Book Reviews

The Life of Robert Burns by D. B. Snyder. Archon Books, Hamden, Conn. 1968. Pp. 524. $14.00.

The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns, edited by James Kinsley. 3 vols. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1968. Pp. 1625. £9 10s.

Librarians and students of Scottish Literature will welcome the reappearance of Snyder's biography (originally published in 1932), for it has long been out of print; but they will deplore the price, which is excessive for the unaltered and unabridged reprint of a work requiring considerable correction. That the book must still be considered one of the best biographies of Burns does not alter the publisher's obligation to bring it up to date, or at least to indicate in an appendix errors noted by reviewers when it first came out. Some of these are on trivial bibliographical points, but others are slightly more serious: for example, Snyder dismisses as a fabrication Lockhart's account of Burns's part in the capture of the smuggling brig *Rosamond* in 1792, although there is documentary evidence in the National Library of Scotland which Dr H. W. Meikle used to vindicate the Lockhart story. Again, in his presentation of the Ayrshire ecclesiastical background Snyder says the Old Lights and New Lights were 'formed out of' the schismatic Associate Synod, whereas Burns applied these terms not to dissident sectaries but to factions within the official Church of Scotland itself. Burns presented the public library at Dumfries with a copy of De Lolme's work *The Constitution of England*, but Snyder gives its title as *The British Constitution*, thus missing the nationalistic irony of Burns's wish that 'they will take it as a Creed of British Liberty—until they find a better'. Snyder's final chapter, 'The Man and the Poet', is dull and unsatisfactory, especially on the poetry; and his dismissal of Currie's account of Burns's deterioration during the Dumfries period needs to be examined again today in the light of R. D. Thornton's recent reappraisal of Currie.

The long awaited Oxford *Burns* comprises two volumes of text with Preface; a useful appendix that lists poems wrongly attributed to Burns or of dubious authorship; and indexes of airs, titles and first lines. There is an additional third volume containing a textual introduction, a commentary of 531 pages, a list of contemporary portraits, the text of the most notable verbal impressions of Burns by those who had met him, and a model glossary. For the first time in any complete edition we have before us 'all the identifiable airs for the songs in their eighteenth-century form'. In choosing his copy-text the editor has given priority to (1) Burns's holographs and transcripts revised in his

hand, and (2) the first edition; at the same time, there has been constant collation with subsequent manuscripts and editions. Not only does he provide the serious student with the best text of the poems and songs, but his background and factual notes are superior to those of any previous editor.

In order to test his method let us examine his treatment of *Holy Willie's Prayer*. His text is the Glenriddell MS, collated with six other MSS and with Stewart's two editions of 1801–2. Following Glenriddell, he gives us 'A guide, a *ruler* and example/To a' thy flock', instead of the more concrete (and Biblical) 'buckler' of Stewart's editions. Again, he prints the Glenriddell 'Wha bring thy *rulers* to disgrace/And *open* shame'. To the modern reader the first of these seems far less concrete than the 'elders' of Stewart's texts; but Kinsley is surely right, on aesthetic as well as scholarly grounds, in rejecting the '*public* shame' of Stewart and five manuscripts: 'public' is precise but neutral, whereas 'open' carries associations of yawning gulfs, bleeding wounds, running sores and perhaps even ragged garments. The well-known fifth stanza from Stewart's edition of 1802 (deleted by Henley and Henderson), which begins 'O L—d thou kens what zeal I bear, When Drinkers drink, and swearers swear', is printed here within square brackets. It is not in Glenriddell, and therefore the editor would delete it from his ideal text as a weak intrusion from an early MS that brings in the fear of the Lord 'at an inappropriate point'. He prints 'While Auld wi' hingin lip gaed sneaking/And hid his head', the reading of Stewart 1802 (though there spelt 'snakin') and all surviving holographs, as preferable in both style and sense to 'While he (*i.e.* Aitken) . . . held up his head' from Stewart 1801. In the penultimate stanza, logic as well as fidelity to Glenriddell leads him to prefer a succession of 'hims' to Stewart's more euphonious 'them' for the third word of the second line:

> L—d, in thy day o' vengeance try him!
> L—d visit him that did employ him!
> And pass not in they mercy by them,
> Nor hear their prayer;
> But for thy people's sake destroy them,
> And dinna spare!

