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The Hazel as a Weapon

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CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE EDITOR OF *Folk-Lore*

DEAR SIR,—I am greatly indebted to Mr. Gardner for his constructive criticism. Looking through my notes on magical weapons I find one passage, which so far always seemed too obscure to be of any use; but now Mr. Gardner's quotation has thrown new light on it.

In *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, ed. and tr. by R. A. Stewart Macalister (Irish Text Society Publication, vol. 41, Dublin, 1941), IV, pp. 139–141, we read:

“And there used to be a battle every day between the Athenians and the Philistines . . . , till the Athenians dwindled away, all but a small remnant. For the Tuatha De Danann (who were between the Athenians and the Philistines) used to fashion demons in the bodies of the Athenians so that they used to come every day to battle. To the Philistines that was a marvel, and they came to the druid who was in the land, and they said unto him: We marvel, that the men whom we slay every day . . . should . . . come to battle with us on the morrow. Their elder gave them counsel, saying unto them: Take with you skewers of hazel and quicken to the battle to-morrow, and if the battle break before you, thrust in those skewers behind the necks of the men whom you shall slay. If they be demons, they shall become heaps of worms. Thereafter the Philistines came to the battle on the morrow, . . . and they thrust those points in behind the necks of the men whom they slew, and they became heaps of worms on the morrow. . . .”

Enough evidence seems to be forthcoming in favour of Mr. Gardner's assumption that Elmar actually carried “a sort of weapon” and not “a life-giving rod”.

May I be permitted to correct two lines in my contribution “Satire and Folklore” (vol. LV). On p. 78, lines 11–12, read instead of “hazel-fork,”—“staffs of white hazel” and (*ibid.*, line 13) “a white-hazel dog-staff”. In these three instances the hazel-staffs may be regarded as “the tokens of heralds”, as mentioned before.

ELLEN ETTLINGER

TO THE EDITOR OF *Folk-Lore*

NEATH, 25th January, 1945.

DEAR SIR,—Reading the article on “The White Dog” reminds me of the story told by the late Miss Cranogwen Rees of an old lady from this district called “Jennie” who used to carry her wares on her head over the mountain to sell in the market places of Aberdare, Merthyr, etc. On one occasion she became very frightened of wild animals, when a White Dog appeared alongside her and walked with her until it became light, and then disappeared.

Miss Rees told the story to my mother many times, and looked upon it, as Jennie did, as an answer to prayer. Miss Rees really believed the story to be true.¹

Yours faithfully,

ANNIE JAMES

¹ Miss Cranogwen Rees was a peripatetic preacher, some forty or more years ago, in Wales.—ED.