



Brazier Robinson Possessed of Two Spirits

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“Stars of the Celestial Bear legend.

“Chart showing their approximate position in lat. 45 N.

“To find the position of the stars at midnight in the middle of any season, turn the chart until the name of that season is at the foot of the page.”

*Editor Journal of American Folk-Lore.*

WHY THE POPLAR STIRS — SUPERSTITION OF MINERS IN MICHIGAN. — Near Marquette, Mich., a mining superintendent, having occasion to lay out a road near a mine, suggested to the foreman, who, like his gang, was Irish, that the men should cut down some neighboring poplar-trees for corduroy. The foreman said that not a man of them could be hired to chop down one of those trees, that the men would as soon think of cutting off their own hands. “Don’t you know,” said he, “that the Saviour’s cross was made of that tree?” and added that you will never see a poplar-tree perfectly still. The idea apparently is that the tree is perpetually agitated or trembling because of the terrible use made of it at Golgotha.

*H. R. Kidder.*

BRAZIEL ROBINSON POSSESSED OF TWO SPIRITS. — Braziel Robinson, recently deceased, is a negro of about seventy-five years of age, and came to our plantation immediately after the war to test the question whether he was really free or not, and had the right to move from his former master’s place. He soon established a reputation as a foreseer of events, as a root-doctor, would advise negroes when to plant their garden, when to expect rain, administered in a medical way to the many wants of the community in which he lived. Braziel had a peculiar habit, when any one asked him a question, of asking you please to give him a chew of tobacco, so that he could collect his thoughts before answering you.

The following statement is given in his own words: —

“I am not a preacher, but a member of the church, but I can make a few remarks in church, I have a seat in conference, I can see spirits, I have two spirits, one that prowls around, and one that stays in my body. The reason I have two spirits is because I was born with a double caul. People can see spirits if they are born with one caul, but nobody can have two spirits unless they are born with a double caul, very few people have two spirits. I was walking along and met a strange spirit, and then I heard a stick crack behind me and turned round and heard my prowling spirit tell the strange spirit it was me, not to bother me, and then the strange spirit went away and left me alone. My two spirits are good spirits, and have power over evil spirits, and unless my mind is evil, can keep me from harm. If my mind is evil my two spirits try to win me, if I won’t listen to them, then they leave me and make room for evil spirits and then I’m lost forever, mine have never left me, and they won’t if I can help it, as I shall try to keep in the path.”

Here he took the quid of tobacco out of his mouth, and rolling it in his hand for a few minutes, resumed: —

“Spirits are around about all the time, dogs and horses can see them as well as people, they don’t walk on the ground, I see them all the time, but I never speak to one unless he speaks to me first, I just walk along as if I saw nothing, you must never speak first to a spirit. When he speaks to me and I speak back I always cross myself, and if it is a good spirit, it tells me something to help me, if it is a bad spirit, it disappears, it can’t stand the cross. Sometimes two or more spirits are together, but they are either all good, or all bad spirits, they don’t mix like people on earth, good and bad together.

“Good spirits have more power than bad spirits, but they can’t help the evil spirits from doing us harm. We were all born to have trouble, and only God can protect us. Sometimes the good spirits let the evil spirits try to make you fall, but I won’t listen to the evil spirits.

“When a person sees a spirit, he can tell whether it is a good spirit or a bad spirit by the color, good spirits are always white, and bad spirits are always black. When a person sees a bad spirit, it sometimes looks like a black man with no head, and then changes into a black cat, dog, or hog, or cow, sometimes the cow has only one horn and it stands out between the eyes. I never saw them change into a black bird; a man told me he saw one in the shape of a black owl; but I have seen good spirits change into white doves, but never saw one in shape of a cat, have seen them in the shape of men and children, some with wings and some without, then I have seen them look like a mist or a small white cloud. When a person is sick and meets good spirits near enough to feel the air from their bodies, or wings, he generally gets well. Any one can feel a spirit passing by, though only a few can see it. I’ve seen a great many together at one time, but that was generally about dusk. I never saw them flying two or three along together. Good and bad spirits fly, but a bad spirit can’t fly away up high in the air, he is obleeged to stay close to the ground. If a person follows a bad spirit, it will lead him into all kinds of bad places, in ditches, briers. A bad spirit is obleeged to stay in the body where it was born, all the time. If one has two spirits, the one outside wanders about, it is not always with you. If it is near and sees any danger, it comes and tells the spirit inside of you, so it can keep you from harm. Sometimes it can’t, for the danger is greater than any spirit can ward off, then one’s got to look higher.

“I’ve heard spirits talk to themselves, they talk in a whisper like, sometimes you can tell what they’re saying, and sometimes you can’t. I don’t think the spirit in the body has to suffer for the sins of the body it is in, as it is always telling you to do right. I can’t tell, some things are hidden from us.

“People born with a caul generally live to be old. The caul is always buried in a graveyard.

“Children born with a caul talk sooner than other children, and have lot more sense.

“I was conjured in May 1898, while hoeing cotton, I took off my shoes and hoed two rows, then I felt strange, my feet begun to swell, and then

my legs, and then, I could n't walk. I had to stop and go home. Just as I stepped in the house, I felt the terriblest pain in my jints, I sat down and thought, and then looked in my shoes, I found some yaller dirt, and knew it was graveyard dirt, then I knew I was conjured, I then hunted about to find if there was any conjure in the house and found a bag under my door-step. I opened the bag and found, some small roots about an inch long, some black hair, a piece of snake skin, and some graveyard dirt, dark-yaller, right off some coffin. I took the bag and dug a hole in the public road in front of my house, and buried it with the dirt out of my shoes, and throwed some red pepper all around the house. I did n't get any better, and went and saw a root-doctor, who told me he could take off the conjure, he gave me a cup of tea to drink and biled up something and put it in a jug to wash my feet and legs with, but it ain't done me much good, he ain't got enough power, I am gwine to see one in Augusta, who has great power, and can tell me who conjured me. They say root-doctors have power over spirits, who will tell them who does the conjuring; they generally uses yerbs gathered on the changes of the moon, and must be got at night. People git conjur from the root-doctors and one root-doctor often works against another, the one that has the most power does the work.

“People gits most conjured by giving them snake's heads, lizards, and scorpions, dried and beat up into powder and putting it in the food or water they drink, and then they gits full of the varmints; I saw a root-doctor cut out of a man's leg a lizard and a grasshopper, and then he got well. Some conjur ain't to kill, but to make a person sick or make him have pain, and then conjur is put on the ground in the path where the person to be conjured goes, it is put down on a young moon, a growing moon, so the conjur will rise up and grow, so the person stepping over it will git conjured. Sometimes they roll it up in a ball and tie it to a string and hang it from a limb, so the person to be conjured, coming by, touches the ball, and the work 's done, and he gits conjured in the part that strikes the ball, the ball is small and tied by a thread so a person can't see it. There are many ways to conjur, I knew a man that was conjured by putting graveyard dirt under his house in small piles and it almost killed him, and his wife. The dirt made holes in the ground, for it will always go back as deep as you got it, it goes down to where it naturally belongs.

“Only root-doctors can git the graveyard dirt, they know what kind to git and when, the hants won't let everybody git it, they must git it thro' some kind of spell, for the graveyard dirt works trouble 'til it gits back inter the ground, and then wears' off. It must git down to the same depth it was took from, that is as deep as the coffin lid was from the surface of the ground.”

*Roland Steiner, M. D.*

GROVETOWN, COLUMBIA COUNTY, GA.

AN OLD ENGLISH NURSERY TALE. — The following version of a familiar nursery tale was obtained by the editor of this Journal many years ago