirit having gone travelling about – perchance on a visit to the homes or burying-places of its ancestors – its return to the body is naturally attended with some difficulty and excitement, occasionally a tingling and enlivening sensation all over the body. Hence the various customary remarks addressed to the returned spirit in different islands. At Rarotonga, when a person sneezes, the bystanders exclaim, as though addressing a spirit, "Ha! you have come back."'

Then there is the widespread Animistic belief, in accordance with which each man has several souls; – some lower races treating the breath, the dream ghost, and other appearances as being separate souls. This notion seems to have originated in the pulsation of the heart and arteries, which rude tribes regard as indications of independent life. Thus this fancy is met with in various parts of America and exists also in Madagascar. It prevails in Greenland, and the Fijians affirm that each man has two souls. This belief, too, is very old, evidences of its existence being clearly traceable among the ancient Greeks and Romans.[30] Indeed, classic literature affords ample proof of how the beliefs of modern savages are in many cases survivals of similar notions held in olden times by nations that had made considerable progress in civilisation.

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[30] See Tylor's *Anthropology*, p. 345; and Sir John Lubbock's *Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man*, p. 141; and H. Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, 1885, i. p. 777.

CHAPTER III
THE NATURE OF THE SOUL

It has from time immemorial been a widely recognised belief among mankind that the soul after death bears the likeness of its fleshly body, although opinions have differed largely as to its precise nature. But it would seem to be generally admitted that the soul set free from its earthly tenement is at once recognised by anyone to whom it may appear, reminding us of Lord Tennyson's dictum in 'In Memoriam':

> Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside;
> And I shall know him when we meet.

Despite the fact that the disembodied spirit has been supposed to retain its familiar likeness, we find all kinds of strange ideas existing in most parts of the world as to what sort of a thing it really is when its condition of existence is so completely changed. Thus, according to a conception which has received in most ages very extensive credence, the soul has substantiality. This was the Greek idea of ghosts, and 'it is only,' writes Bishop Thirwall, 'after their strength has been repaired by the blood of a slaughtered victim, that they recover reason and memory for a time, can recognise their living friends, and feel

anxiety for those they have left on earth.' A similar notion of substantiality prevailed among the Hebrews, and, as Herbert Spencer points out, 'the stories about ghosts accepted among ourselves in past times involved the same thought. The ability to open doors, to clank chains, and make other noises implies considerable coherence of the ghost's substance.'[31] That this conception of the soul was not only received but taught, may be gathered from Tertullian, who says: 'The soul is material, composed of a substance different to the body, and particular. It has all the qualities of matter, but it is immortal. It has a figure like the body. It is born at the same time as the flesh, and receives an individuality of character which it never loses.' He further describes[32] a vision or revelation of a certain Montanist prophetess, of the soul seen by her corporeally, thin and lucid, aerial in colour, and human in form. It is recorded, too, as an opinion of Epicurus, that 'they who say the soul is incorporeal talk folly, for it could neither do nor suffer anything were it such.' It was the idea of materiality that caused the superstitious folk in years gone by to attribute to ghosts all kinds of weird and eccentric acts which could not otherwise be explained. And yet it has always been a puzzle in Animistic philosophy, how a ghost could be possessed at one moment of a corporeal body, and immediately afterwards vanish into immateriality, escaping sight and touch. But this strange ghost phenomenon is clearly

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[31] *Principles of Sociology*, 1885, i. p. 174.

[32] *De Anima*, p. 9; see Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, i. p. 456.

depicted in sacred history, where we find substantiality, now insubstantiality, and now something between the two, described. Thus, as Herbert Spencer remarks,[33] 'the resuscitated Christ was described as having wounds that admitted of tactual examination, and yet as passing unimpeded through a closed door or through walls.' And, as he adds, the supernatural beings of the Hebrews generally, 'whether revived dead or not, were similarly conceived: here, angels dining with Abraham, or pulling Lot into the house, apparently possess complete corporeity; there, both angels and demons are spoken of as swarming invisibly in the surrounding air, thus being incorporeal; while elsewhere they are said to have wings, implying motion by mechanical action, and are represented as rubbing against, and wearing out, the dresses of Rabbis in the Synagogue.' All kinds of strange theories have been suggested by perplexed metaphysicians to account for this duplex nature of the disembodied soul; Calmet having maintained that 'immaterial souls have their own vaporous bodies, or occasionally have such vaporous bodies provided for them by supernatural means to enable them to appear as spectres, or that they possess the power of condensing the circumambient air into phantom-like bodies to invest themselves in.'[34]

In Fiji the soul is regarded quite as a material object, subject to the same laws as the living body, and having to struggle hard to gain the paradisaical Bolotu. Some idea, too, of the hardships

[33] *Principles of Sociology*, 1885, i. p. 174.

[34] See Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, i. p. 457.

it has to undergo in its material state may be gathered from the following passage in Dr. Letourneau's 'Sociology' (p. 251): 'After death the soul of the Fijian goes first of all to the eastern extremity of *Vanna Levou*, and during this voyage it is most important that it should hold in its hand the soul of the tooth of a spermaceti whale, for this tooth ought to grow into a tree, and the soul of the poor human creature climbs up to the top of this tree. When it is perched up there it is obliged to await the arrival of the souls of his wives, who have been religiously strangled to serve as escort to their master. Unless all these and many other precautions are taken, the soul of the deceased Fijian remains mournfully seated upon the fatal bough until the arrival of the good Ravuyalo, who kills him once and for all, and leaves him without means of escape.'

According to another popular and widely accepted doctrine, the soul was supposed to be composed of a peculiar subtle substance, a kind of vaporous materiality. The Choctaws have their ghosts or wandering spirits which can speak and are visible, but not tangible.[35] The Tongans conceived it as the aeriform part of the body, related to it as the perfume and essence of a flower; and the Greenlanders speak of it as pale and soft, without flesh and bone, so that he who tries to grasp it feels nothing he can take hold of. The Siamese describe the soul as consisting of some strange matter, invisible and untouchable. While Dr. Tylor

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[35] Dorman's *Primitive Superstitions*, p. 20.

quotes a curious passage from Hampole,[36] in which the soul, owing to the thinness of its substance, suffers all the more intense suffering in purgatory:

> The soul is more tendre and nesche (soft)
> Than the bodi that hath bones and fleysche;
> Thanne the soul that is so tendere of kinde,
> Mote nedis hure penaunce hardere y-finde,
> Than eni bodi that evere on live was.

Then there is the idea of the soul as a shadow, a form of superstition which has given rise to many quaint beliefs among uncultured tribes. The Basutos, when walking by a river, take care not to let their shadow fall on the water, lest a crocodile seize it, and draw the owner in. The Zulu affirms that at death the shadow of a man in some mysterious way leaves the body, and hence, it is said, a corpse cannot cast a shadow. Certain African tribes consider that 'as he dies, man leaves a shadow behind him, but only for a short time. The shade, or the mind, of the deceased remains, they think, close to the grave where the corpse has been buried. This shadow is generally evil-minded, and they often fly away from it in changing their place of abode.'[37] The Ojibways tell how one of their chiefs died,[38] but while they were watching the body on the third night, his shadow came back into it. He sat

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[36] Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, i. p. 456.

[37] Letourneau's *Sociology*, p. 253.

[38] See Tylor's *Anthropology*, 1881, p. 344.

up, and told them how he had travelled to the River of Death, but was stopped there, and sent back to his people.

Speaking of the human shadow in relation to foundation sacrifices, we are reminded[39] how, according to many ancient Roumenian legends, 'every new church or otherwise important building became a human grave, as it was thought indispensable to its stability to wall in a living man or woman, whose spirit henceforward haunts the place. In later times this custom underwent some modifications, and it became usual, in place of a living man, to wall in his shadow. This is done by measuring the shadow of a person with a long piece of cord, or a ribbon made of strips of reed, and interring this measure instead of the person himself, who, unconscious victim of the spell thrown upon him, will pine away and die within forty days. It is an indispensable condition to the success of this proceeding that the chosen victim be ignorant of the part he is playing, therefore careless passers by near a building may often hear the cry, warning, "Beware, lest they take thy shadow!" So deeply engrained is this superstition, that not long ago there were professional shadow-traders, who made it their business to provide architects with the necessary victims for securing their walls.' 'Of course, the man whose shadow is thus interred must die,' argues the Roumenian, 'but as he is unaware of his doom, he does not feel any pain or anxiety, and so it is less cruel than walling in a living man.'

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[39] *Nineteenth Century*, July 1885, pp. 143-144, 'Transylvanian Superstitions,' by Madame Emily de Laszowska Gerard.

At the present day in Russia, as elsewhere, a shadow is a common metaphor for the soul,[40] whence it arises that there are persons there who object to having their silhouettes taken, fearing that if they do, they will die before the year is out. In the same way, a man's reflected image is supposed to be in communion with his inner self, and, therefore, children are often forbidden to look at themselves in a glass, lest their sleep should be disturbed at night. It may be added, too, as Mr. Clodd points out, that in the barbaric belief of the loss of the shadow being baleful, 'we have the germ of the mediæval legends of shadowless men, and of tales of which Chamisso's "Story of Peter Schlemihl" is a type.'[41] Hence the dead in purgatory recognised that Dante was alive when they saw that, unlike theirs, his figure cast a shadow on the ground. But, as Mr. Fiske observes,[42] 'the theory which identifies the soul with the shadow, and supposes the shadow to depart with the sickness and death of the body, would seem liable to be attended with some difficulties in the way of verification, even to the dim intelligence of the savage.'

Again, another doctrine promulgated under various forms in Animistic philosophy is, that the existence and condition of the soul depend upon the manner of death. The Australian, for instance, not content with slaying his enemy, cuts off the right thumb of the corpse, so that the departed soul may

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[40] Ralston's *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 117.

[41] *Myths and Dreams*, 1885, p. 184.

[42] *Myths and Myth-makers*, 1873, p. 225.

be incapacitated from throwing a spear; and even the half-civilised Chinese prefer the punishment of crucifixion to that of decapitation, that their souls may not wander headless about the spirit world. Similarly the Indians of Brazil 'believe that the dead arrive in the other world wounded or hacked to pieces, in fact, just as they left this.' European folk-lore has preserved, more or less, the same idea, and the ghost of the murdered person often appears displaying the wounds which were the cause of the death of the body. Many a weird and ghastly ghost tale still current in different parts of the country gives the most blood-curdling details of such apparitions; and although, in certain cases, a century or so is said to have elapsed since they first made their appearance, they still bear the marks of violence and cruelty which were done to them by a murderous hand when in the flesh. An old story tells how, when the Earl of Cornwall met the fetch of William Rufus carried on a very large black goat, all black and naked, across the Bodmin moors, he saw that it was wounded through the breast. Robert adjured the goat, in the name of the Holy Trinity, to tell what it was he carried so strangely. He answered, 'I am carrying your king to judgment; yea, that tyrant, William Rufus, for I am an evil spirit, and the revenger of his malice which he bore to the Church of God. It was I that did cause this slaughter.' Having spoken, the spectre vanished. Soon afterwards Robert heard that at that very hour the king had been slain in the New Forest by the arrow of William Tirell.[43]

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[43] See Hunt's *Popular Romances of the West of England*, p. 373.

