



BY EDWARD SALMON.

IN giving an account, which I here propose to do, of the ceremonies of different nations in bestowing names upon their children, it is natural to begin with our own country. Nowhere is the ceremony of naming the baby more picturesque or more simple than in England. Mother and father, godmothers and godfathers, and friends invited to take part in it, make a point of dressing in their best, and the child, in the spotless white of the handsomely embroidered christening robe, is a fit emblem of innocence, regnant for a brief while in human shape. Simple as

is the ceremony, however, it is capable of all magnificence and pomp, as may be seen by the following illustration from the painting by C. R. Leslie, R.A., of a Royal christening in which appear the Queen and Prince Albert, the then Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishop of London, and other dignitaries of the Church; the Queen Dowager, the Duchess of Gloucester, the Duchess of Kent, the King of the Belgians, the Duke of Sussex, the Duke of Wellington, and many more notable and noble personages of that time.

Among the Christian Churches the Roman Catholic baptismal ceremony alone presents



From the Painting by
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THE CHRISTENING OF THE PRINCESS ROYAL.

[C. R. Leslie, R.A.]

any remarkable attributes. The child is supposed to be born deaf, and to be possessed of the evil spirit, and the first thing the priest has to do is to exorcise the devil and to give the babe hearing. He performs the latter operation by wetting his right thumb with his lips and touching the child's right ear, saying, as he does so, "Do thou open."

In Protestant churches the godmother holds the child fully dressed until it is taken by the clergyman; in the Roman Catholic, the child is stripped and, naked or semi-naked, is held by the godfather over the font, and the godmother takes it by the feet and holds them towards the east. After the renunciation of the Prince of Darkness by the godfather on the babe's behalf, the priest anoints the child between the shoulders with the sign of the cross. The baptism is performed in the usual way, save that the priest puts a piece of white linen on the child's head and a lighted taper into the child's hand, or rather the hand of the godfather.

The christening ceremony in other European lands is much what it is in England, the attributes being varied only by the characteristics of the people. The differences of dress, and of physique, assuming all to be Roman Catholic or Protestant, are the chief differences between a christening in Germany, Italy, France, and England. In all, the event is regarded with a certain solemnity more or less impressive as the parents are more or less religious.

One of our illustrations, taken from one of

the most extraordinary works ever published, namely, Bernard Picart's "Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World," shows the ceremony of baptism among the Laplanders. Whether the Lapps have become more earnest Christians than they were, I do not know. It was only towards the end of the last century that they adopted Christianity pretty generally; and at heart they remained Pagans. About their baptismal ceremony there is, or was, nothing exceptional. The mites, packed securely in

their new-moon-like case—which I am afraid will bring to the minds of most people the advertisement of a familiar brand of soap—are simply crossed with water, and a name is given to them. What is remarkable is the fondness of the Lapps for the names of their Pagan ancestors. Many thousands of Laplanders have received Pagan titles on the occasion of their Christian baptism. Nor do the Lapps, as we do, regard the name which they give to their children at that time as binding for the rest of their lives. After a dangerous illness, or even a serious indispo-



A LAPP CHRISTENING.

sition, Picart tells us the Lapps altered the names of their children, though whether by way of commemorative thanksgiving or in the belief that they were giving them a wholly new start, he does not say.

From the Lapps to the land of the Caribs is a far cry. On the other side of the Atlantic several curious customs are to be found among primitive or semi-primitive peoples. The Caribs, like Christians, have a sort of godfather and godmother to assist in

the ceremony of naming the baby, but, being heathens, have a very different use for these self-sacrificing folk. Among the Caribs, instead of presenting the child with a present as good as they can afford, it is the duty of the godfather and godmother (so to call them, for the sake of a title which defines their position if not their characters) to bore holes in the child's ears and lower lip and between his nostrils, from which jewels and ornaments are hung. Cruel as the practice is, it should be said that the ceremony is not performed until the child is old enough to stand the ordeal.

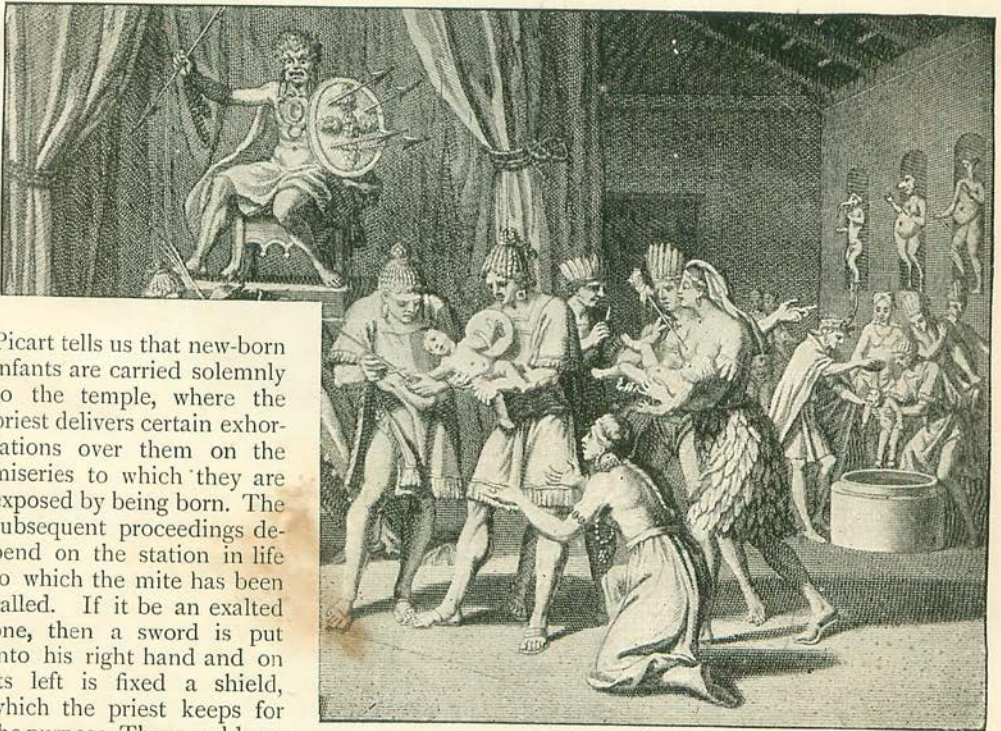
Among the Indians of Florida it is the practice to name the male children not after the best friends and best-loved members of a family, but after the enemies the father or his friends have killed, the villages they have destroyed, or some successful event in which they have figured during war.

In another part of America—Mexico—

the tools or instruments which he will need to use in the years ahead. The child having, as it were, been brought into touch with his future, the priest carries him near the altar and draws a drop or two of blood from his ear and parts of his body. Water is then thrown on it, or the child is immersed.

Some Mexicans have essentially pretty notions with regard to the naming of the baby. Thus, when the ceremony just gone through is not in favour, they adopt another. A few days after the birth of the child, the nurse takes it into a yard where some rushes have been prepared, and where a vessel full of water can stand. The nurse plunges the babe three times into the vessel, and with each immersion three little boys of three years old, in their loudest voices, name the baby.

It is the custom with many native races to name their children, without ceremony, merely from some incident or association of



THE MEXICAN CEREMONY.

Picart tells us that new-born infants are carried solemnly to the temple, where the priest delivers certain exhortations over them on the miseries to which they are exposed by being born. The subsequent proceedings depend on the station in life to which the mite has been called. If it be an exalted one, then a sword is put into his right hand and on its left is fixed a shield, which the priest keeps for the purpose. These emblems

are significant, no doubt, of a patriotic predisposition on the part of the babe to defend himself, his order, and his country against all comers.

