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The Hazel as a Weapon

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## CORRESPONDENCE

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TO THE EDITOR OF *Folk-Lore*

SIR,—In *Folk-Lore* for June Mrs. Ettlinger, when commenting on Miss Randolph's paper on "Early Irish Satire and the White-Thorn Tree," quotes Elcmar "without any arms upon him except a fork of white hazel in his hand," and the hazel is supposed to have "life-giving" powers. But does not the text suggest that the hazel could be a sort of weapon?

I am interested because I know an old Irish story about a boy who was attacked by three witches at night, trying to kill him. He had a bow and only one arrow, which he aimed at them, and one witch cried: "Is it a hazel twig he has in his bow? If it is we're all destroyed entirely!" The story goes on to say that it was not a hazel arrow, but the boy spoke up and said, "It is a hazel twig, and I will destroy you all!" So the witches fled and left him.

It seems a pointless story, as he evidently could not shoot more than one arrow, unless there was some virtue or magic in a hazel which could kill by pointing, like the Australian and other pointing sticks or bones, or the Malay *kris* Mojapahit. The fact that the story insists on his having only one arrow would suggest that to carry a bow and only one arrow is an unlikely thing. I mean to say, if this story said he had been out hunting and had only one arrow left it would have explained it, but it didn't.

The only reference I can find that seems to have a bearing on this incident is Faraday, who in *Pendragon*, speaking of the Britons, says "They tip their arrows with stone. They make them of any straight wood, but prefer hazel because of its magical powers, which are disastrous to the enemy." I have also heard long ago—I forget where—that a man hit by a hazel arrow must die.

Please can you, or any of your readers, give me any information on this subject. I believe that witches or magicians were supposed to use blasting rods, made of hazel with magic runes cut on them, and that these were used as sort of pointing sticks to blast an enemy, but I am not certain where I heard this. Could Elcmar have been carrying one of these?

G. B. GARDNER

TO THE EDITOR OF *Folk-Lore*

SIR,—The following curious statement, the good faith of which I see no reason to doubt, appears in the correspondence column of the *Daily Mirror* for July 12 of this year. The writer says that in 1916 (the exact time of year is not stated, but is given as "autumn") he was stationed at Malenny Camp, near Edinburgh, being then a captain in the Army. He and another officer went for a walk up a neighbouring hill. He continues: