

# North Carolina Folk-Lore Society

BY CATHERINE ALBERTSON

The first annual meeting of the North Carolina Folk Lore Society was held at Raleigh on Easter Monday, April 24th 1913.

By folk-lore is meant "that body of oral tradition which is handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another." And this Society has for its purpose the preservation by publication, in the "North Carolina Review," "The Journal of American Folk-Lore," and a volume of Annual Proceedings of the North Carolina Folk-Lore Society, such material as is mentioned in a letter sent out by the organization committee shortly before Easter Monday, which will be found at the close of this article.

The Folk-Lore of the countries of the old World has been the basis of many of our greatest literary productions. The traditions of Ancient Greece as found in these greatest epics, the Iliad and Odyssey; the legends of ancient Rome; the story of Cinderella so beloved by children of all ages and nations; the beautiful Norse myths, the lovely Irish fairy tales are all outcome of the folk of those various countries. While the wondrous stories of baubee and brownie, demon and dwarf, gnome and geni, elf and fay that filled our childhood days with delightful, if somewhat fearsome expectations of some day encountering one of these mythical beings, all have descended to us from such remote antiquity that they seem to be the common heritage of the human race.

Banish these marvelous tales from the literature of the world and how much the poorer we should be! With what bed-time stories could mothers beguile the little ones? What would the children do without those airy creatures of the imagination with which the wondrous child-world is filled? What facts of history or science could ever compensate them for the loss of those beloved playfellows? And with what sad, reluctant leave takings would fawn and fairy, goblin and gnome, elf and troll part from their little mortal friends! How mournfully would the beloved Uncle Remus shake his grey head and totter away from the little boy and his friends, followed sadly by Brer Fox and Brer Wolf, and all these merry comrades of wood and field.

And but for the fact that writers of various ages have rescued from oblivion these beloved tales and traditions, the world of today would be deprived of the multitude of charming stories that for generations have beguiled both children and grown ups of all nations.

Lest the old tales and superstitions beloved and held in honor by our grandparents should be destroyed before the steady march of civilization and the way of educational progress now sweeping over our state, a number of the best known and most highly cultured men and women in North Carolina have organized a North Carolina Branch of the National Folk-Lore Society.

Such old wives tales, ghost stories, superstitions and beliefs in strange omens and curious cures as the society wishes to collect, are numerous in our state. On the isolated sand banks of our coast region, in the secluded mountain coves of our western counties, among the many rural districts of a country whose farmers and fishers and sturdy mountaineers have for generations lived "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife," the old stories of strange and supernatural creatures and occurrences brought by our ancestors from their homes across the sea, are still told by the winter fireside in these simple homes. The grand-dame still brews her potent compound for the cure of diseases which the dwellers in cities consider cases for a trained nurse, or hospital fees. The farmer still waits for certain phases of the moon before planting his seed and herbs. And the love-lorn maiden steals by night to the cot of the village wise-woman to beg a mystic potion wherewith to win the lad on whom she has set her heart.

But in a few years' time, all these ancient superstitions will

be laughed to scorn. The many railroads, the automobiles, the Rural deliveries, the motor boats all factors in the spread of civilization and sophistication, will so occupied in keeping up with the marvels of this marvelous age that the things thought wonderful by our forefathers will fail to thrill the children of the future.

The aeroplane will frighten away the Ariels of our childhood days, the elf will be outdone by electricity, no witch or wizard can compete with the miracles in working magic; the miracles of fairydom will give place to the wonders of radium, and the geni themselves despair of working deeds as miraculous as those wrought by the genius of the Twentieth Century inventor.

The old stories held dear by our forefathers will soon be entirely superseded by the fairy tales of science. The old omens and cures the ancient signs and symptoms all stand in danger of being utterly forgotten. Therefore the members of the Folk-Lore Society have banded together for the purpose of collecting from every available source the folk-lore of our state. And in order to help the society in its commendable work, the newspapers in every county are asked to invite their readers to write down any such material of their kind which they may happen to possess, and to send it to the proper authorities.

The ADVANCE will gladly receive any such contributions, and will see to it that the stories reach the Secretary of the Society.

And in order that our readers may know just what contributions are desired, a circular letter published by the Society is printed below.

### The Details of the Report Are, in Brief as follows:

1. Name.—The Society, which will be a branch of the American Folk-Lore Society, shall be called the North Carolina Folk-Lore Society.

2. Dues.—The annual dues, payable in advance, shall be one dollar a year for annual members, and three dollars and a half for Journal Members (those who pay \$3.50 will receive the Journal of American Folk-Lore and will become at once members also of the American Folk-Lore Society.)