But if he be born with a humbler spoon in his mouth—if he should be a mechanic's son, say—the sword and shield give place to

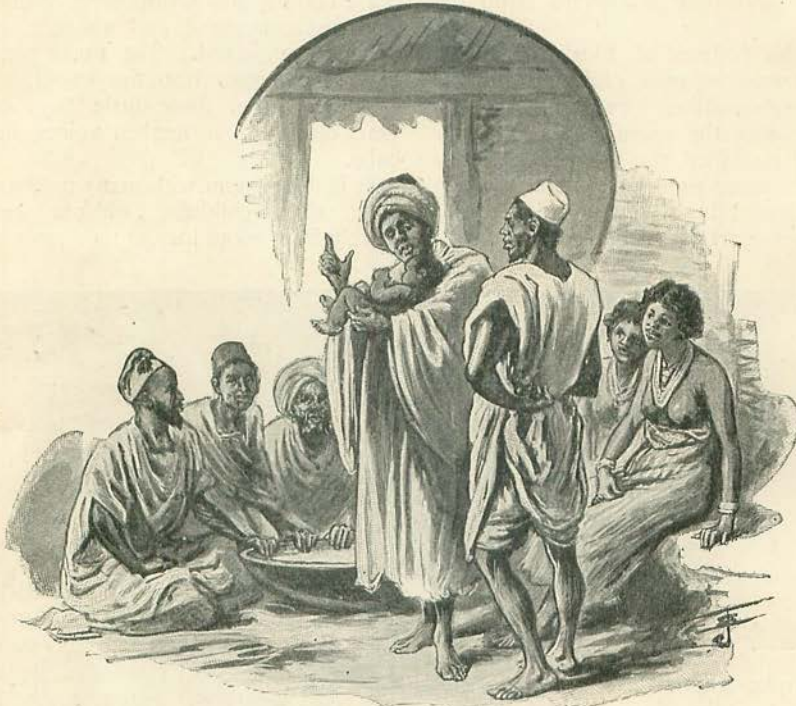
birth. This custom—which, as everyone probably knows, is Biblical—obtains especially in Africa and Australia, and those who are familiar with particular native languages must often be amused at the quaint titles borne by individual aboriginals. As a matter

of fact, of course, there is nothing more in the practice than in the naming of our ancestors from their occupations or environment in the days when surnames were first taken.

To call a man Kangaroo Rat because a kangaroo rat was seen to rush through the bush at the moment he came into the world, or Hyena because a hyena laughed—what a laugh!—at the moment of birth is no more singular than to call a man a Gladstone or a Blackstone, a Burns or a Bannerman, a

names of their children, we hear these poor creatures addressed as 'The Father of God's Bounty' (*Abu Fudle Allah*), and 'The Mother of the Full Moon,' etc., etc., through the whole list of poet's fancies."

So far as I am aware, only two distinctive ceremonies are recorded in connection with the naming of the aboriginal babe. Mungo Park, in his account of his travels in Africa, describes the practice among the Mandingoes, a Mussulman race on the West Coast. The Mandingoes call their children sometimes



NAMING A MANDINGO BABY.

Churchill or a Chamberlain, a Butcher, a Baker, a Webb, or a Frost. The difference, of course, now is that the whole family has come to be known by such a name, and a supplemental name is given to enable one to distinguish between a group who would otherwise have to be known as Frost 1, Frost 2, or Frost 3, as the case might be.

In Arabia the people are fond of poetic and flowery names, especially for the girls. "We have all about us," says Dr. W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book," "among servants, washerwomen, and beggars—suns, and stars, and full moons, and roses, and lilies, and jessamines, and diamonds, and pearls, and every other beautiful epithet you can think of, and as the parents assume the

after a relative, sometimes after a remarkable event. The babe is usually named when seven or eight days old.

"The ceremony," says the famous traveller, "commences by shaving the infant's head, and a dish called dega, made of pounded corn and sour milk, is prepared for the guests. If the parents are rich, a sheep or a goat is commonly added. The feast is called 'Ding koon lee,' the 'child's head shaving.' During my stay at Kamalia, I was present at four different feasts of this kind, and the ceremony was the same in each, whether the child belonged to a bushreen or a kafir. The schoolmaster, who officiated as priest on these occasions, and who is necessarily a bushreen, first said a long prayer over the

dega, during which every person present took hold of the brim of the calabash with his right hand. After this, the schoolmaster took the child in his arms and said a second prayer, in which he repeatedly solicited the blessing of God upon the child and upon the company. When this prayer was ended, he whispered a

woman and laid on a mat in the midst of the family. A ladle is placed in its chubby little sable hand, and an address is delivered on the duties of the good housewife.

