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W. F. H. NICOLAISEN

B. OTHER NOTES

Scottish Proverbs

Review: *The James Carmichaell Collection of Proverbs in Scots.* Edited by M. L. Anderson. Edinburgh University Press. 1957. vii+149 pp. 20s.

The popular proverb, this age-old vehicle of folklore in a pregnant sense, long cherished by the medieval preacher and teacher, gained literary respectability, chiefly through Erasmus, in the age of Humanism, when the major vernacular collections were first made all over Europe. The Elizabethan passion for proverbs is well known, and Stewart Scotland was no exception: indeed the ease with which, in the earliest Scots collection in the Bannatyne MS. (1568), 69 proverbs went into rhyming lines testifies to no ordinary wealth that could be drawn upon. The earliest separately published collection was apparently one by Archbishop James Beaton in 1610 (now lost). The earliest surviving printed collection is the 1641 edition of David Fergusson, minister of Dunfermline, who died in 1598, which by way of constant plagiarisation and re-edition became the basis of all subsequent printed Scottish collections. Curiously enough, the very earliest known collection of Scottish proverbs has been found among the papers of an Englishman, Sir Adrian Fortesque (1532), though of course many others are to

be found scattered through the pages of earlier Scottish writers, notably Henryson. The richest repository of such and any later proverb material in Older Scots is, naturally, the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue.*

Even for British proverbs Fergusson's printed collection has in many cases been the earliest and best authority, as Smith's and Tilley's Proverb Dictionaries show. In 1924 Beveridge edited for the Scottish Text Society a reprint of the Fergusson Collection together with an anonymous MS., which has been known as the "Fergusson MS.", as it covers much the same ground. Now, with the publication of a contemporary compilation which Fergusson's colleague in Haddington, James Carmichaell, built up on the same basic material, a much fuller collection of 1637 items, larger by 648 items, and more authentic in many respects, has been made accessible. In transcribing and editing the very difficult MS. Professor Anderson has made an outstanding contribution to the illustration of Scottish cultural history. Indeed, working in the true antiquarian spirit of the founders of the S.T.S., though his book is not of that series and does not quite reach its present editorial standard, he has given us much more than the required text. The Introduction includes a fascinating account of the literary detective work by which Professor Anderson has identified the compiler, recounts the bibliographical fortunes of the MS., traces Carmichaell's procedure in its compilation, and shows its relation to other Scots proverb collections. Not least, it gives an admirable biographical sketch of James Carmichaell (?1543-1628), who, on the strength of this very collection, surely deserves to be much better known.

The transcription is generally excellent, though some readings must remain conjectural or debatable. While *v* and *u* have been silently modernised to *u*, *v* and *o*, modernisation would have been more appropriate with regard to Carmichaell's sometimes odd word-division (e.g. in item 34 *a bus be set scheif = a bus-beset scheif*, 239 *auld debtis = auld debt is*, 351 *dame blakis = Dame Blak is*, 453 *a brode = abrode*, 988 *unfore served = vnforeserved*, and possibly 374 *Better a sche on the schoulder, nor shoulder all bair = Better asche* (= ashes) *on the shoulder . . .*). Less pardonable are a number of errors and misreadings: P. 10 *Hoc volumen dedit a Guglielmo Hog = dedit D. Guglielmus Hog*, No. 58 *Ane evill word meits hane oter = ane vther*, p. 117 The Bannatyne MS. . . . S.T.S. 5, 22-3, 26 = S.T.S. III. 8-10 (fol. 134*b*-135*b*). Clear misreadings occur in these items:

54 *de auris* = *de tauris*, 362 *Come forsuth caire by my buith* = *Bonie forsuth came . . .*, 913 *the mussel midin* = *the muckl(e) midin*, 1273 *Quhat wowis fuiles pay ye* = *Quhit wall is fuiles papyer*, 1360 *maist* = *maister*, 1587 *gie* = *gefe* or *gife*, 1866 *il wult* = *il reult* (= ravelled). Serious as these blemishes are, they do not fortunately, lessen the reader's enjoyment of this most entertaining proverbial pageant of which I regret space does not allow me to unfold as much here as might be desired.

Some background study shows the interest of the collection in embodying evidence for venerable archaisms rubbing shoulders with quite recent modernisms. Two ancient saws, one a reminder of human limitations, the other an appeal to divine justice, point to a very distant Germanic origin. These are *Mak not twa mewis* (= sons-in-law) *of ane dochter*, which we find as early as A.D. 1000 in Notker's OHG. *Tu ne maht nieht mit einero dohder zeuuena eidima machon*, and *He sits abune deals akers*, which figures in the annal for 1130 of the Peterborough Chronicle as *Hæge sitteð þa aceres dæleth*. In others, a word or phrase is archaic enough to make an item if not equally old, yet certainly very much older than Carmichaell. (Cf. *Olied*, *Over*, *Raid*, *Raik* in the final suggestions.) Modernistic touches, apart from consciously colloquial spellings like *ca* call, *fa* fall, *fw* full, *ga* gave, consist lexically in the appearance of slang words here recorded much earlier than in OED., notably of *rino* "ready money" (OED. 1688) in *We are all bursin with your charge, a plak in the rino and tua pennies a frist*, of *cut* "strumpet" (OED. 1725, though earlier in "to call sb. cut") in *Cut duells in everie toun* and *There is caill in cuts wimbe*, and of *lark* "to sport" (OED. 1813) in *Ye are larked and toyed like Sandie balop* (= trouser flap).

The Notes are very useful and especially valuable in tracing some items to specific historical events and in quoting many, though not all, Scottish literary parallels. Such parallels, when numerous, would I think simply show the proverb to be part of a broad popular tradition rather than, as suggested, demonstrate Carmichaell's extensive reading and borrowing from contemporary literature.

A more widely comparative frame of reference, which naturally was beyond the intended scope, could doubtlessly throw still more light on many curious items. Some, like *Of evill dettours men taks aits* (= oats, not as in later Scots versions "oaths") or *He is fallen in the ditch, the ditch he digged for others* would appear as common European adages. Others might have

originated in various popular tales or writings. I wonder, e.g. about *The clink of my silver may staik for the reik of your rost*, which coincides with one of Till Eulenspiegel's tricks, and about the provenance of the heroic couplet *Of all the world we have na mair adoe Bot saul to keip and honour to luke to*, and of *Go seik your fathers sword* (be a vagrant), which might have come from a West Highland tale like that recorded in this volume, p. 209. Further clarification would be especially welcome on the legal, biblical, superstitious, or anecdotal origins, on the literal, the figurative and the allusive meanings, and on the situational context of many of these sayings. Occasionally, thanks to the careful notations of variants by Carmichaell, the collection affords highly interesting evidence for the changes and remouldings which a proverb may undergo by verbal association with others. Thus, starting from two common European sayings (1) "The dearest ships anchor close in the harbour" (the small ones are out at sea) and (2) "A threatened man lives long," we find not only *A deir schip stands lang in the heaven* (said of maidens long unmarried) and *A schored* (threatened) *man leives lang*, with the variation (3) *A schored tree stands lang in the wod*, but as a new creation of quite different application (4) *A schored* (propped up) *ship stands lang in the heaven*, and later, in Ramsay's collection, (5) "A short tree stands lang", with which compare "Tall trees are soonest blown down" (Swedish) and "The greater the tree the harder the fall" (English).

A collection of lexically so complex and various a structure depends for its evaluation on a fully explanatory glossary. The Glossary provided is nearly as complete as could be wished, but in not a few cases it has to fall back on provisional explanations, pending further research. Meanwhile, what little I have been able to do has prompted me with the following suggestions, with which I conclude this (I hope) friendly incursion into a most stimulating publication.

