

## TINDLES.

(A CURIOUS OLD FINDERN CUSTOM).

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ON All Souls' Day (2 November) the villagers of Findern formerly kept a curious annual custom. The boys and girls would proceed on that evening to the adjoining common, and light up a number of small fires among the furze growing there, which they called *Tindles*.<sup>1</sup>

“Upon enquiring into the origin of this custom amongst the inhabitants of the place, they suppose it to be a relique of popery, and that the professed design of it, when first instituted, was to light souls out of purgatory; but as the commons have been inclosed there very lately, that has most probably put an end to the custom, for want of the wonted materials.”<sup>2</sup>

The above account was published in November, 1784, by a correspondent who signed himself A.B., and dated his article from Chesterfield, 28 August. But the custom may have survived to a considerably later date, for Mr. John Piggott, jun., F.S.A., in *Notes and Queries*, 3 October, 1868, points out that *tind* was then a word used in Derbyshire meaning “to kindle,” and he adds that “in the latter county tindle is the term used for a fire made by the children on All Souls' night.” Mr. Piggott refers us to *The Reliquary*, October, 1866 (vol. vii, p. 65). On consulting the reference given, it is found to be an

<sup>1</sup> See T. F. Thiselton Dyer's *British Popular Customs*, p. 409; *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 54, p. 836; *Notes and Queries*, 4th S., ii, 335.

<sup>2</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 54, p. 836.

article on tinder-boxes by John Holland of Sheffield, which has nothing to do with the subject, except that Llewellyn Jewitt, the learned Editor of *The Reliquary*, added a footnote: "It may be as well to add a line to this highly interesting paper, in reference to the name of *Tinder*, to say that in Derbyshire "Tindle" is the term used for a fire made by the children on All Souls night. "Tind" is frequently used in the sense *to kindle*."<sup>1</sup> This interesting word *tindle* is compared by Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* with *teanlay* and *teanla* (Lancashire), meaning "the fire kindled on All Souls' Eve," so that it would appear that the word, and not the custom it describes, was peculiar to Findern. Other similar dialect words mentioned by Wright are *tawnle*, *taunel*, *taunle*, *tawnel*, *teanle* and *taundle*, all of which mean "a bonfire." Also *tendle*, *tennel*, and *tennle* for "firewood."

The verb *tend* is used in many districts for "to kindle"; and as a noun, *tend*, in the dialect of Lonsdale hundred, Lancashire, means "fire." There must also be a connection with the non-dialect word "tinder," which is derived from Anglo-Saxon *tendan*, *tyndan*, (whence Middle English *tenden*), to kindle. From this we get *tind*, in common use in the Seventeenth Century; also dialect forms *tin*, *tine*, *tend*, *tind* (Cheshire), *teen* (Devonshire), and *tind* (Derbyshire), all meaning "to kindle."

In *Notes and Queries*, 5 December, 1868, D. Macphail wrote: "Mr. Piggott mentions *tindle* as a term used in Derbyshire for a fire made by the children on All Souls' night. This word is used in Renfrewshire under the form *taundel* or *taunel*, having a similar meaning. Any large fire made out of doors is so designated. It is often an amusement to boys in rural districts to go out into the fields and collect the cuttings of hedges, dried grass, etc. into a heap, for the purpose of making a *taunel*. Great is

<sup>1</sup> *The Reliquary*, Vol. vii, p. 71.

their delight, when, having struck a match, and ' kennelt ' their fire, the flames begin to rise."

These remarks led to another short note in *Notes and Queries*, 16 January, 1869, where a correspondent points out that in Flanders *tondel* was the word for a tinder-box and that Pomey's *Belgico-Latinum* Dictionary<sup>1</sup> gives *tnel*, *torder*, *tintel*, as translations of *igniarium*. (Cf. Dutch *tondel*, *tonderdoos*, a tinder-box; Swedish *tindra*, to sparkle; and *tunder*, tinder; Old Norse *tyndra*, to sparkle; Old French *tondres*, tinder; and Old Norse or Norwegian words *tyndra*, to sparkle; *tendra*, *tandra*, *tende*, to light a fire; *tundra*, to blaze; *tundr*, tinder; *tendring*, a setting fire to; *maanetendring*, the new moon).

It would be interesting to hear whether this custom of Tindles on All Souls' Day is still observed, either in Derbyshire or elsewhere; if so, at which villages; if not, when was it last noticed?

The Vicar of Findern, the Rev. H. Saxton, kindly made enquiries on my behalf in his parish; but he has informed me, in a letter dated 2 August, 1945, that none of the present inhabitants of Findern has ever heard of Tindles.

The evidence quoted above would seem to imply that Tindles was still kept up as recently as 1867. Although the writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1784 thought the Enclosures had "most probably" put an end to the custom, Mr. Jewitt and Mr. Piggott, writing in 1866 and 1868 respectively, both use the present tense; though Mr. Piggott seems to have copied Mr. Jewitt's footnote, for it will be observed that he uses the identical wording. D. Macphail likewise does not say that Taundel was a similar custom in Renfrewshire; he says *is*, i.e. in 1868.

<sup>1</sup> i.e., Francois Antoine Pomey: *Novum Dictionarium Belgico-Latinum*, 8vo., 1753.