This idea corresponds with what was believed in early times, for Ovid[44] tells us how

> Umbra cruenta Remi visa est assistere lecto.

Again, some modes of death are supposed to kill not only the body but also the soul. 'Among all primitive peoples,' writes Mr. Dorman,[45] 'where a belief in the renewal of life, or the resurrection, exists, the peace and happiness of the spirit, which remains in or about the body, depend upon success in preventing the body, or any part of it, from being devoured or destroyed in any manner.' The New Zealanders believed that the man who was eaten was annihilated, both body and soul; and one day a bushman, who was a magician, having put to death a woman, dashed the head of the corpse to pieces with large stones, buried her, and made a large fire over the grave, for fear, as he explained, lest she should rise again and trouble him. The same idea, remarks Sir John Lubbock,[46] evidently influenced the Californian, who did not dispute the immortality of the whites, who buried their dead, but could not believe the same of his own people, because they were in the habit of burning them, maintaining that when they were burnt they became annihilated.

It may be added, too, that the belief underlying the burial

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[44] *Fasti*, v. 457.

[45] *Primitive Superstitions*, p. 195.

[46] *The Origin of Civilisation, and the Primitive Condition of Man*, 1870, p. 140; see Letourneau's *Sociology*, p. 263.

customs of most American tribes was to preserve the bones of the dead, the opinion being that the soul, or a part of it, dwelt in the bones. These, indeed, were the seeds which, planted in the earth, or preserved unbroken in safe places, would in time put on once again a garb of flesh, and germinate into living human beings.[47] This Animistic belief has been amply illustrated by mythology and superstition. In an Aztec legend, after one of the destructions of the world, Zoloti descended to the realm of the dead, and brought thence a bone of the perished race. This, sprinkled with blood, grew on the fourth day into a youth, the father of the present race. The practice of pulverising the bones of the dead, practised by some tribes, and of mixing them with the food, was defended by asserting that the souls of the dead remained in the bones, and lived again in the living.[48] The Peruvians were so careful lest any of the body should be lost, that they preserved even the parings of the nails and clippings of the hair – expecting the mummified body to be inhabited by its soul; while the Choctaws maintain that the spirits of the dead will return to the bones in the bone mounds, and flesh will knit together their loose joints. Even the lower animals were supposed to follow the same law. 'Hardly any of the American hunting-tribes,' writes Mr. Brinton, 'before their original manners were vitiated by foreign influence, permitted the bones of game slain in the chase to be broken, or left carelessly about the encampment; they were

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47 Brinton's *Myths of the New World*, 1868, p. 257.

48 Dorman's *Primitive Superstitions*, 1881, p. 193.

collected in heaps, or thrown into the water.' The Yuricares of Bolivia carried this belief to such an inconvenient extent that they carefully put by even small fish bones, saying that unless this was done the fish and game would disappear from the country. The traveller on the western prairies often notices the buffalo skulls, countless numbers of which bleach on those vast plains, arranged in circles and symmetrical piles by the careful hands of the native hunters. The explanation for this practice is that these osseous relics of the dead 'contain the spirits of the slain animals, and that some time in the future they will rise from the earth, re-clothe themselves with flesh, and stock the prairies anew.'

As a curious illustration of how every spiritual conception was materialised in olden times, may be quoted the fanciful conception of the weight of the soul. Thus in mediæval literature the angel in the Last Judgment 'was constantly represented weighing the souls in a literal balance, while devils clinging to the scales endeavoured to disturb the equilibrium.'[49] But how seriously such tests of the weight of the soul have been received, may be gathered from the cases now and then forthcoming of this materialistic notion of its nature. These, writes Dr. Tylor,[50] range from the 'conception of a Basuto diviner that the late queen had been bestriding his shoulders, and he never felt such a weight in his wife, to Glanvil's story of David Hunter, the neatherd,

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[49] See Lecky's *Rationalism in Europe*, 1870, i. p. 340; cf. Maury's *Légendes Pieuses*, p. 124.

[50] *Primitive Culture*, i. p. 455.

who lifted up the old woman's ghost, and she felt just like a bag of feathers in his arms; or the pathetic superstition that the dead mother's coming back in the night to suckle the baby she has left on earth, may be known by the hollow pressed down in the bed where she lay, and at last down to the alleged modern spiritualistic reckoning of the weight of a human soul at from three to four ounces.' But the heavy tread which occasionally makes the stairs creak and boards resound has been instanced as showing that, whatever may be the real nature of the soul, it is capable of materialising itself at certain times, and of displaying an amount of force and energy in no way dissimilar to that which is possessed when living in the flesh.

Just, too, as souls are possessed of visible forms, so they are generally supposed to have voices. According to Dr. Tylor,[51] 'men who perceive evidently that souls do talk when they present themselves in dream or vision, naturally take for granted at once the objective reality of the ghostly voice, and of the ghostly form from which it proceeds;' and this principle, he adds, 'is involved in the series of narratives of spiritual communications with living men, from savagery onward to civilisation.' European folk-lore represents ghostly voices as resembling their material form during life, although less audible. With savage races the spirit voice is described 'as a low murmur, chirp, or whistle.' Thus, when the ghosts of the New Zealanders address the living, they speak in whistling tones. The sorcerer among the Zulus

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[51] See Andrew Lang's *Myth, Ritual, Religion*, i. p. 108.

'hears the spirits who speak by whistlings speaking to him.' Whistling is the language of the Caledonians, and the Algonquin Indians of North America 'could hear the shadow souls of the dead chirp like crickets.' As far back as the time of Homer, the ghosts make a similar sound, 'and even as bats flit gibbering in the secret place of a wonderful cavern, even so the souls gibbered as they fared together.'[52]

Ghosts, when they make their appearance, are generally supposed, as already noticed, to have a perfect resemblance, in every respect, to the deceased person. Their faces appear the same – except that they are usually paler than when alive – and the ordinary expression is described by writers on the subject as 'more in sorrow than in anger.' Thus, when the ghost of Banquo rises and takes a seat at the table, Macbeth says to the apparition —

> Never shake
> Thy gory locks at me.

And Horatio tells Marcellus how the ghost of Hamlet's father was not only fully armed, but —

> So frown'd he once, when in angry parle,
> He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.

The folk-lore stories from most parts of the world coincide in

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[52] *Odyssey*, xxiv.

this idea. It was recorded of the Indians of Brazil by one of the early European visitors that 'they believe that the dead arrive in the other world, wounded or hacked to pieces, in fact, just as they left this;'[53] a statement which reminds us of a ghost described by Mrs. Crowe,[54] who, on appearing after death, was seen to have the very small-pox marks which had disfigured its countenance when in the flesh.

As in life, so in death, it would seem that there are different classes of ghosts – the princely, the aristocratic, the genteel, and the common. The vulgar class, it is said, delight to haunt 'in graveyards, dreary lanes, ruins, and all sorts of dirty dark holes and corners.' An amusing anecdote illustrative of this belief was related by the daughter of 'the celebrated Mrs. S.' [Siddons?] who told Mrs. Crowe that when her parents were travelling in Wales they stayed some days at Oswestry, and lodged in a house which was in a very dirty and neglected state, yet all night long the noise of scrubbing and moving furniture made it impossible to sleep. The servants did little or no work, for they had to sit up with their mistress to allay her fears. The neighbours said that this person had killed an old servant, hence the disturbance and her terror. Mr. and Mrs. S – coming in suddenly one day, heard her cry out, 'Are you there again? Fiend! go away!' But numerous tales similar to the above are still current in different parts of the country; and from time to time are duly chronicled in the local

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[53] Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, i. p. 451.

[54] *Night Side of Nature.*

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CHAPTER IV
THE UNBURIED DEAD

The Greeks believed that such as had not received funeral rites would be excluded from Elysium. The younger Pliny tells the tale of a haunted house at Athens, in which a ghost played all kinds of pranks owing to the funeral rites having been neglected. It is still a deep-rooted belief that when the mortal remains of the soul have not been honoured with proper burial, it will walk. The ghosts of unburied persons not possessing the *obolus* or fee due to Charon, the ferryman of Styx, and Acheron, were unable to obtain a lodging or place of rest. Hence they were compelled to wander about the banks of the river for a hundred years, when the portitor, or 'ferryman of hell,' passed them over *in formâ pauperis*. The famous tragedy of 'Antigone' by Sophocles owes much of its interest to this popular belief on the subject. In most countries all kinds of strange tales are told of ghosts ceaselessly wandering about the earth, owing to their bodies, for some reason or another, having been left unburied.

There is a well known German ghost, the Bleeding Nun. This was a nun who, after committing many crimes and debaucheries, was assassinated by one of her paramours and denied the rites of burial. After this, she used to haunt the castle where she was murdered, with her bleeding wounds. On one occasion, a young

lady of the castle, willing to elope with her lover, in order to make her flight easier, personated the bleeding nun. Unfortunately the lover, whilst expecting his lady under this disguise, eloped with the spectre herself, who presented herself to him and haunted him afterwards.[55]

Comparative folk-lore, too, shows how very widely diffused is this notion. It is believed by the Iroquois of North America, that unless the rites of burial are performed, the spirits of the dead hover for a time upon the earth in great unhappiness. On this account every care is taken to procure the bodies of those slain in battle. Certain Brazilian tribes suppose that the spirits of the dead have no rest till burial, and among the Ottawas, a great famine was thought to have been produced on account of the failure of some of their tribesmen to perform the proper burial rites. After having repaired their fault they were blessed with abundance of provisions. The Australians went so far as to say that the spirits of the unburied dead became dangerous and malignant demons. Similarly, the Siamese dread, as likely to do them some harm, the ghosts of those who have not been buried with proper rites, and the Karens have much the same notion. According to the Polynesians, the spirit of a dead man could not reach the sojourn of his ancestors, and of the gods, unless the sacred funereal rites were performed over his body. If he was buried with no ceremony, or simply thrown into the sea, the spirit

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[55] Yardley's *Supernatural in Fiction*, p. 93.

always remained in the body.[56]

Under one form or another, the same belief may be traced in most parts of the world, and, as Dr. Tylor points out,[57] 'in mediæval Europe the classic stories of ghosts that haunt the living till laid by rites of burial pass here and there into new legends where, under a changed dispensation, the doleful wanderer now asks Christian burial in consecrated earth.' Shakespeare alludes to this old idea, and in 'Titus Andronicus' (i. 2) Lucius, speaking of the unburied sons of Titus, says:

> Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths,
> That we may hew his limbs, and on a pile
> *Ad manes fratrum* sacrifice his flesh,
> Before this earthly prison of their bones;
> That so the shadows be not unappeas'd,
> Nor we disturb'd with prodigies on earth.

Hence the appearance of a spirit, in times past, was often regarded as an indication that some foul deed had been done, on which account Horatio in 'Hamlet' (i. 1) says to the ghost:

> If there be any good thing to be done
> That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,
> Speak to me.

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[56] Letourneau's *Sociology*, p. 257.

[57] *Primitive Culture*, ii. p. 29; Douce's *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, pp. 450, 451.

In the narrative of the sufferings of Byron and the crew of H.M. ship 'Wager,' on the coast of South America, we find a good illustration of the superstitious dread attaching to an unburied corpse. 'The reader will remember the shameful rioting, mutiny, and recklessness which disgraced the crew of the "Wager," nor will he forget the approach to cannibalism and murder on one occasion. These men had just returned from a tempestuous navigation, in which their hopes of escape had been crushed, and now what thoughts disturbed their rest – what serious consultations were they which engaged the attention of these sea-beaten men? Long before Cheap's Bay had been left, the body of a man had been found on a hill named "Mount Misery." He was supposed to have been murdered by some of the first gang who left the island. The body had never been buried, and to such neglect did the men now ascribe the storms which had lately afflicted them; nor would they rest until the remains of their comrade were placed beneath the earth, when each evidently felt as if some dreadful spell had been removed from his spirit.' Stories of this kind are common everywhere, and are interesting as showing how widely scattered is this piece of superstition.

In Sweden the ravens, which scream by midnight in forest swamps and wild moors, are held to be the ghosts of murdered men, whose bodies have been hidden in those spots by their undetected murderers, and not had Christian burial.[58] In many

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[58] Henderson's *Folk-lore of Northern Counties*, p. 126, note.

a Danish legend the spirit of a strand varsler, or coast-guard, appears, walking his beat as when alive. Such ghosts were not always friendly, and it was formerly considered dangerous to pass along 'such unconsecrated beaches, believed to be haunted by the spectres of unburied corpses of drowned people.'[59]

The reason, it is asserted, why many of our old castles and country seats have their traditional ghost, is owing to some unfortunate person having been secretly murdered in days past, and to his or her body having been allowed to remain without the rites of burial. So long as such a crime is unavenged, and the bones continue unburied, it is impossible, we are told, for the outraged spirit to keep quiet. Numerous ghost stories are still circulated throughout the country of spirits wandering on this account, some of which, however, are based purely on legendary romance.

But when the unburied body could not be found, and the ghost wandered, the missing man was buried in effigy, for, as it has been observed, 'according to all the laws of primitive logic, an effigy is every bit as good as its original. Therefore, when a dead man is buried in effigy, with all due formality, that man is dead and buried beyond a doubt, and his ghost is as harmless as it is in the nature of ghosts to be.' But sometimes such burial by proxy was premature, for the man was not really dead; and if he declined to consider himself as such, the question arose, was he alive, or was he dead? The solution adopted was that he might

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[59] Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, ii. p. 166.

be born again and take a new lease of life. ‘And so it was, he was put out to nurse, he was dressed in long clothes – in short, he went through all the stages of a second childhood. But before this pleasing experience could take place, he had to overcome the initial difficulty of entering his own house, for the door was ghost-proof. There was no other way but by the chimney, and down the chimney he came.’ We may laugh at such credulity, but many of the ghost-beliefs of the present day are not less absurd.

CHAPTER V
WHY GHOSTS WANDER

A variety of causes have been supposed to prevent the dead resting in the grave, for persons 'dying with something on their mind,' to use the popular phrase, cannot enjoy the peace of the grave; oftentimes some trivial anxiety, or some frustrated communication, preventing the uneasy spirit flinging off the bonds that bind it to earth. Wickedness in their lifetime has been commonly thought to cause the souls of the impenitent to revisit the scenes where their evil deeds were done. It has long been a widespread idea that as such ghosts are too bad for a place in either world, they are, therefore, compelled to wander on the face of the earth homeless and forlorn. We have shown in another chapter how, according to a well-known superstition, the *ignes fatui*, which appear by night in swampy places, are the souls of the dead – men who during life were guilty of fraudulent and other wicked acts. Thus a popular belief reminds us[60] how, when an unjust relative has secreted the title-deeds in order to get possession of the estate himself, he finds no rest in the other world till the title-deeds are given back, and the estate is restored to the rightful heir. Come must the spirit of such an unrighteous man to the room where

[60] See Gregor's *Folk-lore of North-East of Scotland*, p. 68.

he concealed the title-deeds surreptitiously removed from the custody of the person to whose charge they were entrusted. 'A dishonest milkwoman at Shrewsbury is condemned,' writes Miss Jackson in her 'Shropshire Folk-lore'[61] (p. 120), 'to wander up and down "Lady Studley's Diche" in the Raven Meadow – now the Smithfield – constantly repeating:

> "Weight and measure sold I never,
> Milk and water sold I ever."'

The same rhyme is current at Burslem, in the Staffordshire Potteries. The story goes that 'Old Molly Lee,' who used to sell milk there, and had the reputation of being a witch, was supposed to be seen after her death going about the streets with her milk-pail on her head repeating it. Miss Jackson further relates how a mid-Shropshire squire of long ago was compelled to wander about in a homeless state on account of his wickedness. Murderers cannot rest, and even although they may escape justice in this life, it is supposed that their souls find no peace in the grave, but under a curse are compelled to walk to and fro until they have, in some degree, done expiation for their crimes. Occasionally, it is said, their plaintive moans may be heard as they bewail the harm done by them to the innocent, weary of being allowed no cessation from their ceaseless wandering – a belief which reminds us of the legend of the Wandering Jew, and

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[61] Edited by C. S. Burne.

the many similar stories that have clustered round it.

In 'Blackwood's Magazine' for August 1818 this passage occurs: 'If any author were so mad as to think of framing a tragedy upon the subject of that worthy vicar of Warblington, Hants, who was reported about a century ago to have strangled his own children, and to have walked after his death, he would assuredly be laughed to scorn by a London audience.' But a late rector of Warblington informed a correspondent of 'Notes and Queries' (4th S. xi. 188), 'it was quite true that his house was said to be haunted by the ghost of a former rector, supposed to be the Rev. Sebastian Pitfield, who held the living in 1677.' A strong prejudice against hanging prevails in Wales, owing to troublesome spirits being let loose, and wandering about, to the annoyance of the living.

The spirits of suicides wander, and hence cross-roads in various parts of the country are oftentimes avoided after dark, on account of being haunted by headless and other uncanny apparitions. The same belief exists abroad. The Sioux are of opinion that suicide is punished in the land of spirits by the ghosts being doomed for ever to drag the tree on which they hang themselves; and for this reason they always suspend themselves to as small a tree as can possibly sustain their weight.

With the Chinese the souls of suicides are specially obnoxious, and they consider that the very worst penalty that can befall a soul is the sight of its former surroundings. Thus, it is supposed that, in the case of the wicked man, 'they only see their homes as if they

were near them; they see their last wishes disregarded, everything upside down, their substance squandered, strangers possess the old estate; in their misery the dead man's family curse him, his children become corrupt, land is gone, the wife sees her husband tortured, the husband sees his wife stricken down with mortal disease; even friends forget, but some, perhaps, for the sake of bygone times, may stroke the coffin and let fall a tear, departing with a cold smile.'[62] But, as already noticed, the same idea, in a measure, extends to the West, for in this country it has long been a popular belief that the ghosts of the wicked are forced to periodically rehearse their sinful acts. Thus, the murderer's ghost is seen in vain trying to wash out the indelible blood-stains, and the thief is supposed to be continually counting and recounting the money which came into his possession through dishonest means. The ghost is dogged and confronted with the hideousness of his iniquities, and the young woman who slew her lover in a fit of jealous passion is seen, in an agonised expression, holding the fatal weapon. But such unhappy spirits have, in most cases, been put to silence by being laid, instances of which are given elsewhere; and in other cases they have finally disappeared with the demolition of certain houses which for years they may have tenanted.

On the other hand, the spirits of the good are said sometimes to return to earth for the purpose of either succouring the

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[62] Countess Evelyn Martinengo-Cesaresco, 1886, *Essays in the Study of Folk-songs*, p. 8.

innocent, or avenging the guilty.

'Those who come again to punish their friends' wrongs,' writes Miss Jackson, in her 'Shropshire Folk-lore' (p. 119), 'generally appear exactly as in life, unchanged in form or character. A certain well-to-do man who lived in the west of Shropshire within living memory, left his landed property to his nephew, and a considerable fortune to his two illegitimate daughters, the children of his housekeeper. Their mother, well provided for, was at his death turned adrift by the nephew. Her daughters, however, continued to live in their old home with their cousin. A maid-servant who entered the family shortly after (and who is our informant) noticed an elderly man often walking in the garden in broad daylight, dressed in old-fashioned clothes, with breeches and white stockings. He never spoke, and never entered the house, though he always went towards it. Asking who he was, she was coolly told, "Oh, that is only our old father!" No annoyance seems to have been caused by the poor old ghost, with one exception, that the clothes were every night stripped off the bed of the two unnatural daughters.'

German folk-lore tells how slain warriors rise again to help their comrades to victory, and how a mother will visit her old home to look after her injured and forsaken children, and elsewhere the same idea is extensively believed. In China, the ghosts which are animated by a sense of duty are frequently seen: at one time they seek to serve virtue in distress, and at another they aim to restore wrongfully-held treasure. Indeed, as it has

been observed, 'one of the most powerful as well as the most widely diffused of the people's ghost stories is that which treats of the persecuted child whose mother comes out of the grave to succour him.'[63] And there perhaps can be no more gracious privilege allotted to immortal spirits than that of beholding those beloved of them in mortal life:

> I am still near,
> Watching the smiles I prized on earth,
> Your converse mild, your blameless mirth.[64]

As it has been observed, no oblivious draught has been given the departed soul, but the remembrance of its earthly doings cleaves to it, and this is why ghosts are always glad to see the places frequented by them while on earth. In Galicia, directly after a man's burial, his spirit takes to wandering by nights about the old home, and watching that no evil befalls his heirs.[65]

Occasionally the spirit returns to fulfil a promise as in compacts, to which reference is made in another chapter. The reappearance of a lover, 'in whose absence his beloved has died, is a subject that has been made use of by the folk-poets of every country, and nothing,' it is added, 'can be more characteristic of the nationalities to which they belong than the divergences

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[63] *Study of Folk-songs*, p. 2.

