ANANCI STORIES.

In the Folk-Lore Record, vol. iii. Part i., two Ananci Stories are given, as related by a Mulatto woman, born in Antigua, who said that Ananci was the spider. Probably many negro stories of a similar character are to be met with in the works of travellers and others. I have heard them spoken of by a lady who was born in Jamaica as Nancy* Stories, and such would seem to have been the name generally given to them by Europeans. Mr. Matthew Gregory Lewis, better known as "Monk" Lewis, thus refers to them in his Journal of a West India Proprietor. The term "Ananci" is, however, the proper one; as appears from the following passage taken from William Bosman's Description of the Coast of Guinea, which also enables us to understand why the spider should be credited with the stories in question. Bosman, after mentioning an enormous spider which is found on the Gold Coast, says, "the Negroes call this spider Ananse, and believe that the first men were made by this creature; and, notwithstanding some of them by conversation with Europeans are better informed, there are yet a great number that remain of that opinion, out of which folly they are not to be reasoned."

The following is from the Journal (p. 253) of Lewis, who says:—"The negroes are also very fond of what they call Nancy stories, part of which is related, and part sung. The heroine of one of them is an old woman named Mammy Luna, who having left a pot boiling in her hut, found it robbed on her return. Her suspicions were divided between two children whom she found at play near her door and some Negroes who had passed that way to market. The children denied the theft positively. It was necessary for the negroes, in order to reach their own estate, to wade through a river at that time almost dry; and on their return Mammy Luna (who, it would seem, was not without some skill in witchcraft) warned them to take care in venturing across the stream, for that the water would infallibly

* This is really "ananci" with the initial vowel dropped.
rise and carry away the person who had stolen the contents of her pot; but if the thief would but confess the offence she engaged that no harm should happen, as she only wanted to exculpate the innocent, and not punish the guilty. One and all denied the charge, and several crossed the river without fear or danger; but upon the approach of a belly-woman to the bank she was observed to hesitate. 'My neger, my neger,' said Mammy Luna, 'why you stop? me tink you savee well who thief me?' This accusation spirited up the woman, who instantly marched into the river, singing as she went (and the woman's part is always chanted, frequently in chorus, which the negroes call, 'taking up the sing'),

'If da me eat Mammy Luna's pease—O,
Drowny me, water, drowny, drowny!'

'My neger, my neger,' cried the old woman, 'me sure now you the thief! me see the water wet you feet. Come back, my neger, come back.' Still on went the woman, and still continued her song of 'If da me eat Mammy Luna's perse,' &c.

'My neger, my neger,' repeated Mammy Luna, 'me no want punish you; my pot smell good, and you belly-woman. Come back, my neger, come back; me see now water above your knee!' But the woman was obstinate; she continued to sing and to advance, till she reached the middle of the river's bed, when down came a tremendous flood, swept her away, and she never was heard of more; while Mammy Luna warned the other negroes never to take the property of another; always to tell the truth; and, at least, if they should be betrayed into telling a lie, not to persist in it, otherwise they must expect to perish like their companion."

