

## AELIAN, VARIA HISTORIA 4.1 An Unnoticed Modern Parallel

Aelian at VH 4.1 observes that the Dardanians of Illyria were washed but three times in their lives: upon emerging from the womb, at marriage and at death. The recent Loeb editor occasionally provides ancient and modern parallels for oddities recalled by Aelian. Here he is mute<sup>1</sup>. There is one. In her autobiography 'My First Hundred Years' the pioneer woman Egyptologist, Margaret Murray, discusses the reluctance of the English working class to enter hospital at the end of the nineteenth century. She writes<sup>2</sup>: "The bath was as great a deterrent as the cutting up, for before bathrooms became common, a working-class man or woman had only three baths during their earthly career, the first when new-born, the second the night before marriage, the third when the corpse was being prepared for burial." That is: a Dardanian habit is attested in Victorian London.

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1) Aelian, *Historical Miscellany*, ed. and transl. by N. G. Wilson (Cambridge/London 1997) 181.

2) Margaret Murray, *My First Hundred Years* (London <sup>2</sup>1963) 80.

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