[64] *Study of Folk-songs*, p. 8.

[65] Ralston's *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 121.

which mark their treatment of it.'[66] Another cause of ghosts wandering is founded upon a superstition as to the interchange of love-tokens, an illustration of which we find in the old ballad of 'William's Ghost':

> There came a ghost to Marjorie's door,
> Wi' many a grievous maen,
> And aye he tirl'd at the pin,
> But answer made she nane.
>
> 'Oh, sweet Marjorie! oh, dear Marjorie!
> For faith and charitie,
> Give me my faith and troth again,
> That I gied once to thee.'
>
> 'Thy faith and troth I'll ne'er gie thee,
> Nor yet shall our true love twin,
> Till you tak' me to your ain ha' house,
> And wed me wi' a ring.'
>
> 'My house is but yon lonesome grave,
> Afar out o'er yon lee,
> And it is but my spirit, Marjorie,
> That's speaking unto thee.'[67]

She followed the spirit to the grave, where it lay down and

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[66] *Study of Folk-songs*, p. 21.

[67] *Folk-lore Record*, 1879, iii. pp. 111, 112.

confessed that William had betrayed three maidens whom he had promised to marry, and in consequence of this misdemeanour he could not rest in his grave until she released him of his vows to marry her. On learning this, Marjorie at once released him.

> Then she'd taen up her white, white hand,
> And struck him on the breist,
> Saying, 'Have ye again your faith and troth,
> And I wish your soul good rest.'

In another ballad, 'Clerk Sanders,' there is a further illustration of the same belief. The instances, says Mr. Napier, differ, but 'the probability is that the ballad quoted above and "Clerk Sanders" are both founded on the same story. Clerk Sanders was the son of an earl, who courted the king's daughter, Lady Margaret. They loved each other even in the modern sense of loving too well. Margaret had seven brothers, who suspected an intrigue, and they came upon them together in bed and killed Clerk Sanders, whose ghost soon after came to Margaret's window. The ballad, which contains much curious folk-lore, runs thus:[68]

> 'Oh! are ye sleeping, Margaret?' he says,
> 'Or are ye waking presentlie?
> Give me my faith and troth again,
> I wot, true love, I gied to thee.

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[68] *Folk-lore Record*, 1879, iii. pp. 111, 112.

‘I canna rest, Margaret,’ he says,
‘Down in the grave where I must be,
Till ye give me my faith and troth again,
I wot, true love, I gied to thee.’

‘Thy faith and troth thou shalt na get,
And our true love shall never twin,
Until ye tell what comes o’ women,
I wot, who die in strong travailing.

‘Their beds are made in the heavens high,
Down at the foot of our Lord’s knee,
Weel set about wi’ gilliflowers,
I trow sweet company for to see.

‘Oh, cocks are crowing a merry midnight,
I wot the wild fowls are boding day;
The psalms of heaven will soon be sung,
And I, ere now, will be missed away.’

Then she has ta’en a crystall wand,
And she has stroken her throth thereon;
She has given it him out of the shot-window,
Wi’ many a sigh and heavy goan.

‘I thank ye, Margaret; I thank ye, Margaret;
And aye, I thank ye heartilie;
Gin ever the dead come for the quick,
Be sure, Margaret, I’ll come for thee.’

Then up and crew the milk-white cock,
And up and crew the gray;
Her lover vanished in the air,
And she gaed weeping away.

Madness, again, during life, is said occasionally to produce restlessness after death. 'Parson Digger, at Condover,' remarked an old woman to Miss Jackson,[69] 'he came again. He wasn't right in his head, and if you met him he couldn't speak to you sensibly. But when he was up in the pulpit he'd preach, oh! beautiful!' In Hungary, there are the spirits of brides who die on their wedding-day before consummation of marriage. They are to be seen at moonlight, where cross-roads meet. And it is a Danish tradition that a corpse cannot have peace in the grave when it is otherwise than on its back. According to a Scotch belief, excessive grief for a departed friend, 'combined with a want of resignation to the will of Providence, had the effect of keeping the spirit from rest in the other world. Rest could be obtained only by the spirit coming back, and comforting the mourner by the assurance that it was in a state of blessedness.'[70] The ghosts of those, again, who had some grievance or other in life are supposed to wander. The Droitwich Canal, in passing through Salwarpe, Worcestershire, is said to have cut off a slice of a large old half-timbered house,

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[69] *Shropshire Folk-lore*, p. 119.

[70] Gregor's *Folk-lore of North-East of Scotland*, p. 69.

in revenge for which act of mutilation, the ghost of a former occupier revisited his old haunts, and affrighted the domestics.

Once more, according to another Animistic conception which holds a prominent place in the religion of uncultured tribes, the soul at death passes through some transitionary stages, finally developing into a demon. In China and India this theory is deeply rooted among the people, and hence it is customary to offer sacrifices to the souls of the departed by way of propitiation, as otherwise they are supposed to wander to and fro on the earth, and to exert a malignant influence on even their dearest friends and relatives. Diseases, too, are regarded as often being caused by the wandering souls of discontented relatives, who in some cases are said to re-appear as venomous snakes.[71] Owing to this belief, a system of terror prevails amongst many tribes, which is only allayed by constantly appeasing departed souls. Believing in superstitions of this kind, it is easy to understand how the uncivilised mind readily lays hold of the doctrine that the souls of the departed, angry and enraged at having had death thrust on them, take every opportunity of wandering about, and annoying the living, and of wreaking their vengeance on even those most nearly related to them. In this phase of savage belief may be traced the notion of Manes worship found under so many forms in foreign countries. Indeed, once granted that the departed soul has power to affect the living, then this power attributed to it is only one of degree. With this belief, too, may be compared the

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[71] Sir John Lubbock's *Origin of Civilisation*, p. 134.

modern one of worship of the dead; and as Dr. Tylor remarks: 'A crowd of saints, who were once men and women, now form an inferior order of deities active in the affairs of men, and receiving from them reverence and prayer, thus coming strictly under the definition of Manes.'[72] A further illustration may be adduced in the patron deities of particular trades and crafts, and in the imposing array of saints supposed to be specially interested in the particular requirements of mankind.

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[72] *Primitive Culture*, ii. p. 120.

CHAPTER VI
GHOSTS OF THE MURDERED

It is commonly supposed that the spirits of those who have suffered a violent or untimely death are baneful and malicious beings; for, as Meiners conjectures in his 'History of Religions,' they were driven unwillingly from their bodies, and have carried into their new existence an angry longing for revenge. Hence, in most countries, there is a dread of such harmful spirits; and, among the Sioux Indians the fear of the ghost's vengeance has been known to act as a check to murder. The avenging ghost often comes back to convict the guilty, and appears in all kinds of strange and uncanny ways. Thus the ghost of Hamlet's father (i. 5) says:

> I am thy father's spirit,
> Doomed for a certain time to walk the night,
> And for the day confined to fast in fires,
> Till the foul crimes, done in my days of nature,
> Are burnt and purged away.

Till the crime has been duly expiated, not only is the spirit supposed to be kept from its desired rest, but it flits about the haunts of the living, that, by its unearthly molestation, it may compel them to make every possible reparation for the cruel

wrong done. Any attempt to lay such a ghost is ineffectual, and no exorcist's art can induce it to discontinue its unwelcome visits. Comparative folk-lore proves how universal is this belief, for one of the most popular ghost stories in folk-tales is that which treats of the murdered person whose ghost hovers about the earth with no gratification but to terrify the living.

The Chinese have a dread of the wandering spirits of persons who have come to an unfortunate end. At Canton, in 1817, the wife of an officer of Government had occasioned the death of two female domestic slaves, from some jealous suspicion it was supposed of her husband's conduct towards the girls; and, in order to screen herself from the consequences, she suspended the bodies by the neck, with a view to its being construed into an act of suicide. But the conscience of the woman tormented her to such a degree that she became insane, and at times personated the victims of her cruelty; or, as the Chinese supposed, the spirits of the murdered girls possessed her, and utilised her mouth to declare her own guilt. In her ravings she tore her clothes, and beat her own person with all the fury of madness; after which she would recover her senses for a time, when it was supposed the demons quitted her, but only to return with greater frenzy, which took place a short time previous to her death.[73] According to Mr. Dennys,[74] the most common form of Chinese ghost story is that wherein the ghost seeks to bring to justice the murderer

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[73] *The Chinese*: J. F. Davis, 1836, ii. pp. 139, 140.

[74] *Folk-lore of China*, p. 73.

who shuffled off its mortal coil.

The following tale is told of a haunted hill in the country of the Assiniboins. Many summers ago a party of Assiniboins pounced on a small band of Crees in the neighbourhood of Wolverine Knoll. Among the victors was the former wife of one of the vanquished, who had been previously captured by her present husband. This woman directed every effort in the fight to take the life of her first husband, but he escaped, and concealed himself on this knoll. Wolverine – for this was his name – fell asleep, and was discovered by this virago, who killed him, and presented his scalp to her Assiniboin husband. The knoll was afterwards called after him. The Indians assert that the ghosts of the murderess and her victim are often to be seen from a considerable distance struggling together on the very summit of the height.[75]

The Siamese 'fear as unkindly spirits the souls of such as died a violent death, or were not buried with the proper rites, and who, desiring expiation, invisibly terrify their descendants.'[76] In the same way, the Karens say that the ghosts of those who wander on the earth are the spirits of such as died by violence; and in Australia we hear of the souls of departed natives walking about because their death has not been expiated by the avenger of blood.

The Hurons of America, lest the spirits of the victims of their torture should remain around the huts of their murderers from

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[75] See Dorman's *Primitive Superstitions*, p. 304.

[76] *Primitive Culture*, ii. p. 28.

a thirst of vengeance, strike every place with a staff in order to oblige them to depart. An old traveller mentions the same custom among the Iroquois: 'At night we heard a great noise, as if the houses had all fallen; but it was only the inhabitants driving away the ghosts of the murdered;' with which we may compare the belief of the Ottawas: On one occasion, when noises of the loudest and most inharmonious kind were heard in a certain village, it was ascertained that a battle had been lately fought between the Ottawas and Kickapoos, and that the object of all this noise was to prevent the ghosts of the dead combatants from entering the village.[77]

European folk-lore still clings to this old belief, and, according to the current opinion in Norway,[78] the soul of a murdered person willingly hovers around the spot where his body is buried, and makes its appearance for the purpose of calling forth vengeance on the murderer.