Lewis adds that "a moral is always an indispensable part of a Nancy story," and he then relates the following one:—"Two sisters had always lived together on the best terms; but on the death of one of them the other treated very harshly a little niece who had been left to her care, and made her a common drudge to herself and her daughter. One day the child having broken a water-jug, was turned out of the house, and ordered not to return till she could bring back as good a one. As she was going along, weeping, she came to a large cotton-tree, under which was sitting an old woman without a head. I suppose this unexpected sight made her gaze rather too earnestly, for the old woman immediately inquired, 'Well, my piccaniny, what you see?'
'Oh! mammy,' answered the girl, 'me no see nothing.' 'Good child,' said again the old woman, 'and good will come to you.' Not far distant was a cocoa-tree, and here was another old woman without any more head than the former one. The same question was asked her, and she failed not to give the same answer which had already met with so good a reception. Still she travelled forward, and began to feel faint through want of food, when, under a mahogany-tree, she not only saw a third old woman but one who, to her great satisfaction, had got a head between her shoulders. She stopped, and made her best courtesy. 'How day, grannie.' 'How day, my piccaniny, what matter, you no look well?' 'Grannie, me lilly hungry.' 'My piccaniny, you see that hut, there's rice in the pot, take it, and yam-yamme; but if you see one black puss, mind you give him him share.' The child hastened to profit by the permission; the 'one black puss' failed not to make its appearance, and was served first to its portion of rice, after which it departed, and the child had but just finished the meal when the mistress of the hut entered, and told her that she might help herself to three eggs out of the fowl-house, but that she must not take any of the talking ones: perhaps, too, she might find the black puss there also, but if she did, she was to take no notice of her. Unluckily all the eggs seemed to be as fond of talking as if they had been so many old maids, and the moment that the child entered the fowl-house, there was a cry of 'Take me! Take me!' from all quarters. However, she was punctual in her obedience; and although the convertible eggs were remarkably fine and large, she searched about till at length she had collected three little dirty-looking eggs that had not a word to say for themselves. The old woman now dismissed her guest, bidding her to return home without fear, but not to forget to break one of the eggs under each of the three trees near which she had seen an old woman that morning. The first egg produced a water-jug exactly similar to that which she had broken; out of the second came a whole large sugar estate; and out of the third a splendid equipage, in which she returned to her aunt, delivered up the jug, related that an old woman in a red docker (i.e. Petticoat) had made her a great lady, and then departed in triumph to her sugar estate. Stung by envy, the aunt lost no time in sending her own daughter to search for the same good fortune which had befallen her cousin. She found the cotton-tree and the headless old woman, and had the same question addressed to her; but instead of returning the same
answer—'What me see,' said she, 'me see one old woman without him head.' Now this reply was doubly offensive; it was rude, because it reminded the old lady of what might certainly be considered as a personal defect, and it was dangerous, as, if such a circumstance were to come to the ears of the buckras, it might bring her into trouble, women being seldom known to walk and talk without their heads, indeed, if ever, except by the assistance of Obeah. 'Bad child,' cried the old woman, 'bad child! and bad will come to you!' Matters were no better managed near the cocoa-tree, and even when she reached the mahogany, although she saw that the old woman had not only got her head on, but had a red docker besides, she could not prevail on herself to say more than a short 'How day?' without calling her 'grannie.' However she received the permission to eat rice at the cottage, coupled with the injunction of giving a share to the black puss, an injunction, however, which she totally disregarded, although she scrupled not to assure her hostess that she had suffered puss to eat till she could eat no more. The old lady in the red petticoat seemed to swallow the lie very glibly, and despatched the girl to the fowl-house for three eggs, as she had before done her cousin; but having been cautioned against taking the talking eggs she conceived that these must needs be the most valuable; and, therefore, made a point of selecting those three which seemed to be the greatest gossips of the whole poultry yard. Then, lest their chattering should betray her disobedience, she thought it best not to return into the hut, and, accordingly, set forward on her return home; but she had not yet reached the mahogany-tree when curiosity induced her to break one of the eggs. To her infinite disappointment it proved to be empty, and she soon found cause to wish that the second had been empty too, for, on dashing it against the ground, out came an enormous yellow snake, which flew at her with dreadful hissings. Away ran the girl; a fallen bamboo lay in her path, she stumbled over, and fell. In her fall the third egg was broken, and the old woman without the head immediately popping out of it told her that if she had treated her as civilly, and had adhered as closely to the truth, as her cousin had done, she would have obtained the same good fortune; but that as she had shown her nothing but rudeness, and told her nothing but lies, she must be contented to carry nothing home but the empty egg-shells. The old woman then jumped upon the yellow snake, galloped away with
incredible speed, and never showed her red docker in that part of the island any more."