Having chosen the most authoritative copy, then, Kinsley does not allow aesthetics to drive him towards a composite text, although he is always aware of artistic criteria. Even where an editor does no more than scrupulously follow his copy, he should surely note differences between his punctuation and that of previous standard editions, at any rate where interpretation is affected. For example, Kinsley follows Glenriddell in having a comma between 'O may't ne'er be a living plague' and the following 'To my dishonour', a restoration that clarifies the syntax at the same time as it slows down the tempo. Glenriddell's omission of a comma between lines 3 and 4 of stanza V ('I'm here, a pillar o' thy temple/Strong as a rock,') halves the pause between the lines. The restoration of the comma between 'God' and 'confound' in 'But God, confound their stubborn

face, and blast their name' has an important *literary* consequence; it is a direction to the reader that Willie has not given vent to a common oath, but is still addressing the deity in a confidential manner, and his 'confound' is therefore a word of the fullest possible meaning. The Kinsley text of *Holy Willie's Prayer* thus gives the poem a clearer and more logical structure than it has in any previous edition and accurately reflects 'the state of the poem' at the time the Glenriddell MS was put together, though it sacrifices some colourful readings which Burns favoured at one stage of the poem's history.

It is when we come to the new edition's commentary on the poem, in Vol. III, that its superiority to Henley and Henderson is most evident. By citing the scriptural parallels and the relevant passages in the Westminster Confession Kinsley brings out the subtlety of Burns's use of Presbyterian Scots-English; and his critical exegesis is both authoritative and succinct. His criticism of the other major poems can be similarly praised. His notes are more than a bare summary of recent criticism, for in almost every case he adds his own judgment—*e.g.* his scepticism towards critics who interpret *Tam o'Shanter* in terms of multiple *personae*, his rejection of those who would play down Burns's indebtedness to Augustan thought (he mentions Henley and Henderson, Catherine Carswell, David Daiches and Maurice Lindsay), his comments on the tone and humour of *The Auld Farmer's New-Year-morning Salutation to his Auld Mare, Maggie*. Particularly welcome is his acceptance of the modern reappraisal of *The Cotter's Saturday Night* and *The Vision*—the first as 'a bold linguistic experiment in an accepted mode', which is not necessarily inferior to Fergusson's *Farmer's Ingle*, the second as 'a monologue on the Scottish cultural achievement and the art of poetry, in a descriptive frame, with a series of "subsidiary prospects".' His more antiquarian notes are a sheer delight, like that on *To a Haggis* (p. 1222); but occasionally there are quotations we could have done without, such as Wordsworth on *Death and Dr Hornbook* (p. 1055) and *On a Scotch Bard* (p. 1176), which tell us more about Wordsworth than about Burns.

Following John C. Weston, Kinsley would excise the Merry Andrew's song from *The Jolly Beggars* (actually, he prints it in smaller type) as an interruption of the dramatic action that does not represent Burns's final intention. It is a judgment similar to that which wishes to remove 'O L—d thou kens what zeal I bear' from *Holy Willie's Prayer*. At times, however, he seems inconsistent. Thus he argues for the authenticity of the lines *On Tom the Chapman* on the ground that they have 'nothing untypical of Burns', but is sceptical about *The Tree of Liberty*, though he admits that *some* lines 'have a Burnsian quality, and there are some correspondences with his acknowledged work'. This revolutionary song is greatly superior poetically to the contemporary English *Tree of Liberty* broadsides published in London—which, incidentally, the editor does not mention. If Burns did not write the song, who did; who else in Scotland was capable of it?