The idea that, in cases of hidden murder, the buried dead cannot rest in their graves is often spoken in our old ballad folk-lore. Thus, in the ballad of the 'Jew's Daughter,' in Motherwell's collection, a youth was murdered, and his body thrown into a draw-well, and he speaks to his mother from the well:

> She ran away to the deep draw-well,
> And she fell down on her knee,

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[77] See Dorman's *Primitive Superstitions*, 1880, pp. 19, 20.

[78] Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, ii, p. 19.

Saying, 'Bonnie Sir Hugh, oh, pretty Sir Hugh,
I pray ye, speak to me!'
'Oh! the lead it is wondrous heavy, mother,
The well, it is wondrous deep,
The little penknife sticks in my throat,
And I downa to ye speak.
But lift me out of this deep draw-well,
And bury me in yon churchyard;
Put a Bible at my head,' he says,
'And a Testament at my feet,
And pen and ink at every side,
And I will lay still and sleep.
And go to the back of Maitland town,
Bring me my winding sheet;
For it's at the back of Maitland town
That you and I shall meet.'

The eye of superstition, we are told, sees such ghosts sometimes as white spectres in the churchyard, where they stop horses, terrify people, and make a disturbance; and occasionally as executed criminals, who, in the moonlight, wander round the place of execution, with their heads under their arms. At times they are said to pinch persons while asleep both black and blue, such spots being designated ghost-spots, or ghost-pinches. It is also supposed in some parts of Norway that certain spirits cry like children, and entice people to them, such being thought to derive their origin from murdered infants. A similar belief exists in Sweden, where the spirits of little children that have been

murdered are said to wander about wailing, within an assigned time, so long as their lives would have lasted on earth, had they been allowed to live. As a terror for unnatural mothers who destroy their offspring, their sad cry is said to be 'Mama! Mama!' If travellers at night pass by them, they will hang on the vehicle, when the most spirited horses will sweat as if they were dragging too heavy a load, and at length come to a dead stop. The peasant then knows that a ghost or pysling has attached itself to his vehicle.[79]

The nautical ghost is often a malevolent spirit, as in Shelley's 'Revolt of Islam'; and Captain Marryat tells a sailor story of a murdered man's ghost appearing every night, and calling hands to witness a piratical scene of murder, formerly committed on board the ship in which he appeared. A celebrated ghost is that of the 'Shrieking Woman,' long supposed to haunt the shores of Oakum Bay, near Marblehead. She was a Spanish lady murdered by pirates in the eighteenth century, and the apparition is thus described by Whittier in his 'Legends of New England':

> 'Tis said that often when the moon,
> Is struggling with the gloomy even,
> And over moon and star is drawn
> The curtain of a clouded heaven,
> Strange sounds swell up the narrow glen,
> As if that robber crew was there;
> The hellish laugh, the shouts of men

[79] Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, ii. pp. 94, 95.

And woman's dying prayer.

Many West Indian quays were thought to be the haunts of ghosts of murdered men; and Sir Walter Scott tells how the Buccaneers occasionally killed a Spaniard or a slave, and buried him with their spirits, under the impression that his ghost would haunt the spot, and keep away treasure hunters. He quotes another incident of a captain who killed a man in a fit of anger, and, on his threatening to haunt him, he cooked his body in the stove kettle. The crew believed that the murdered man took his place at the wheel, and on the yards. The captain, troubled by his conscience and the man's ghost, finally jumped overboard, when, as he sank, he threw up his arms and exclaimed, 'Bill is with me now!'

In most parts of the world similar tales are recorded, and are as readily believed as when they were first told centuries ago. A certain island on the Japanese coast is traditionally haunted by the ghosts of Japanese slain in a naval battle. Even 'to-day the Chousen peasant fancies he sees the ghostly armies baling out the sea with bottomless dippers, condemned thus to cleanse the ocean of the slain of centuries ago.'[80] According to an old Chinese legend the ghost of a captain of a man-of-war junk, who had been murdered, reappeared and directed how the ship was to be steered to avoid a nest of pirates.[81]

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[80] Griffis, *The Mikado's Kingdom*.

[81] Denny's *Folk-lore of China*; see Bassett's *Legends and Superstitions of the Sea*,

In this country, many an old mansion has its haunted room, in which the unhappy spirit of the murdered person is supposed, on certain occasions, to appear. Generation after generation do such troubled spirits return to the scene of their life, and persistently wait till some one is bold enough to stay in the haunted room, and to question them as to the cause of their making such periodical visits. Accordingly, when a murder has been committed and not discovered, often, it is said, has the spirit of the murdered one continued to come back and torment the neighbourhood till a confession of the crime has been made, and justice satisfied. Mr. Walter Gregor,[82] detailing instances in Scotland of haunted houses, tells how 'in one room a lady had been murdered, and her body buried in a vault below it. Her spirit could find no rest till she had told who the murderer was, and pointed out where the body lay. In another, a baby heir had its little life stifled by the hand of an assassin hired by the next heir. The estate was obtained, but the deed followed the villain beyond the grave, and his spirit could find no peace. Night by night the ghost had to return at the hour of midnight to the room in which the murder was committed, and in agony spend in it the hours till cock-crowing, when everything of the supernatural had to disappear.'

The ghost of Lady Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh, who always appears in white, carrying her child in her arms, has long been,

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p. 296.

[82] *Folk-lore of North-East of Scotland*, 1881, p. 68.

as Mr. Ingram says,[83] 'an enduring monument of the bloodthirsty spirit of the age in which she lived.' Whilst her husband was away from home, a favourite of the Regent, Murray seized his house, turned his wife, on a cold night, naked, into the open fields, where, before morning, she was found raving mad; her infant perishing either by cold or murder. The ruins of the mansion of Woodhouslee, 'whence Lady Bothwell was expelled in the brutal manner which occasioned her insanity and death,' have long been tenanted with the unfortunate lady's ghost; 'and so tenacious is this spectre of its rights, that a part of the stones belonging to the ancient edifice having been employed in building or repairing the new Woodhouslee, the apparition has deemed it one of her privileges to haunt that house also.'

Samlesbury Hall, Lancashire, has its ghosts; and it is said that 'on certain clear still evenings a lady in white can be seen passing along the gallery and the corridors, and then from the hall into the grounds; then she meets a handsome knight who receives her on bended knees, and he then accompanies her along the walks. On arriving at a certain spot, most probably the lover's grave, both the phantoms stand still, and, as they seem to utter lost wailings of despair, they embrace each other, and then melt away into the clear blue of the surrounding sky.' The story goes that one of the daughters of Sir John Southworth, a former owner, formed an attachment with the heir of a neighbouring house; but when Sir John said 'no daughter of his should ever be united to the son

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[83] *Haunted Homes of England*, 1881, p. 286.

of a family which had deserted its ancestral faith,' an elopement was arranged. The day and place were overheard by the lady's brother, and, on the evening agreed upon, he rushed from his hiding-place and slew her lover. But soon afterwards her mind gave way, and she died a raving maniac.[84]

Mrs. Murray, a lady born and brought up in the borders, writes Mr. Henderson,[85] tells me of 'a cauld lad,' of whom she heard in her childhood during a visit to Gilsland, in Cumberland. He perished from cold, at the behest of some cruel uncle or stepdame, and ever after his ghost haunted the family, coming shivering to their bedsides before anyone was stricken by illness, his teeth audibly chattering; and if it were to be fatal, he laid his icy hand upon the part which would be the seat of the disease, saying:

> Cauld, cauld, aye cauld!
> An' ye see he cauld for evermair.

St. Donart's Castle, on the southern coast of Glamorganshire, has its favourite ghost, that of Lady Stradling, who is said to have been murdered by one of her family. 'It appears,' writes the late Mr. Wirt Sikes,[86] 'when any mishap is about to befall a member of the house of Stradling, the direct line, however,

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[84] *Haunted Homes of England*, 2nd S., pp. 222-225.

[85] *Folk-lore of Northern Counties*, p. 267.

[86] *British Goblins*, pp. 143, 144.

of which is extinct. She wears high-heeled shoes, and a long trailing gown of the finest silk.' While she wanders, the castle hounds refuse to rest, but with their howling raise all the dogs in the neighbourhood. The Little Shelsey people long preserved a tradition that the court-house in that parish was haunted by the spirit of a Lady Lightfoot, who was said to have been imprisoned and murdered;[87] and Cumnor Hall has acquired a romantic interest from the poetic glamour flung over it by Mickle in his ballad of Cumnor Hall, and by Sir Walter Scott in his 'Kenilworth.' Both refer to it as the scene of Amy Robsart's murder, and although the jury agreed to accept her death as accidental, the country folk would not forego their idea that it was the result of foul play. Ever since the fatal event it was asserted that 'Madam Dudley's ghost did use to walk in Cumnor Park, and that it walked so obstinately, that it took no less than nine parsons from Oxford to lay her.' According to Mickle —

> The village maids, with fearful glance,
> Avoid the ancient moss-grown wall;
> Nor ever lead the merry dance
> Among the groves of Cumnor Hall.

About half a mile to the east of Maxton, a small rivulet runs across the old turnpike road, at a spot called Bow-brig-syke. Near this bridge is a triangular field, in which for nearly

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[87] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1855, part ii. p. 58.

a century it was averred that the forms of two ladies, dressed in white, might be seen pacing up and down, walking over precisely the same spot of ground till morning light. But one day, while some workmen were repairing the road, they took up the large flagstones upon which foot-passengers crossed the burn, and found beneath them the skeletons of two women lying side by side. After this discovery the Bow-brig ladies, as they were called, were never again seen to walk in the three-corner field. The story goes that these two ladies were sisters to a former laird of Littledean, who is said to have killed them in a fit of passion, because they interfered to protect from ill-usage a young lady whom he had met at Bow-brig-syke. Some years later he met with his own death near the same fatal spot.[88]

Mr. Sullivan, in his 'Cumberland and Westmoreland,' relates how, some years ago, a spectre appeared to a man who lived at Henhow Cottage, Martindale. Starting for his work at an early hour one morning, he had not gone two hundred yards from his house when his dog gave signs of alarm, and, on looking round, he saw a woman carrying a child in her arms. On being questioned as to what was troubling her, the ghost replied that she had been seduced, and that her seducer, to conceal his guilt and her frailty, had given her medicine, the effect of which was to kill both mother and child. Her doom was to wander for a hundred years, forty of which had expired. The occurrence is believed to have made a lasting impression on the old man, who,

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[88] See Henderson's *Folk-lore of Northern Counties*, pp. 324-325.

says Sullivan, 'was until lately a shepherd on the fells. There can be no moral doubt that he both saw and spoke with the apparition; but what share his imagination had therein, or how it had been excited, are mysteries, and so they are likely to remain.' But as Grose remarks, ghosts do not go about their business like living beings. In cases of murder, 'a ghost, instead of going to the next justice of the peace and laying its information, or to the nearest relation of the person murdered, it appears to some poor labourer who knows none of the parties, draws the curtains of some decrepit nurse or alms-woman, or hovers about the place where his body is deposited.' The same circuitous mode, he adds, 'is pursued with respect to redressing injured orphans or widows, when it seems as if the shorter and more certain would be to go to the person guilty of the injustice, and haunt him continually till he be terrified into a restitution.'