At page 301 of his *Journal*, Mr. Lewis gives what he calls an *African Nancy* story. It runs as follows:—"The head man (i.e. the king) of a large district in Africa, in one of his tours visited a young nobleman, to whom he lost a considerable sum at play. On his departure he loaded his host with caresses, and insisted on his coming in person to receive payment at court; but his pretended kindness had not deceived the nurse of the young man. She told him that the headman was certainly incensed against him for having conquered him at play, and meant to do him some injury; that having been so positively ordered to come to court he could not avoid obeying; but she advised him to take the river-road, where, at a particular hour, he would find the king's youngest and favourite daughter bathing; and she instructed him how to behave. The youth reached the river, and concealed himself till he saw the princess enter the stream alone; but when she thought fit to regain the bank, she found herself extremely embarrassed. 'Ho-day! what is become of my clothes? Ho-day! who has stolen my clothes? Ho-day! if any one will bring me back my clothes, I promise that no harm shall happen to him this day. !' This was the cue for which the youth had been instructed to wait. 'Here are your clothes, missy!' said he, stepping from his concealment; 'a rogue had stolen them while you were bathing, but I took them from him and have brought them back.' 'Well, young man, I will keep my promise to you. You are going to court, I know; and I know also that the headman will chop off your head unless at first sight you can tell him which of his three daughters is the youngest. Now I am she; and in order that you may not mistake, I will take care to make a sign, and then do not you fail to pitch upon me.' The young man assured her that having once seen her he never could possibly mistake her for any other, and then set forwards with a lightened heart. The headman received him very graciously, feasted him with magnificence, and told him that he would present him to his three daughters, only there was a slight rule respecting them to which he must conform. Whoever could not point out which was the youngest, must immediately lose his head. The young man kissed the ground in obedience, the door opened, and in walked three little black dogs. Now then, the necessity of the pre-
ANANCi STORIES.

caution taken by the princess was evident; the youth looked at the
dogs earnestly; something induced the headman to turn away his
eyes for a moment, and in that moment one of the dogs lifted up its
fore-paw. 'This,' cried the youth, 'this is your youngest daughter!'
And instantly the dogs vanished and three young women appeared in
their stead. The headman was equally surprised and incensed, but,
concealing his rage, he professed the more pleasure at that discovery;
because, in consequence, the law of that country obliged him to give
his youngest daughter in marriage to the person who should recognise
her; and he charged his future son-in-law to return in a week, when
he should receive his bride. But his feigned caresses could no longer
deceive the young man. As it was evident that the headman practised
Obeah, he did not dare disobey him, and knew that to escape by flight
would be unavailing. It was, therefore, with melancholy forbodings
that he set out for court on the appointed day, and (according to the
advice of his old nurse) he failed not to take the road which led by
the river. The princess came again to bathe; her clothes again
vanished; she had again recourse to her 'Ho-day! what is become
of my clothes?' and on hearing the same promise of protection the
youth again made his appearance. 'Here are your clothes, missy,'
said he, 'the wind had blown them away to a great distance; I found
them hanging upon the bushes, and have brought them back to you.'
Probably the princess thought it rather singular that whenever her
petticoats were missing the same person should always happen to be
in the way to find them; however, as she was remarkably handsome, she
kept her thoughts to herself, swallowed the story like so much butter,
and assured him of her protection. 'My father,' said she, 'will again
ask you which is the youngest daughter; and, as hesuspects me of
having assisted you before, he threatens to chop off my head instead
of yours, should I disobey him a second time. He will, therefore,
watch me too closely to allow of my making any sign to you, but still
I will contrive something to distinguish me from my sisters; and do
you examine us narrowly till you find it.' As she had foretold, the
headman no sooner saw his destined son-in-law enter than he told
him that he should immediately receive his bride, but that if he did
not immediately point her out the laws of the kingdom sentenced him
to lose his head. Upon which the door opened and in walked three
large black cats, so exactly similar in every respect that it was utterly
impossible to distinguish one from the other. The youth was at length on
the point of giving up the attempt in despair, when it struck him that each of the cats had a slight thread passed round its neck, and that while the threads of two were scarlet, that of the third was blue. 'This is your youngest daughter,' cried he, snatching up the cat with the blue thread. The headman was utterly at a loss to conceive by what means he had made the discovery, but could not deny the fact, for there stood the princesses in their own shape. He therefore affected to be greatly pleased, gave him his bride, and made a great feast, which was followed by a ball; but in the midst of it the princess whispered her lover to follow her silently into the garden. Here she told him that an old Obeah woman, who had been her father's nurse, had warned him that if his youngest daughter should live to see the day after her wedding he would lose his power and his life together; that she, therefore, was sure of his intending to destroy both herself and her bridegroom that night in their sleep, but that being aware of all these circumstances she had watched him so narrowly as to get possession of some of his magical secrets, which might possibly enable her to counteract his cruel designs. She then gathered a rose, picked up a pebble, filled a small phial with water from a rivulet; and thus provided, she and her lover betook themselves to flight upon a couple of the swiftest steeds in her father's stables. It was midnight before the headman missed them; his rage was excessive, and, immediately mounting his great horse Dandy, he set forward in pursuit of the lovers. Now Dandy galloped at the rate of ten miles a minute. The princess was soon aware of her pursuer: without loss of time she pulled the rose to pieces, scattered the leaves behind her, and had the satisfaction of seeing them instantly grow up into a wood of briars, so strong and so thickly planted that Dandy vainly attempted to force his way through them. But, alas! this fence was but of a very perishable nature. In the time that it would have taken to wither its parent rose-leaves, the briars withered away, and Dandy was soon able to trample them down, while he continued his pursuit. Now then the pebble was thrown in his passage, it burst into forty pieces, and every piece in a minute became a rock as lofty as the Andes. But the Andes themselves would have offered no insurmountable obstacle to Dandy, who bounded from precipice to precipice, and the lovers and the headman could once more distinguish each other by the first beams of the rising sun. The headman roared, and threatened, and brandished a monstrous sabre; Dandy tore up the ground as he ran,
neighed louder than thunder, and gained upon the fugitives every moment. Despair left the princess no choice, and she violently dashed her phial upon the ground. Instantly the water which it contained swelled itself into a tremendous torrent, which carried away every thing before it—rocks, trees, and houses; and the horse and his rider were carried away among the rest. There was an end of the headman and Dandy! The princess then returned to court, where she raised a strong party for herself, seized her two sisters, who were no better than their father and had assisted him in his witchcraft; and, having put them all and their partizans to death by a summary mode of proceeding, she established herself and her husband on the throne as headman and headwoman. It was from this time that all the kings of Africa have been uniformly mild and benevolent sovereigns. Till then they were all tyrants, and tyrants they would all still have continued if this virtuous princess had not changed the face of things by drowning her father, strangling her two sisters, and chopping off the heads of two or three dozen of her nearest and dearest relations.”