3. Meeting.—The first annual meeting shall be held in the Senate chamber in Raleigh on Easter Monday, March 24th 1913, when professor George L. Kittridge, of Harvard University, one of the most distinguished scholars in America, will deliver an address on folk-lore.

4. Members.—Any citizen of the state shall be eligible to membership on the payment of one dollar, and all who send their names and dues to the acting secretary, Frank C. Brown, Durham, North Carolina, before March 24th 1913 shall become charter members of the Society and shall so be enrolled.

5. Purpose.—Folk-lore is that body of oral tradition which is handed down by word or mouth from generation to generation. North Carolina is particularly rich in popular lore, and it is extremely important that such material be saved ere it is extremely

terial as is still available should be saved before it has been entirely forgotten. The North Carolina Folk-Lore Society shall have for its purpose the preservation by publication in the North Carolina Review, the Journal of the American Folk-Lore, and a volume of Annual Proceedings of the North Carolina Folk Lore Society such material as is mentioned among the following items:

- (a) Customs such as those connected with planting, harvesting crops, and slaughtering animals.
  - (b) Children's games.
  - (c) Signs and superstitions connected with the weather.
  - (d) Cures used by the country people for various diseases; superstitions regarding shrubs, plants and trees.
  - (e) Unusual social usages, such as throwing rice and old shoes at a newly married couple.
  - (f) Stories of local celebrities and queer characters; place legends.
  - (g) Unusual words; peculiar dialectal forms.
  - (h) Popular tales, especially those connected with "spooks", "hunts", witches, and witch and conjure doctors.
  - (i) Jokes, proverbs, and riddles.
  - (j) Ballads and popular songs.
6. Those Who can Serve the Society.—It is by no means necessary that the collector be a trained folk-loreist. Many persons throughout the state will doubtless be glad to contribute from their memory or observation local superstitions and traditions and thus save them from oblivion. To these the society will look for material and on these it will depend to preserve the traditions of our state.

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Multiply this quarter of an ounce by the number of strokes the average operator makes in writing a letter and multiply this result by the number of letters written and then multiply that by the number of working days in a year, and you get some idea of how much manual effort alone is saved by the L. C. Smith & Bros. typewriter.

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N.B. The Following schedule figures published as information ONLY and are not guaranteed. TRAINS LEAVE ELIZABETH CITY

South Bound  
10:53 P. M. Daily for Raleigh Pullman Sleeping cars for Raleigh, Goldsboro and intermediate stations.  
11:35 A. M. Daily for Raleigh, Goldsboro, and intermediate stations. Pullman Parlor car for Raleigh.  
6:22 A. M. Daily for Norfolk and intermediate stations.  
2:00 P. M. Daily for Norfolk and intermediate stations.  
2:10 P. M. Monday, Wednesday and Friday for Suffolk.

For further information, apply to F. L. Garrett, Ticket Agent, Elizabeth City, N. C.

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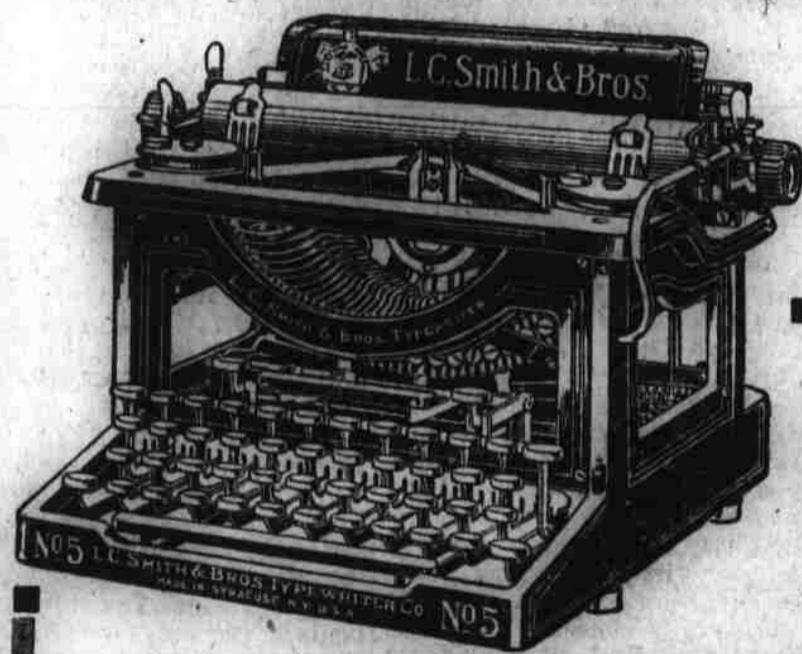
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