From early days the phantoms of the murdered have occasionally appeared to the living, and made known the guilty person or persons who committed the deed. Thus Cicero relates how 'two Arcadians came to Megara together; one lodged at a friend's house, the other at an inn. During the night, the latter appeared to his fellow-traveller, imploring his help, as the innkeeper was plotting his death; the sleeper sprang up in alarm, but thinking the vision of no importance, he went to sleep again. A second time his companion appeared to him, to entreat that, though he had failed to help, he would at least avenge, for the innkeeper had killed him, and hidden his body

in a dung-cart, wherefore he charged his fellow-traveller to be early next morning at the city gate before the cart passed out. The traveller went as bidden, and there found the cart; the body of the murdered man was in it, and the innkeeper was brought to justice.'[89]

Of the many curious cases recorded of a murder being discovered through the ghost of the murdered person, may be quoted one told in Aubrey's 'Miscellanies.' It appears that on Monday, April 14, 1690, William Barwick was walking with his wife close to Cawood Castle, when, from motives not divulged at the trial, he determined to murder her, and finding a pond conveniently at hand, threw her in. But on the following Tuesday, as his brother-in-law, Thomas Lofthouse, 'about half an hour after twelve of the clock in the daytime, was watering quickwood, as he was going for the second pail, there appeared walking before him an apparition in the shape of a woman, "her visage being like his wife's sister's." Soon after, she sat down over against the pond, on a green hill. He walked by her as he went to the pond, and, on his return, he observed that she was dangling "something like a white bag" on her lap, evidently suggestive of her unborn baby that was slain with her. The circumstance made such an impression on him, that he immediately suspected Barwick, especially as he had made false statements as to the whereabouts of his wife, and obtained a warrant for his arrest. The culprit when arrested confessed his crime, and the body

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[89] Quoted in Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, i. p. 444.

of the murdered woman being recovered, was found dressed in clothing similar, apparently, to that worn by the apparition. Ultimately Barwick was hanged for his crime.'[90]

A similar case, which occurred in the county of Durham in 1631, and is the subject of a critical historical inquiry in Surtees's 'History of Durham,' may be briefly summed up.[91] 'One Walker, a yeoman of good estate, a widower, living at Chester-le-Street, had in his service a young female relative named Anne Walker. The results of an amour which took place between them caused Walker to send away the girl under the care of one Mark Sharp, a collier, professedly that she might be taken care of as befitted her condition, but in reality that she might no more be troublesome to her lover. Nothing was heard of her till, one night in the ensuing winter, one James Graham, coming down from the upper to the lower floor of his mill, found a woman standing there with her hair hanging about her head, in which were five bloody wounds. According to the man's evidence, she gave an account of her fate; having been killed by Sharp on the moor in their journey, and thrown into a coal pit close by, while the instrument of her death, a pick, had been hid under a bank along with his clothes, which were stained with her blood. She demanded of Graham that he should expose her murder, which he hesitated to do, until she had twice reappeared to him, the last time with a threatening aspect.

'The body, the pick, and the clothes having been found as

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[90] See Ingram's *Haunted Homes*, 1884, pp. 33-36.

[91] See *Book of Days*, ii. p. 287.

Graham had described, Walter and Sharp were tried at Durham, before Judge Davenport, in August 1631. The men were found guilty, condemned, and executed.'

In 'Ackerman's Repository' for November 1820, there is an account of a person being tried on the pretended evidence of a ghost. A farmer, on his return from the market at Southam, co. Warwick, was murdered. The next morning a man called upon the farmer's wife, and related how on the previous night her husband's ghost had appeared to him, and, after showing him several stabs on his body, had told him that he was murdered by a certain person, and his corpse thrown into a marl-pit. A search was instituted, the body found in the pit, and the wounds on the body of the deceased were exactly in the parts described by the pretended dreamer; the person who was mentioned was committed for trial on the charge of murder, and the trial came on at Warwick before Lord Chief Justice Raymond. The jury would have convicted the prisoner as rashly as the magistrate had committed him, but for the interposition of the judge, who told them he did not put any credence in the pretended ghost story, since the prisoner was a man of unblemished reputation, and no ill-feeling had ever existed between himself and the deceased. He added that he knew of no law which admitted of the evidence of a ghost, and, if any did, the ghost had not appeared. The crier was then ordered to summon the ghost, which he did three times, and the judge then acquitted the prisoner, and caused the accuser to be detained and his house searched, when such strong proofs

of guilt were discovered, that the man confessed the crime, and was executed for murder at the following assizes.

CHAPTER VII
PHANTOM BIRDS

One of the forms which the soul is said occasionally to assume at death is that of a bird – a pretty belief which, under one form or another, exists all over the world. An early legend tells how, when St. Polycarp was burnt alive, there arose from his ashes a white dove which flew towards heaven; and a similar story is told of Joan of Arc. The Russian peasantry affirm that the souls of the departed haunt their old homes in the shape of birds for six weeks, and watch the grief of the bereft, after which time they fly away to the other world. In certain districts bread-crumbs are placed on a piece of white linen at a window during those six weeks, when the soul is believed to come and feed upon them in the form of a bird. It is generally into pigeons or crows that the dead are transformed. Thus, when the Deacon Theodore and his three schismatic brethren were burnt in the year 1682, writes Mr. Ralston,[92] 'the souls of the martyrs appeared in the air as pigeons.' In Volhynia dead children are believed to come back in the spring to their native village under the semblance of swallows and other small birds, endeavouring, by soft twittering or song, to console their sorrowing parents. The Bulgarians say that after death the soul assumes the form of a bird; and according to an old

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[92] *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 118.

Bohemian fancy the soul flies out of the dying in a similar shape. In the 'Chronicles of the Beatified Anthony'[93] we find described fetid and black pools 'in regione Puteolorum in Apulia,' whence the souls arise in the form of monstrous birds in the evening hours of the Sabbath, which neither eat nor let themselves be caught, but wander till in the morning an enormous lion compels them to submerge themselves in the water.

It is a German belief that the soul of one who has died on shipboard passes into a bird, and when seen at any time it is supposed to announce the death of another person. The ghost of the murdered mother comes swimming in the form of a duck, or the soul sits in the likeness of a bird on the grave. This piece of folk-lore has been introduced into many of the popular folk-tales, as in the well-known story of the juniper tree. A little boy is killed by his step-mother, who serves him up as a dish of meat to his father. The father eats in ignorance, and throws away the bones, which are gathered up by the half-sister, who puts them into a silk handkerchief and buries them under a juniper tree. But presently a bird of gay plumage perches on the tree, and whistles as it flits from branch to branch:

> Min moder de mi slach't,
> Min fader de mi att,
> Min swester de Marleenken,
> Söcht alle mine Beeniken,

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[93] Quoted by Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology*, 1872, ii. pp. 254, 255.

Und bindt sie in een syden Dodk,
Legst unner den Machandelboom;
Ky witt! ky witt! Ach watt en schön vogel bin ich!

– a rhyme which Goethe puts into the mouth of Gretchen in prison.[94] In Grimm's story of 'The White and the Black Bride,' the mother and sister push the true bride into the stream. At the same moment a snow-white swan is discovered swimming down the stream.

Swedish folk-lore tells us that the ravens which scream by night in forest swamps and wild moors are the ghosts of murdered men whose bodies have been hidden by their undetected murderers, and not had Christian burial. In Denmark the night-raven is considered an exorcised spirit, and there is said to be a hole in its left wing caused by the stake driven into the earth. Where a spirit has been exorcised, it is only through the most frightful swamps and morasses that it ascends, first beginning under the earth with the cry of 'Rok! rok!' then 'Rok op! rok op!' and when it has thus come forth, it flies away screaming 'Hei! hei! he! – i!' When it has flown up it describes a cross, but one must take care, it is said, not to look up when the bird is flying overhead, for he who sees through the hole in its wing will become a night-raven himself, and the night-raven will be released. This ominous bird is ever flying towards the east,

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[94] Countess Evelyn Martinengo-Cesaresco, *Study of Folk-songs* p. 10; Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, i. p. 289.

in the hope of reaching the Holy Sepulchre, for when it arrives there it will find rest.[95] Then there is the romantic Breton ballad of 'Lord Nann and the Korrigan,' wherein it is related how —

> It was a marvel to see, men say,
> The night that followed the day,
> The lady in earth by her lord lay,
>
> To see two oak trees themselves rear,
> From the new made grave into the air;
>
> And on their branches two doves white,
> Who there were hopping, gay and light,
>
> Which sang when rose the morning ray,
> And then towards heaven sped away.

In Mexico it is a popular belief that after death the souls of nobles animate beautiful singing birds, and certain North American Indian tribes maintain that the souls of their chiefs take the form of small woodbirds.[96] Among the Abipones of Paraguay we are told of a peculiar kind of little ducks which fly in flocks at night-time, uttering a mournful tone, and which the popular imagination associates with the souls of those who have died. Darwin mentions a South American Indian who would not

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[95] Henderson's *Folk-lore of Northern Counties*, p. 126; Thorpe's Northern Mythology, ii. p. 211.

[96] See Dorman's *Primitive Superstitions*, pp. 48, 49.

eat land-birds because they were dead men; and the Californian tribes abstain from large game, believing that the souls of past generations have passed into their bodies. The Içannas of Brazil thought the souls of brave warriors passed into lovely birds that fed on pleasant fruits; and the Tapuyas think the souls of the good and the brave enter birds, while the cowardly become reptiles. Indeed, the primitive psychology of such rude tribes reminds us how the spirit freed at death —

> Fills with fresh energy another form,
> And towers an elephant, or glides a worm;
> Swims as an eagle in the eye of noon,
> Or wails a screech-owl to the deaf cold moon.