Carvailes "light sailing vessels:carvel nails, dowels." *Cuile* "cool:1216 maintain (friendship)" (OSc. *culȝe*). *Fordel, the laird of*, 1748:a pun on OSc. *fordell* "advantage, profit." *Maw* "mow":so also 1385. *Not* "need:nought" (for *nocht*, cf. *wrot* 609, *brot* 640, *nyt* 1656). *Olied* "active, energetic:willing, compliant" (ON. *oflettr* lit. "too easy," in same sense). *Over* "domineer":*May over* "to be stronger than" (OE. *maȝan ofer* sb.). *Raid* "errand:advice" (OE. *ræd*). Include *Raik* n. "revenge" 956 (OE. *wracu*). *Rame* "shout":*raine* "rain." *Rash-ring* does not occur (a mock wedding-ring of rushes was given to maidens

in amorous exploits). *Skail* "empty:(of a home) break up." Include *Spring* n. "dance-tune" 254. *Still* "hold still:keep quiet, soothe (a baby)." *Sture* "cloud of dust:stit (the earth), plough for the second time." *Winter and sommer* (*a taill*) "spend a long time over:tell (a tale) all over again" (Kelly 219). *Wirdie* "a word or two:worthy" (*to win wirdie* "to become respectable"). *Weils* "all very well:weal (or well) is."

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H. H. MEIER

An Old Version of "The Laird o' Cockpen"

The Laird o' Cockpen he's puir and he's duddy,
Wi Drinking and daffing his head is aye muddy;
But now he's determined to ha'e a bit wife,
Gin she should torment him the rest o' his life.

At the back o' the knowe this body did dwell—
For mucking the byre he thought she'd do well—
MacLeish's ae dochter though blin o' an e'e,
And canna brag muckle o' her pedigree.

His head was weel kamed and pouther'd wi' meal—
Said he to himsel', "I'm a gey bit spruce chiel"—
His waistcoat was red and his breeks o' plush blue,
Wi' a great hole ahin' where his sark-tail hung through.

His house, though but sma', was plenish'd fu' weel,
And wi' plenty o' whiskey he caredna the de'il:
While puddin's weel flavour'd wi' pepper and saut—
Sae whae could refuse the Laird wi' a' that?

He's mounted his cuddy and canter'd away
Until that he cam' to the end o' the brae—
"Gae tell Mistress Meg to come to the house-en',
She's wanted to speak wi' the Laird o' Cockpen."

Noo, Meggie she happen'd to be feeding' the swine—
"What the de'il brings the buddy at sic a like time?"—
But she thumpit the grumphies and garr'd them stan' roun',
Syne kilted her coaties and cam away doun.

And when he saw her he bowed fu' low,
And said he was come for to make her his joe—
"Weel, just step your ways in till my auld mither ken,
And, faith! I'll gang wi' ye this nicht, to Cockpen."

The auld wife consented, sae did the auld man;
The Laird started up and took Meg by the han';
Mess John said the blessin', and bade them Gude sen',
Syne, aye to be fruitfu', and plenish Cockpen.

They mounted the cuddy, and away they did ride,
And happier never were bridegroom and bride;
And though they ha'e nocht but a butt and a ben,
Maist ance every year comes an heir to Cockpen.

"The foregoing version of this old song, having been reconstructed from memory, is not here given as absolutely correct: but I think it is substantially as I heard it recited in the Galloway village of Crossmichael when I was a youth—well over sixty years ago. I had forgotten it until it was recalled to my memory on seeing two stanzas of it quoted in the MS. of a Lecture on Scottish Song, by the late Mrs. McMillan, of Glenhead, two or three years ago, after reading which, it all came gradually back to me; and now, in case it should be forgotten again, I have thought it better to have it—imperfect though it may be—fully recorded, whether this is an ANCIENT VERSION or merely a later parody on the better-known song, I am not prepared to give an opinion. That must be left to some one better qualified to judge. Mrs. McMillan gave it as 'The old version' but certain expressions lead me to think that it may be but a parody.