Having seen how the Moslems in Africa, in the person of the Mandingoes, name their little ones, let us pay a visit to Persia, in



THE PERSIAN CEREMONY.

few sentences in the child's ear, and spat three times in its face. This part of the ceremony being ended, the father of the child divided the dega into a number of balls, one of which he distributed to every person present. The inquiry was then made if any person in the town was dangerously sick, it being usual in such cases to send the party a large portion of the dega, which is thought to possess great medical virtues."

Another African ceremony of some interest is that adopted by the negroes of Ardra, and described by Picart. The child is about ten days old, and the ceremony is performed to the accompaniment of singing and instrumental music. A sort of shield is placed in the centre of the company, the babe is laid upon it, and the celebrant then delivers a lengthy address on the principles upheld by the negroes, and the duties which the newly-named babe will have to discharge in order to be hereafter a happy and honourable man. The naming of a daughter, Picart tells us, is performed with nearly the same ceremony, though not with so much solemnity as in the case of a son. The girl babe is taken by a

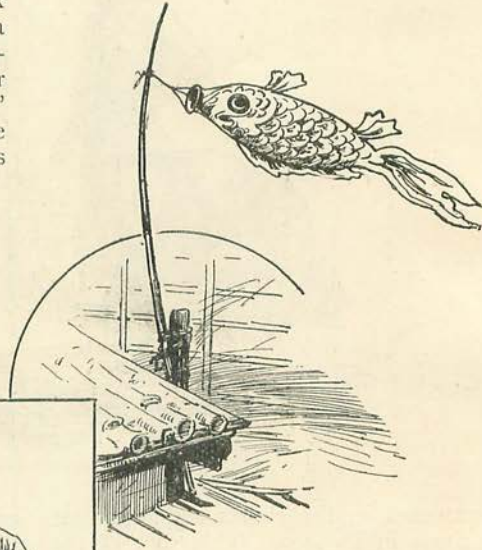
company with Mrs. Bishop, that most delightful of travelling companions (I speak as a student of her books), and ascertain how the followers of the Prophet perform the ceremony within the dominions of the Shah.

The mode of procedure is totally different on the west of Asia from that on the west of Africa. Mrs. Bishop points out that the ceremony of naming the baby in Persia resembles that which obtains among the Buddhists of Tibet on similar occasions. "Unless the father be very poor indeed"—writes the author of "Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan"—"he makes a feast for his friends on an auspicious day and invites the village mollahs. Sweetmeats are solemnly eaten after the guests have assembled. Then the infant, stiffened and mummied in its swaddling clothes, is brought in and laid on the floor by one of the mollahs. Five names are written on five slips of paper, which are placed between the leaves of the Koran, or under the edge of the carpet. The first chapter of the Koran is then read. One of the slips is drawn at random, and a mollah takes up the child and pronounces in its ear the name

found upon it, after which he places the paper on its clothes." This lottery-like proceeding over, the relations and friends give the babe presents according to their means—a custom obviously on all fours with our christening gifts. "Thereafter," continues Mrs. Bishop, "it is called by the name it has received. Among men's names there is a preponderance of those taken from the Old Testament, among which Ibrahim, Ismail, Suleiman, Yusuf, and Moussa are prominent. Abdullah, Yusuf, and Mahmoud, Hassan, Raouf, Baba Houssein, Imam, are also common, and many names have the suffix of Ali among the Shiah. Fatmeh is a woman's name, but girl-children usually receive the name of some flower or bird, or fascinating quality of disposition or person."