It was also a belief of the Aztecs that all good people, as a reward of merit, were metamorphosed at the close of life into feathered songsters of the grove, and in this form passed a certain term in the umbrageous bowers of Paradise; while certain African tribes think that the souls of wicked men become jackals. The Brazilians imagined that the souls of the bad animated those birds that inhabited the cavern of Guacharo and made a mournful cry, which birds were religiously feared.

Tracing similar beliefs in our own country, may be compared the Lancashire dread of the so-called 'Seven Whistlers,' which are occasionally heard at night, and are supposed to contain the souls of those Jews who assisted at the Crucifixion, and in consequence of their wickedness were doomed to float for

ever in the air. Numerous stories have been told, from time to time, of the appearance of these 'Seven Whistlers,' and of their being heard before some terrible catastrophe, such as a colliery explosion. A correspondent of 'Notes and Queries' relates how during a thunderstorm which passed over Kettering, in Yorkshire, on the evening of September 6, 1871, 'on which occasion the lightning was very vivid, an unusual spectacle was witnessed. Immense flocks of birds were flying about, uttering doleful affrighted cries as they passed over the locality, and for hours they kept up a continual whistling like that made by sea-birds. There must have been great numbers of them, as they were also observed at the same time in the counties of Northampton, Leicester, and Lincoln. The next day, as my servant was driving me to a neighbouring village, this phenomenon of the flight of birds became the subject of conversation, and on asking him what birds he thought they were, he told me they were what were called the "Seven Whistlers," and that whenever they were heard it was considered a sign of some great calamity, and that the last time he heard them was the night before the great Hartley Colliery explosion. He had also been told by soldiers, that if they heard them they always expected a great slaughter would take place soon. Curiously enough, on taking up the newspaper the following morning, I saw headed in large letters, "Terrible Colliery Explosion at Wigan," &c.' Wordsworth speaks of the 'Seven Whistlers' in connection with the spectral hounds of the wild huntsman:

He the seven birds hath seen that never part —
Seen the seven whistlers on their nightly rounds,
And counted them. And oftentimes will start,
For overhead are sweeping Gabriel's hounds,
Doomed, with their impious lord, the flying hart
To chase for ever on ærial grounds.

A similar tradition prevails on the Bosphorus with reference to certain flocks of birds, about the size of a thrush, which fly up and down the Channel, and are never seen to rest on the land or water. These are supposed to be the souls of the damned, and condemned to perpetual motion. Among further instances of the same belief may be mentioned one current among the Manx herring fishermen, who, from time immemorial, have been afraid of going to sea without a dead wren, for fear of disasters and storms. The story goes that once upon a time 'a sea spirit hunted the herring track, always attended by storms, but at last assumed the form of a wren, and flew away.' Accordingly they believe that so long as they have a dead wren with them all is snug and safe. Similarly, in the English Channel a rustling, rushing sound is occasionally heard on the dark still nights of winter, and is called the herring spear, or herring piece, by the fishermen of Dover and Folkestone. But this strange sound is really caused by the flight of the little redwings as they cross the Channel on their way to warmer regions.

Stories of disembodied souls appearing as birds are very

numerous. An old well-known Cornish legend tells how, in days of old, King Arthur was transformed into a chough, 'its talons and beak all red with blood,' denoting the violent end to which the celebrated chieftain came. In the same way a curious legend in Poland affirms that every member of the Herburt family assumes the form of an eagle after death, and that the eldest daughters of the Pileck line take the shape of doves if they die unmarried, of owls if they die married, and that they give previous notice of their death to every member of their race by pecking a finger of each. A wild song sung by the boatmen of the Molo, Venice, declares that the spirit of Daniel Manin, the patriot, is flying about the lagunes to this day in the shape of a beautiful white dove.[97] There is the ancient Irish tradition that the first father and mother of mankind exist as eagles in the island of Innis Bofin, at the mouth of Killery Bay, in Galway; indeed, survivals of this old belief occur under all manner of forms. There is the popular legend of the owl and the baker's daughter which Shakespeare has immortalised in 'Hamlet' (iv. 5), where Ophelia exclaims, 'They say the owl was a baker's daughter; Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.'[98] Gervase of Tilbury tells how the stork was formerly regarded as both bird and man, on account of which superstition it is carefully protected in Prussia from any kind of injury. The stork, too, is still held in superstitious dread by the Chinese, who, on the

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[97] Jones' *Credulities, Past and Present*, p. 376.

[98] See Dasent's *Tales of the Norse*, 1859, p. 230.

twenty-first day of the period of mourning for the dead, place three large paper birds resembling storks on high poles in front of the house of mourning. The birds are supposed to carry the soul of the deceased person to Elysium, and during the next three days the Buddhist prays to the ten kings of the Buddhist Hades, calling on them to hasten the flight of the departed soul to the Western Paradise.[99] The Virginian Indians had great reverence for a small bird called Pawcorance, that flies in the woods, and in its note continually sounds that name. This bird flies alone, and is heard only in twilight. It is said to be the son of one of their priests, and on this account they would not hurt it; but there was once a profane Indian who was hired to shoot one of them, but report says he paid dearly for his act of presumption, for a few days afterwards he disappeared, and was never heard of again.[100] The Indians dwelling about the Falls of St. Anthony supposed that the spirits of their dead warriors animated the eagles which frequented the place, and these eagles were objects of their worship. In the 'Sæmund Edda' it is said that in the nether world souls as singed birds fly about like swarms of flies —

> Of that is to be told
> What I just observed,
> When I had come into the land of torment:
> Singed birds,

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[99] Jones' *Credulities, Past and Present*, p. 373.

[100] Dorman's *Primitive Superstitions*, pp. 255, 256.

That had been souls,
Flew as many as gnats.

The Finns and the Lithuanians speak of the 'Milky Way' as the Bird's Way – the way of souls. According to Kuhn, the notion of the soul assuming the form of a bird is closely allied with the primitive tradition of birds as soul-bringers. Thus, as it has been suggested, 'the soul and the bird that brought it down to earth may have been supposed to become one, and to enter and quit the body together.' In the Egyptian hieroglyphics a bird signified the soul of man; and the German name for stork, writes Grimm, is literally child, or soul-bringer. Hence the belief that the advent of infants is presided over by this bird, which obtains so wide a credence in Denmark and Germany.[101]

The idea of the bird as a 'soul bringer' probably gave rise to the popular belief that it is unlucky when a bird hovers near the window of a sick-room, a superstition to which Mrs. Hemans has prettily alluded:

Say not 'tis vain! I tell thee some
Are warned by a meteor's light,
Or a pale bird flitting calls them home,
Or a voice on the winds by night.

There are various stories told of mysterious birds appearing at

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[101] Hardwick's *Traditions, Superstitions, and Folk-lore*, 1872 p. 243; Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, i. p. 289. See Kelly's *Indo-European Folk-lore*, p. 103.

such a time in different localities. In Devonshire the appearance of a white breasted bird has long been considered a presage of death, a notion which is said to have originated in a tragic occurrence that happened to one of the Oxenham family. A local ballad tells how on the bridal eve of Margaret, heiress of Sir James Oxenham, a silver-breasted bird flew over the wedding guests just as Sir James stood up to thank them for good wishes. The next day she was slain by a discarded lover, and the ballad records how —

> Round her hovering flies,
> The phantom-bird, for her last breath,
> To bear it to the skies.

In Yorkshire, Berry Well was supposed to be haunted by a bogie in the form of a white goose, and the Rev. S. Baring-Gould informs us how Lew Trenchard House is haunted by a white lady who goes by the name of Madame Gould, and is supposed to be the spirit of a lady who died there, April 10, 1795. 'A stone is shown on the "ramps" of Lew Slate Quarry, where seven parsons met to lay the old madame, and some say that the white owl, which nightly flits to and fro in front of Lew House, is the spirit of the lady conjured by the parsons into a bird.'[102]

Similarly, whenever the white owls are seen perched on the family mansion of the noble family of Arundel of Wardour, it

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[102] See Henderson's *Folk-lore of Northern Counties*, pp. 331-335.

is regarded as a certain indication that one of its members will shortly be summoned out of the world. In Count Montalembert's 'Vie de Ste. Elizabeth' it is related how 'Duke Louis of Thuringia, the husband of Ste. Elizabeth of Hungary, being on the point of expiring, said to those around him, "Do you see those doves more white than snow?" His attendants supposed him to be a prey to visions; but a little while afterwards he said to them, "I must fly away with those brilliant doves." Having said this he fell asleep in peace. Then his almoner, Berthold, perceived doves flying away to the east, and followed them along with his eyes.' We may compare a similar story told of the most beautiful woman of the Knistenaux, named 'Foot of the Fawn,' who died in her childbirth, and her babe with her. Soon afterwards two doves appeared, one full grown, and the other a little one. They were the spirits of the mother and child, and the Indians would gather about the tree on which they were perched with reverential love, and worship them as the spirit of the woman and child.[103] There is Lord Lyttelton's well-known ghost story, and the belief of the Duchess of Kendal that George I. flew into her window in the shape of a raven. Another well-known case was that of the Duchess of St. Albans, who, on her death-bed, remarked to her step-daughter, Lady Guilford, 'I am so happy to day because your father's spirit is breathing upon me; he has taken the shape of a little bird singing at my window.' Kelly relates an anecdote of a credulous individual who believed that the departing soul of

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[103] Dorman's *Primitive Superstitions*, p. 255.

his brother-in-law, in the form of a bird, tapped at his window at the time of his death;[104] and in FitzPatrick's 'Life of Bishop Doyle' it is related, in allusion to his death, that, 'considering the season was midsummer, and not winter, the visit of two robin redbreasts to the sick-room may be noticed as interesting. They remained fluttering round, and sometimes perching on the uncurtained bed. The priests, struck by the novelty of the circumstance, made no effort to expel the little visitors, and the robins hung lovingly over the bishop's head until death released him.' A singular instance of this belief was the extraordinary whim of a Worcester lady, who, imagining her daughter to exist in the shape of a singing-bird, literally furnished her pew in the Cathedral with cages full of the kind; and we are told in Lord Oxford's letters that, as she was rich, and a benefactress in beautifying the church, no objection was made to her harmless folly.

[104] *Indo-European Folk-lore*, pp. 104, 105.