Maxwellknowe
Dalbeattie, 14th April 1936. T. F."

The above song and note have been copied exactly as found in Thomas Fraser's MS. notebook with the title "Miscellaneous

mostly verse" (Broughton House, Kirkcudbright, Shelf No. S. 8). Mrs. M. G. Brown, County Librarian of Kirkcudbright —who has been helpful on many occasions—has sent me a note on the writer of the notebook:

> Thomas Fraser was a very well-known individual in this area and it was his collection of books which formed the nucleus of the Hornel Collection. He was an extraordinary man—largely self-educated—who started life as a grocer's apprentice and later became a quarrymaster. He had such a passionate love of books that he ultimately invested the savings of his lifetime into a publishing firm, Fraser, Assher & Co., with the object of printing books relating to South-West Scotland. He printed some of Alexander Anderson's poems, "The Gordons of Craichlaw" and some other books of that nature before he became bankrupt. E. A. Hornel entrusted him with the purchase of books he wished to obtain for the Hornel Library and until the time of Fraser's death, they were very close friends.

A variant of this song, much influenced by Lady Nairne's version, was printed in *Scottish Studies 1* (1957) 171-2. Differences in the two are typical of folk-song, and Thomas Fraser was remembering imperfectly a song he had heard "well over sixty years ago." He does not quote the expressions which suggest parody to him. There are, in both versions, the rhymes "dwell—well" and "away—brae" where "well" and "away" have an English spelling and pronunciation, demanded by the rhyme. A fault in the Findlay version, the rhyming of "snug—bride", could have been caused by faulty memory. All that can be deduced from the above text is that the form does not suggest that it antedated Lady Nairne's song by many years. It lacks the formalism of a much older song. I have noticed the fourth line of stanza three in a folk-song recorded in the early nineteenth century, but this proves little.

WILLIAM MONTGOMERIE

Photographs of Traditional Scottish Life

To supplement its documentary and sound recordings, the School of Scottish Studies is gradually building up a photographic archive in which help from the general public would be most welcome. The purpose is to assemble, for permanent preservation and research, visual illustrations of all aspects of Scottish folklife, from a Hebridean waulking to a feeing fair,

or from agricultural implements to obsolete dress. Already more than two thousand photographs have been collected, but many more are needed to cover the wide range of subjects systematically.

Help is needed in two ways:

(*a*) The gift, or loan for copying, of old photographs which record features of traditional life and crafts which have mainly disappeared. Family albums frequently contain views which yield details of great interest, often in the background. A few late Victorian photographers specialised in scenes of everyday rural life—among them Thomas Kent, of Kirkwall, and G. W. Wilson, of Aberdeen—and their work provides excellent documentation of past methods of agriculture. Kent's collection seems unfortunately to have been dispersed at his death, and the School has only a limited selection given by Miss Marion McNeill—one example is Plate I: 2 in this issue. It would be interesting to hear of other surviving examples of his or similar work, and whether these might be borrowed for copying.

(*b*) Photographs can still be taken now of implements and techniques that are tending to disappear, as well as of processes not easily described in words, such as the various stages of stacking peat. Naturally the need to document disappearing features of our cultural landscape is pressing, for often it is the ordinary everyday activities that are forgotten by photographers until it is too late. The scope of this category of photograph is endless. The School cannot hope to cover so wide a field systematically, and would be particularly glad to hear of any collections of photographs of this type, and from amateur and professional photographers who would be prepared to allow their photographs to be copied for preservation and study in the School's archive. Copyright would, of course, be retained by the photographer.

In addition to photographs old and new, the archive includes reproductions of illustrations from miscellaneous sources, such as engravings, drawings and printed material difficult of access in journals, newspapers, etc.