Lewis says an indispensable requisite for a Nancy-story is that it should contain a witch, or a duppy, or some other marvellous personage. Elsewhere (p. 290) he says: “I have not been able to ascertain exactly the negro notions concerning the Duppy; indeed I believe that his character and qualities vary in different parts of the country. At first I thought that the term Duppy meant neither more nor less than a ghost; but sometimes he is spoken of as “the Duppy,” as if there were but one, and then he seems to answer to the devil. Sometimes he is a kind of malicious spirit who haunts burying-grounds (like the Arabian ghouls), and delights in playing tricks on those who may pass that way. On other occasions he seems to be a supernatural attendant on the practitioners of Obeah, in the shape of some animal, as familiar imps are supposed to belong to our English witches.” In illustration of the last-named characteristic Lewis gives the following Nancy-story:—

“Sarah Winyan was scarcely ten years old when her mother died and bequeathed to her considerable property. Her father was already dead, and the guardianship of the child devolved upon his sister, who had always resided in the same house, and who was her only surviving relation. Her mother indeed had left two sons by a former husband, but they lived at some distance in the wood, and seldom came to see
ANANTI STORIES.

their mother, chiefly from a rooted aversion to their aunt, who, although from interested motives she stooped to flatter her sister-in-law, was haughty, ill-natured, and even suspected of Obeahism, from the occasional visits of an enormous black dog whom she called Tiger, and whom she never failed to feed and caress with marked distinction. In case of Sarah's death, the aunt, in right of her brother, was the heiress of his property. She was determined to remove this obstacle to her wishes; and after treating her for some time with harshness and even cruelty, she one night took occasion to quarrel with her for some trifling fault, and fairly turned her out of doors. The poor girl seated herself on a stone near the house and endeavoured to beguile the time by singing,

"Ho-day, poor me O !
Poor me, Sarah Winyan O !
They call me neger, neger !
They call me Sarah Winyan O !"