The incident of laying the child on the floor brings to mind the custom of the Japs in the performance of this function. In Japan everybody agrees that babies are objects of the most tender regard and solicitude, and we rather look for some specially noteworthy ceremony when the day comes for giving him a distinctive title. Authorities differ a

different from that of Miss Bacon, and in an article on Japanese ceremonies in the "Asiatic Quarterly," little more than a year ago, she enlarged somewhat on the symbolism which is to be found in the method of naming the baby in the Land of the Rising Sun. As in most other countries, the birth of a boy is the occasion of special rejoicing. A paper bag in the shape of a carp is hung outside the house at the end of a bamboo pole, and becoming inflated assumes a life-like appearance. The carp, Mrs. Salwey explains,



NAMING-THE BABY IN JAPAN.

is an emblem of perseverance, pluck, and possible long life.

"When the Japanese baby boy is a hundred days old, he is carried to the priest's house in the Shinto Temple, and there receives a compound name, from the family name and that of his guardian. This guardian is generally the dearest friend of the family, and his duty is to watch over the child's future career. The dual name insures the bond of

good deal as to what really does happen. One, Miss A. M. Bacon, the writer of a brochure on "Japanese Girls and Women," positively asserts that the child is named on the seventh day, but that there is no ceremony. All that is done, according to Miss Bacon, is to keep holiday and to eat a festival dish of rice, cooked with red beans, which is supposed to denote good fortune.

Mrs. C. M. Salwey's experience is very

union between them. The priest writes down the name and gives it to the child to keep in his prayer bag, as the sponsor's name has to be remembered continually before the household shrine. When prayers have been said over the child, he is placed on the floor and allowed for the first time to wander at his own sweet will whithersoever he chooses. Towards which ever cardinal point he turns, so will his future be influenced."

The Gohei—some slips of paper hung usually on ropes of straw to remind votaries of the existence of ancestral spirits—is held over the boy to propitiate these spirits, so that they may induce him to turn in the right direction, and two fans are presented to the little man, which in after years will be exchanged for swords.

Japan and China, which, not so many years

to improve the race would be to inculcate a higher sentiment in the interests of the babe, be it girl or boy, than now obtains.

The difference in the feelings entertained towards boys and girls in China is seen in the method of giving them a name. According to one chronicler, when the babe is a month old it has all its hair shaved off, generally by a woman who has had sons of her own ; a

woman with sons being permitted to do many things a woman without sons may not do. "If the baby is a boy, his relations and friends are invited to a feast the day his head is shaved, and many of them bring a present ; in some parts of the country the present is always a silver plate, on which is engraved : 'Long life, honours, and happiness.' On this day the baby gets his name, but it does not keep it all its life : so this first name is called the Milk name. A girl is generally called by her Milk name till she marries ; but a boy gets a new name the first day he goes to school."



THE CHINESE CEREMONY—SHAVING THE BABY'S HEAD.

ago, were regarded as having numerous characteristics in common, are, as a matter of fact, wholly unlike, and in nothing are they more unlike than in their treatment of the little ones. Chinese indifference to the charms of babydom seems to me to throw a vivid light on the Chinese nature. This indifference is, no doubt, largely due to the treatment accorded the baby girl in China. If the baby girl is allowed to live, she is looked upon as a nuisance, and gets a minimum of parental love. Women reared under such blighting influences cannot hope to grow up with the large hearts necessary to train children in the ways of sweetness and light, and when we denounce the cruelty of the Chinese, we should remember that one way

Of the many curious customs at which we have glanced in this brief paper, none is more curious than that of the Banians—an Indian trading class and inferior order of Brahmins. The only place in which I have been able to find any reference to this custom is in the pages of the industrious Picart. He tells us that when the infant is four days old, the Banians perform the ceremony of giving it a name. The picture on the next page will show how this is done. Several infants are borrowed of the neighbours and placed round a large cloth, which is spread upon the floor.

"The Brahmin who officiates puts a certain quantity of rice upon the centre of the cloth, and the infant has then to be named upon



THE BANIAN CEREMONY.

the rice. The attendants take hold of the corners of the cloth, raise it from the ground, and shake it to and fro for about a quarter of an hour."

