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Norah and Willaim Montgomerie. A Book of Scottish Nursery Rhymes. New York. Oxford University Press. 1964. 158 pp. \$3.75.

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REVIEWS

1184. Chr. Matra should be Matras. Poul F. Joenson's Faroese translation of four of Burns's poems (including *Holy Willie's prayer* and *Tam o Shanter*) is omitted.

1186. Traduit par should be traduits par.

1187. Traduit de should be traduites de. Adolphe Delays should be Delahays.

1188. Cagniardy should be Cagniard.

1190. Eaneas Mackay should be Eneas Mackay.

1192. Hofman should be Hofmann.

1197. Ellerman should be Ellermann.

1201. Georg Perta should be Georg Pertz.

1208. W. Speeman should be Speman.

Greek translations in Boumi and Pappos's *Pancosmios anthologia* and in Rotas's *Zena lyrika* are omitted.

1215. Szepidoralmi should be Szepirodalmi.

1230. Tipographia should be Tipografia.

In the Index of proper names there are a few errors. Castle, N. should now be excluded; Chapman —, of Champan & Lang, is obvious; Davies, W. J. is William H. Davies, the poet. Finally the entries for W. McClellan and Eaneas Mackay have already been noted.

Both indexes use page references thus necessitating running down a page for a name. It should have been simpler to refer in each case to the running number prefixing all entries.

In his preface Professor Egerer makes the point that there must be more editions of Burns than those noted. An addendum of omitted editions appears to me essential.

A. G. HEPBURN

THE MITCHELL LIBRARY, GLASGOW

Norah and William Montgomerie. *A Book of Scottish Nursery Rhymes*. New York. Oxford University Press. 1964. 158 pp. \$3.75.

The blurb to this book says, among other things: "They are the folksong and ballad of childhood and form an excellent passport to that

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adult country. This book is a treasury of Scottish verse almost as rich as the ballads themselves." Just so. And the mere mention of ballads brings to mind at once—and this book is for American consumption—the great American ballad scholar F. J. Child. Imagine then, Child writing this in a preface to a collection of his ballads:

"Because I was then more politically aware of their connection with a language somewhat different from English, I made the spelling of these ballads as Scottish as I could, to preserve the full flavour. So now, noticing the gap between these verses and the culture that gave them birth, I have reversed the process of preservation by spelling them as near as possible to the common language of these islands without destroying (as if that were possible!—reviewer's note) the essential differences which are, in a sense, the artistic style of their creators. Like Burns, I trust the reader to read these Scottish rhymes in broad Scots—if he knows broad Scots." Like Burns, indeed!

Child of course would be constitutionally incapable of such un-scholarly, arrogant procedure. His work is scrupulous to the letter, and a model of scholarship. But change, in the above, "I" to "we" and "ballads" to "rhymes," and it is a quote from the Introduction to the above book by the Montgomeries. It obviously has never occurred to them that they have no right either to Scotticize or Anglicize, but have a duty to set down as near as possible what they have actually heard or read: that neither they nor anybody else has any right to distort originals to fit in with some fashion or theory or sales department opinion or whatever. Or should we now, "noticing the gap between these (plays) and the culture that gave them birth," put Shakespeare into Hollywoodese? Burns into BBCese? Keats into cockney?

When the literati discovered the oral tradition's literary possibilities in the eighteenth century, they honestly enough confused the two traditions. The oral tradition permits "improving" the work: the literary one prohibits this absolutely as corruption of text and misrepresentation of the author, who is protected by copyright. It was not seen that when you set down oral work it ceases to be "oral" and comes under the principles proper to literature, until Ritson pointed out the obvious. Since Ritson there has been no excuse for this confusion.

To alter the word-forms of a poem is to alter the sound and the whole cultural associations, and that means that the result is a different poem. The line "A' waitin for their ain dear luves" is a very different line of poetry from "All waiting for their own dear loves," though it looks almost the same to the unpoetic mind. Two different traditions of poetry, two vastly different historical experiences are implied—the

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one Scottish, the other English. It is legitimate to translate Scots into English, or vice versa, so long as your audience are informed that this is in fact translation. This here would mean itemising each anglicized line—a laborious business. But to present translation as if it were in fact the original is to deceive the public.

There was twa craws sat on a stane.
Ane flew awa and there remained ane.
The ither seein his neebour gane,
He flew awa and there was nane.

Compare that with:—

There were two crows sat on a stone.
One flew away and there remained one.
The other seeing his neighbour gone,
He flew away and there was none.

To the mind of a Gradgrind there is no difference—the meaning is logically the same. It would still be the same if you put it into Swahili. But to anybody a little bit sensitive to poetry it is quite clear that there is a big difference between the two pieces—the poetry is different, as vastly different as Scots from English, whisky from beer. It is a demonstration of the fact that if you alter the sound of a poem, you get a different poem. If the sound doesn't matter to a poem, it is a bad poem, probably not a poem at all.

The first of these two rhymes is from *Sandy Candy*, published in 1948 by the Montgomeries, a book of 345 rhymes. This book was sequel to an earlier book of 178 rhymes. The second rhyme above is from the book now under review, a selection of 200 rhymes taken from their first two books, but, in accordance with the principles outlined in their Introduction, considerably anglicised. This distortion of the poetry of these rhymes they dismiss as merely "spelling."

It is distasteful to me to labour the point. The first two books of rhymes by the Montgomeries may also be suspect in that they may have been scotticised, but at least that was a distortion along with and not against the grain of the material. These two books were a valuable contribution, subject to reservations in respect of scotticising, to Scottish studies in folklore. The best that can be said for the present volume is that it may direct attention to these first two volumes: the worst, that it may distract attention from them to itself.

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