But her song was soon interrupted by a loud rushing among the bushes, and the growling which accompanied it announced the approach of the dreaded Tiger. She endeavoured to secure herself against his attacks by climbing a tree; but it seems that Tiger had not been suspected of Obeahism without reason; for he immediately growled out an assurance to the girl that come down she must and should. Her aunt, he said, had made her over to him by contract, and had turned her out of doors that night for the express purpose of giving him an opportunity of carrying her away. If she would descend from the tree and follow him willingly to his own den to wait upon him he engaged to do her no harm; but if she refused to do this, he threatened to gnaw down the tree without loss of time, and tear her into a thousand pieces. His long sharp teeth, which he gnashed occasionally during the above speech, appeared perfectly adequate to the execution of his menaces, and Sarah judged it most prudent to obey his commands. But as she followed Tiger into the wood she took care to resume her song of

"Ho-day, poor me O !"

in hopes that some one passing near them might hear her name and come to her rescue. Tiger however was aware of this, and positively forbade her singing. However she contrived every now and then to loiter behind, and when she thought him out of hearing her

"Ho-day ! poor me O !"
began again, although she was compelled to sing in so low a voice through fear of her four-footed master that she had but faint hopes of it reaching any ear but her own. Such was indeed the event, and Tiger conveyed her to his den without molestation. In the meanwhile her two half-brothers had heard of their mother's death, and soon arrived at the house to inquire what was become of Sarah. The aunt received them with every appearance of welcome, told them that grief for the loss of her only surviving parent had already carried her niece to the grave, which she showed them in her garden, and acted her part so well that the youths departed perfectly satisfied of the decease of their sister, but while passing through the wood on their return they heard some one singing, but in so low a tone that it was impossible to distinguish the words. As this part of the wood was the most unfrequented, they were surprised to find any one concealed there. Curiosity induced them to draw nearer, and they could soon make out the

"Ho-day! poor me O!
Poor me, Sarah Winyan O!"

There needed no more to induce them to hasten onwards; and, upon advancing deeper into the thicket, they found themselves at the mouth of a large cavern in a rock. A fire was burning within it, and by its light they perceived their sister seated on a heap of stones and weeping, while she chanted her melancholy ditty in a low voice and supported on her lap the head of the formidable Tiger. This was a precaution which he always took when inclined to sleep lest she should escape, and she had taken advantage of his slumbers to resume her song in as low a tone as her fears of waking him would allow. She saw her brothers at the mouth of the cave; the youngest fortunately had a gun with him, and he made signs that Sarah should disengage herself from Tiger if possible. It was long before she could summon up courage enough to make the attempt; but at length with fear and trembling and moving with the utmost caution she managed to slip a log of wood between her knees and the frightful head, and at length draw herself away without waking him. She then crept softly out of the cavern, while the younger brother crept as softly into it. The monster's head still reposed upon the block of wood; in a moment it was blown into a thousand pieces; and the brothers, afterwards cutting the body into four parts, laid one in each quarter of the wood." Lewis adds, "from that time only were dogs brought into subjection to men; and the inhabitants of Jamaica would never have been able to
subdue those ferocious animals if Tiger had not been killed and quartered by Sarah Winyan's brothers. As to the aunt, she received the punishment she merited.

To these Ananci stories given by Lewis may be added the following extract from Dr. Thomas Winterbottom's *Account of the native Africans in the Neighbourhood of Sierra Leone*, published in 1803. The author says (vol. i. p. 120): "The natives round Sierra Leone are fond of inventing little histories or fables, in relating which they often spend a great part of the night; in these animals are usually the *dramatis personae*; the stratagems of the leopard and alligator are occasionally introduced, and form as brilliant a part as those of the fox in the fables of *Æsop*. The two following stories may serve as specimens of their mode of relating them: an elephant and a goat had once a dispute which could eat most; and, in order to decide it, they went into a meadow as big as from here to white man's country. After having eaten some time the goat lay down upon a rock to chew the cud. 'What are you doing?' said the elephant to him. 'I am eating this rock,' replied the goat; 'and when I have done I will eat you.' The elephant, terrified at this unexpected threat, betook himself to flight, and *since that time has never dared to enter a town in which there is a goat*.