CHAPTER VIII
ANIMAL GHOSTS

It is the rule rather than the exception for ghosts to take the form of animals. A striking feature of this form of animism is its universality, an argument, it is said, in favour of its having originally sprung from the old theory of metempsychosis which has pertinaciously existed in successive stages of the world's culture. 'Possibly,' it has been suggested, 'the animal form of ghosts is a mark of the once-supposed divinity of the dead. Ancestor worship is one of the oldest of the creeds, and in all mythologies we find that the gods could transform themselves into any shape at will, and frequently took those of beasts and birds.'[105] At the same time, one would scarcely expect to come across nowadays this fanciful belief in our own and other civilised countries, and yet instances are of constant occurrence, being deeply rooted in many a local tradition. Acts of injustice done to a person cause the soul to return in animal form by way of retribution. Thus, in Cornwall, it is a very popular fancy that when a young woman who has loved not wisely but too well dies forsaken and broken-hearted, she comes back to haunt her deceiver in the form of a white hare.[106] This phantom pursues the

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[105] *Shropshire Folk-lore*, p. 131.

[106] Hunt's *Popular Romances of the West of England*, p. 377.

false one everywhere, being generally invisible to everyone but himself. It occasionally rescues him from danger, but invariably causes his death in the end. A Shropshire story tells[107] how 'two or three generations back there was a lady buried in her jewels at Fitz, and afterwards the clerk robbed her; and she used to walk Cuthery Hollow in the form of a colt. They called it Obrick's Colt, and one night the clerk met it, and fell on his knees, saying, "Abide, Satan! abide! I am a righteous man, and a psalm singer."'[108] The ghost was known as Obrick's Colt from the name of the thief, who, as the peasantry were wont to say, 'had niver no pace atter; a was sadly troubled in his yed, and mithered.'[109]

Sometimes the spirit in animal form is that of a wicked person doomed to wear that shape for some offence. A man who hanged himself at Broomfield, near Shrewsbury, 'came again in the form of a large black dog;' and an amusing Shropshire story is told of the laying of an animal ghost at Bagbury, which took the form of a roaring bull, and caused no small alarm. This bull, it appears, had been a very bad man, but when his unexpected presence as a bull-ghost terrified the neighbourhood, it was deemed desirable by the twelve parsons whose help had been invoked to run him to earth in Hyssington Church, with candles and all the paraphernalia employed on such occasions. But the bull, becoming infuriated, 'made such a bust that he cracked the

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[107] *Shropshire Folk-lore*, pp. 105, 106.

[108] See *Ibid.* pp. 108-111.

[109] See Hartshorne's *Salopia Antiqua*, p. 522

wall of the church from the top to the bottom.' Their efforts were ultimately successful, for they captured him, and as he was compressible, they shut him up in a snuff-box, and laid him in the Red Sea for a thousand years.

Lady Howard, a Devonshire notable of the time of James I., in spite of her beauty and accomplishments, had many bad qualities, and amongst others was not only guilty of unnatural cruelty to her only daughter, but had a mysterious knack of getting rid of her husbands, having been married no less than four times. Her misdemeanours, however, did not escape with impunity, for, on her death, her spirit was transformed into a hound, and compelled to run every night, between midnight and cockcrow, from the gateway of Fitzford, her former residence, to Oakhampton Park, and bring back to the place from whence she started a blade of grass in her mouth, and this penance she is doomed to continue till every blade of grass is removed from the park, which she will not be able to effect till the end of the world.

Many spectral dogs, believed to be the souls of wicked persons, are said to haunt the sides of rivers and pools, and the story goes that there once lived in the hamlet of Dean Combe, Devon, a weaver of great fame and skill. After a prosperous life he died, but the next day he appeared sitting at the loom and working diligently as when he was alive. His sons applied to the parson, who, hearing the noise of the weaver's shuttle above, cried, 'Knowles! come down; this is no place for thee.' 'I will,' said the weaver, 'as soon as I have worked out my quill' (the

quill is the shuttle-full of wool). 'Nay,' said the vicar, 'thou hast been long enough at thy work, come down at once!' So when the spirit came down, the vicar took a handful of earth from the churchyard, and threw it on its face, and instantly it became a black hound. Then the vicar took a nutshell with a hole in it, and led the hound to the pool below the waterfall. 'Take this shell,' he said, 'and when thou shalt have dipped out the pool with it, thou mayest rest, not before.'[110] On the west coast of Ireland, fishermen have a strong prejudice against killing seals, owing to a popular tradition that they enshrined 'the souls of them that were drowned at the flood.' It was also said that such seals possessed the power of casting aside their external skins, and disporting themselves in human form on the sea-shore.

Within the parish of Tring, Hertford, a poor old woman was drowned in 1751 for suspected witchcraft. A chimney-sweeper, who was the principal perpetrator of this deed, was hanged and gibbeted near the place where the murder was committed; and while the gibbet stood, and long after it had disappeared, the spot was haunted by a black dog. A correspondent of the 'Book of Days' (ii. 433) says that he was told by the village schoolmaster, who had been 'abroad,' that he himself had seen this diabolical dog. 'I was returning home,' said he, 'late at night in a gig with the person who was driving. When we came near the spot, where a portion of the gibbet had lately stood, he saw on the bank of the roadside a flame of fire as large as a man's hat. "What's that?"

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[110] *Notes and Queries*, 1st S. ii. p. 515.

I exclaimed. "Hush!" said my companion, and suddenly pulling in his horse, made a dead stop. I then saw an immense black dog just in front of our horse, the strangest looking creature I ever beheld. He was as big as a Newfoundland, but very gaunt, shaggy, with long ears and tail, eyes like balls of fire, and large, long teeth, for he opened his mouth and seemed to grin at us. In a few minutes the dog disappeared, seeming to vanish like a shadow, or to sink into the earth, and we drove on over the spot where he had lain.'

Occasionally, when loss of life has happened through an accident, a spectre animal of some kind has been afterwards seen. Some years ago an accident happened in a Cornish mine, whereby several men lost their lives. As soon as help could be procured, a party descended, but the remains of the poor fellows were discovered to be mutilated beyond recognition. On being brought up to the surface, the clothes and a mass of mangled flesh dropped from the bodies. A bystander, anxious to spare the feelings of the relatives present, quickly cast the unsightly mass into the blazing furnace of an engine close at hand. But ever since that day the engineman positively asserted that troops of little black dogs continually haunted the locality. Then there is the pretty legend mentioned by Wordsworth in his poem entitled, 'The White Doe of Rylstone,' in which is embodied a Yorkshire tradition to the effect that the lady founder of Bolton Abbey revisited the ruins of the venerable structure in the form of a spotless white doe:

Which, though seemingly doomed in its breast to sustain
A softened remembrance of sorrow and pain,
Is spotless, and holy, and gentle, and bright,
And glides o'er the earth like an angel of light.

So common in France are human ghosts in bestial form, 'that M. D'Assier has invented a Darwinian way of accounting for the phenomena. M. D'Assier, a positivist, is a believer in ghosts, but not in the immortality of the soul. He suggests that the human *revenants* in the guise of sheep, cows, and shadowy creatures may be accounted for by a kind of Atavism, or "throwing back," on the side of the spirit to the lower animal forms out of which humanity was developed!'[111]

According to a German piece of folk-lore, the soul takes the form of a snake, a notion we find shared by the Zulus, who revere a certain kind of serpents as the ghosts of the dead; and the Northern Indians speak of a serpent coming out of the mouth of a woman at death. It is further related that out of the mouth of a sleeping person a snake creeps and goes a long distance, and that whatever it sees, or suffers, on its way, the sleeper dreams of. If it is prevented from returning, the person dies.[112] Another belief tells us that the soul occasionally escapes from the mouth in the shape of a weasel or a mouse, a superstition to which Goethe

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[111] *Nineteenth Century*, April 1885, p. 625.

[112] See Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, ii. pp. 289, 290.

alludes in ‘Faust’:

> Ah! in the midst of her song,
> A red mouseskin sprang out of her mouth.

Turning to similar beliefs current among distant nations, we are told that the Andaman Islanders had a notion that at death the soul vanished from the earth in the form of various animals and fishes; and in Guinea, monkeys found in the locality of a graveyard are supposed to be animated by the spirits of the dead. As Mr. Andrew Lang remarks:[113] ‘Among savages who believe themselves to be descended from beasts, nothing can be more natural than the hypothesis that the souls revert to bestial shapes.’ Certain of the North American Indian tribes believe that the spirits of their dead enter into bears; and some of the Papuans in New Guinea ‘imagine they will reappear as certain of the animals in their own island. The cassowary and the emu are the most remarkable animals that they know of; they have lodged in them the shades of their ancestors, and hence the people abstain from eating them.’[114] Spiritualism, we are told, is very widely spread among the Esquimos, who maintain that all animals have their spirits, and that the spirits of men can enter into the bodies of animals.[115] In the Ladrone Islands it was supposed that the spirits

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[113] *Nineteenth Century*, April 1885, p. 625.

[114] Letourneau’s *Sociology*, p. 250.

[115] *Ibid.* p. 264.

of the dead animated the bodies of the fish, and 'therefore to make better use of these precious spirits, they burnt the soft portions of the dead body, and swallowed the cinders which they let float on the top of their cocoa-nut wine.'[116]

In most parts of England there is a popular belief in a spectral dog, which is generally described as 'large, shaggy, and black, with long ears and tail. It does not belong to any species of living dogs, but is severally said to represent a hound, a setter, a terrier, or a shepherd dog, though often larger than a Newfoundland.'[117] It is commonly supposed to be a bad spirit, haunting places where evil deeds have been done, or where some calamity may be expected. In Lancashire, this spectre-dog is known as 'Trash' and 'Striker,'[118] its former name having been applied to it from the peculiar noise made by its feet, which is supposed to resemble that of a person walking along a miry, sloppy road, with heavy shoes; and its latter appellation from its uttering a curious screech, which is thought to warn certain persons of the approaching death of some relative or friend. If followed, it retreats with its eyes fronting its pursuer, and either sinks into the ground with a frightful shriek, or in some mysterious manner disappears. When struck, the weapon passes through it as if it were a mere shadow. In Norfolk and Cambridgeshire this apparition is known to the peasantry by the name of 'shuck' – the

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[116] *Ibid.* p. 266.

[117] *Book of Days*, ii. p. 433.

[118] See Harland and Wilkinson's *Lancashire Folk-lore*, p. 91.

provincial word for 'shag' – and is reported to haunt churchyards and other lonely places. A dreary lane in the parish of Overstrand is called from this spectral animal 'Shuck's Lane,' and it is said that if the spot where it has been seen be examined after its disappearance, it will be found to be scorched, and strongly impregnated with the smell of brimstone. Mrs. Latham tells[119]

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[119] 'West Sussex Superstitions,' *Folk-lore Record*, i. p. 23.

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