When the child and the rice have been sufficiently shaken up, the infant's sister—Picart seems to assume that all infants have sisters—gives it any name which she thinks proper. Not till two months after is the child initiated into the religion of his people. What the significance of the naming ceremony is, Picart does not say, and whether it still obtains or not I am not aware. It is the only instance I have met with in which rice plays a part in the ceremony, and the practice seems very cruel. Anyone who has ever been tossed in a blanket will sympathize with the helpless mite, for, however gently it may be moved about, the rice and the shaking combined are

calculated to play havoc equally with its cuticle and its nerves.

When we come to the fire ceremony, we understand that the object of the celebrants is to exorcise any evil spirit by which the innocent may be possessed. The practice of holding a baby over a fire on the occasion when it receives a name is



THE PARSEE CEREMONY.

widespread, though perhaps less common than it used to be. Among the Parsees it is easy to understand, but it is curious that not so long ago it existed in the United Kingdom itself, and especially in Scotland.

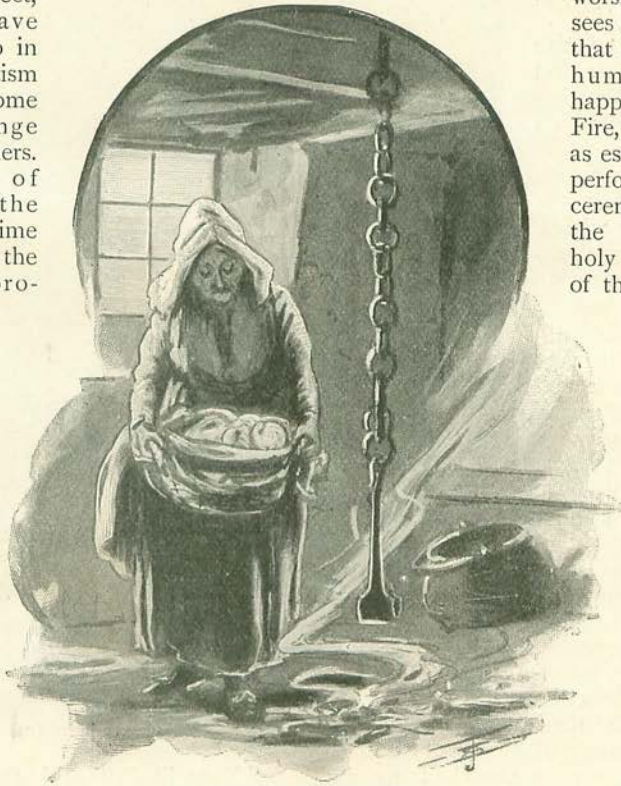
Thus it is reported of one parish in Perthshire that, in the earlier years of the century, it was customary when a child was baptized to put it upon a clean basket, over which a cloth had previously been spread. Bread and cheese were laid upon the cloth, and the whole arrangement was then moved "three times successively round the iron crook, which hangs over the fire from the roof of a house, for the purpose of supporting the pot when water is boiled or victuals are prepared. This might anciently," says the chronicler, "be intended to counteract the malignant arts which witches and evil spirits were imagined to practise against new-born infants."

Scotland has always been peculiarly superstitious in this respect, and mothers have been known to go in terror, till the baptism took place, lest some fairy might change their mites for others. The holding of children over the flames was at one time very customary, the import of the pro-

ceeding being clearly shown in the words, repeated three times, "Let the flame consume thee now or never."

A blend between the fire and the water accompaniments to the naming ceremony is that among the Parsees. The object of the Parsees is to purify, and both elements are enlisted in furtherance of that end. When a child is born, a priest waits on the parents at their own house, and after he has made a note of the hour, moment, and circumstances of the child's introduction to the world, he calculates its nativity. He then consults the father and mother about a name, and that point being settled, he pronounces the choice in the presence of the assembled friends. The child is washed, or dipped into a tub of water, and subsequently taken to the church, where it is held for a few moments over a fire. Though not, as is commonly supposed, absolutely fire-

worshippers, the Parsees appear to believe that by fire alone can human virtue and happiness be assured. Fire, consequently, is as essential to the due performance of the ceremony of naming the Parsee baby, as holy water is to that of the Christian.



A SCOTTISH SUPERSTITION.