The general public can be of great assistance to us by lending old photographs for copying, or by themselves photographing domestic implements, and other day to day activities. All photographs of relevance to the study of Scottish folklife are welcome.

IAN WHITAKER

Scottish Contribution to the Inventaria Archaeologica

One of the aspects of Scottish archaeology in which the School of Scottish Studies has been concerned since its inception is the assembling of the basic museum material in indexed *corpus* form. The work has progressed slowly owing to the lack of funds for any but part-time workers, but the School is now making its first published contribution to international scholarship in this field. The International Congress of Pre- and Proto-historic Sciences sponsors a European project, the *Inventaria Archaeologica*, for the publication of the most important associated finds in prehistoric archaeology, in the form of uniform record cards containing a succinct statement of the details of the find, with parallels and dating evidence, accompanied by scale drawings in line. The fifth British set (of ten cards) comprises the most important hoards and grave-groups of the Early and Middle Bronze Age in Scotland, edited by Professor Stuart Piggott and Mrs. Margaret Stewart working on behalf of the School, and with original drawings by the School's Illustrator. C. D. Findlay. The *Inventaria* now comprises about a dozen fascicules which in addition to the British cards include material from Germany, France, Austria and Belgium; and are all obtainable at ten shillings each set, from Garraway Ltd., 11 Kensington Church Street, London, W. 8.

EDITOR

Edinburgh University Folk-song Society

On 18th April 1958 the first meeting of a newly founded Edinburgh University Folk-song Society was held in the S.R.C. Hall, Old College. The aim of the Society was described by its President, Stuart Macgregor, a fifth year medical student, as the provision of a forum for discussion, and of a "folk-song workshop" in which student balladmakers and singers could learn their craft, swop songs and extend their knowledge of the traditional music of Scotland and other countries.

In order to encourage its members to learn direct from authentic traditional singers, the Society had invited Jeannie Robertson of Aberdeen—described by A. L. Lloyd in the first number of *Recorded Folk Music* as "one of the finest ballad singers in Western Europe"—to be guest artist at this inaugural meeting. Jeannie contributed three of her already famous

classical ballad versions, "Son David" (= the "Edward" ballad, Child 13), "Harlaw" (Child 163) and "The Twa Brithers" (Child 49), together with several other North-East folk-songs. Among the other singers were two young Americans, Christopher S. Wren of Marlow, New Hampshire, and Danny Botkin of New York, both of whom have done a considerable amount of field collecting on their own account in the United States. Danny Botkin, a physicist, is the son of the distinguished American folklorist Professor B. A. Botkin, author of "The American Play-Party Song," and of a classic work on the Southern slave states, "Lay My Burden Down."

Also present at the first meeting was a Glasgow school teacher, Norman Buchan, who gave an account of his work in popularising Scots folk-song among Rutherglen school children.

The second meeting of the Society was devoted to examples of "the Love Song"; these were provided by singers from Japan, Hungary, Canada, the U.S.A. and the Isle of Lewis. The third ("North American Folk-song") was the proper occasion for a little friendly rivalry between the two Americans already mentioned, and Pat Fulford, a Canadian girl at present studying at the College of Art.

The fourth, held on 23rd May, was a public *ceilidh*, at which Mr. Calum Maclean, School of Scottish Studies, acted as *fear an tighe*. The guest singer was his fellow clansman Norman Maclean, a Celtic student from Glasgow University, who has done a good deal of song collecting among his mother's people in Benbecula, South Uist and Lochaber.

HAMISH HENDERSON

International Congress for Folk-tale Research

An "International Congress for Folk-tale Research" is to be held in the Federal German Republic in August 1959. The Congress is to serve the discussion of all types and methods of folk-tale research, and is to deal with questions of organisation and international co-operation in this field of study. The official languages will be German, English and French. Place and programme of the Congress will be announced later. All enquiries should be sent to Professor Dr. Kurt Ranke, Universität Kiel, Federal German Republic.