Again—"A man and his wife were travelling through a thick wood, and carried with them their spoiled and froward child. Seeing a gourd lying near the path, the child cried for it, and the father took it up, and pursued his journey. Soon afterwards one of those spirits called Min, to whom the gourd belonged, awaking from his sleep, and being thirsty, seeks for his gourd bottle. Not finding it, he sings a couplet, which he repeats once or twice in a plaintive tone of voice, 'Where are you, my gourd? Why have you gone away, and left me thus alone?' In answer to this, the gourd instantly replies in the same tone, 'I have not run away from you, oh Min, but have been carried off against my will.' The man, alarmed at this strange occurrence, throws down the gourd, and, with his wife and child, endeavours to escape by flight. Min, pursuing the direction of the sound, arrives at the spot, and takes up his gourd. Provoked at the theft, he resolves to find the culprit, and sings as before—'Where is the wretch who stole my gourd? I'll wreak my vengeance on his guilty head.' The child then accuses itself, and is dropped by the father and mother, who pursue their flight in the most agonizing state
ANACI STORIES.

of distress. Min soon reaches the place, and destroys the child, but persists in his intention of knowing the offender: hereupon the woman accuses herself, and is stabbed by the man in a fit of despair. Min, whose revenge is not yet glutted, on finding the body, repeats his demand, and the man is obliged to confess himself guilty. He attempts, however, to elude the search of his dreadful adversary, by concealing himself in the bushes, but is soon discovered, and sacrificed to the resentment of Min. The moral which they draw from this story is, that children ought not to have everything given to them which they cry for, as it may not only cause their own destruction, but that also of those most intimately connected with them. These questions and answers being formed into stanzas and sung, contribute much to relieve the tediousness of the narration."

In conclusion I will give one other extract from Lewis's Journal bearing on the subject of this communication. He says (p. 307), "the creole slaves are very fond of another species of tale, which they call, 'Neger-tricks,' and which bear the same relation to a Nancy-story which a farce does to a tragedy." The following is a specimen: "A man who had two wives divided his provision-grounds into two parts, and proposed that each of the women should cultivate one-half. They were ready to do their proper share, but insisted that the husband should at least take his third of the work. However, when they were to set out, the man was taken so ill, that he found it impossible to move; he quite roared with pain, and complained bitterly of a large lump which had formed itself on his cheek during the night. The wives did what they could to relieve him, but in vain; they boiled a negro-pot for him, but he was too ill to swallow a morsel: and at length they were obliged to leave him, and go to take care of the provision grounds. As soon as they were gone, the husband became perfectly well, emptied the contents of the pot with great appetite, and enjoyed himself in ease and indolence till evening, when he saw his wives returning; and immediately he became worse than ever. One of the women was quite shocked to see the size to which the lump had increased during her absence; she begged to examine it; but although she barely touched it with the tip of her finger as gingerly as possible, it was so tender that the fellow screamed with agony. Unluckily, the other woman's manners were by no means so delicate; seizing him forcibly by the head to examine it, she undesignedly happened to hit him a great knock on the jaw, and, lo and behold! x 2
out flew a large lime, which he had crammed into it. Upon which both his wives fell upon him like two furies; beat him out of the house; and whenever afterwards he begged them to go to the provision grounds they told him that he had got no lime in his mouth then, and obliged him from that time forward to do the whole work himself."

C. Staniland Wake.

KELPIE STORIES FROM THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND.*

KELPIE AS USEFUL.

MAN in carting home his peats for winter fuel was in the habit of seeing a big black horse grazing on the banks of the Ugie, at Inverugie Castle, near Peterhead, each morning as he passed to the "moss." He told some of his neighbours. They suspected what the horse was, and advised the man to get a "waith-horse" bridle, approach the animal with all care and caution, and cast the bridle over his head. The man now knew the nature of the creature, and followed the advice. Kelpie was secured, and did good work in carrying stones to build the bridge over the Ugie at Inverugie. When his services were no longer needed he was set at liberty. As he left he said:

"Sehr back an sehr behns
Cairryt a' the Brig o' Innerugie's stehns."

The old man, who handed down this story to his children, from one of whom I have now got it, used to say to any of them that complained of being tired after a hard day's work: "Oh, aye, ye're like the kelpie that cairryt the stehns to big the brig o' Innerugie, 'sehr back an sehr behns.'"