As important as the new text, and the printing of the airs to the songs, is the critical attitude underlying Kinsley's commentary. When he annotates the poems, he gives due weight to English poetic models and ideas; Burns is not regarded as the vehicle of some

mystically conceived Scottish Tradition. It is only when we come to the songs that there appears to be a difference. There, says Kinsley, on a page on which the words 'tradition' and 'traditional' occur no less than five times (p. vi), Burns 'worked to recover and consolidate the *native* lyric tradition', and 'an edition of his songs, inevitably, to some extent, another "Museum" of that tradition'. But what is the precise meaning of 'native'? There is surely also a sense in which an edition of Burns's songs is a Museum of an *English* tradition (*Clarinda, Mistress of my Soul; Lovely Davies; Where are the Joys I have met in the morning?*). When one considers how frequently the song books, miscellanies and chapbooks printed in Scotland published English and Irish songs, and how frequently Scottish songs appeared in London, Newcastle, Liverpool and Dublin, it does not seem fanciful to speak of a single all-British song-culture in the eighteenth-century, with Scottish and English strands. Is this, perhaps, what Kinsley means by 'native'? In any case, the lyric 'tradition' is not an abstraction but a medium in which the poet works. A Burns song is the product of the poet's emotional state at the time, the tune he has in mind, and a set of stylistic stimuli which may include an inherited chorus or refrain, floating folksong phrases, fixed 'tea-table' phrases and syntactic 'frames' such as a set question-and-answer pattern ('Wha is that at my bower door?'). From one point of view the song arises out of the poet's knowledge of himself and other people; from another, out of what Kinsley calls 'tradition'—that is, out of the poet's organised perception of the congealed experience of his predecessors. It is more profitable to regard the writer as a living, struggling being to whom 'tradition' is a tool, than as tradition's 'silly vassal'. Kinsley does this admirably in his notes on the individual songs; it is only occasionally, as in the Preface, that there is a tendency to hypostatise tradition. On pages 1066–7, however, he seems to accept an allied notion—that of a general dissociation of sensibility in Scottish Augustan culture, but without exposing the idea to critical scrutiny.

It is remarkable that such an enormous undertaking contains so few omissions, misprints and errors of fact and judgment. To help non-specialist readers, titles by which works are generally known should have been included in the Index of Titles: *The Jolly Beggars* as well as Burns's own title, *Love and Liberty; A Vision* as well as its first line, *As I stood by yon roofless tower*. Ritson's two versions of *Johnie Cope* are printed in his Vol. II, pages 84–8, and not on pages 424–8. It is more relevant to say that *My daddy forbade* (p. 1263) is in *The Tea-Table Miscellany* and is probably by Ramsay, than that it is 'reprinted' by Herd. On page 1062 the central place of benevolence in eighteenth-century ethics is considered in relation to Pope and the philosophers without any mention that such concepts were popularised in Burns's *milieu* by the Freemasons. It is implied (p. 1019) that *The Mare of Collingtoun* in Watson's *Collection* is written in 'Standard Habbie', whereas it is in an eight-lined stanza. In *John Barleycorn* the 'systematic allegory of threshing, winnowing and processing for brewing' are not innovations by Burns, but must have come down through oral tradition from such texts as the seventeenth-century *As I went through the North Country* from which John Ashton claimed that

Burns 'stole' his *John Barleycorn*. And in his notes on the songs the editor does not take into account the sources of *My Daddy forbade, Hey ca' thro'*, and *The Highland Widow's Lament* reprinted by Frank Miller in his pamphlet on the Mansfield Manuscript (Dumfries 1935), from which it is clear that Burns's versions of these songs are more nearly 'folk' than has hitherto been supposed.

It would no doubt be possible to multiply such petty cavillings, but they are of no importance when set beside the whole. 'When the rich carpet is stained, the fool points his finger and laughs; the wise man covers the blemish with his foot.' Here there is no stain, but merely a few inconspicuous droplets, easily ignored. The Oxford *Burns* will surely take its place as one of the great works of twentieth-century scholarship, as important in its own way as were Grierson's *Donne* or Geoffrey Keynes's *Blake*. Skilfully combining the biographical-chronological approach of the Chambers-Wallace edition of 1896 with the critical acumen of Henley and Henderson of the same year, it does not altogether supersede them, though it is immeasurably more accurate—for example, the scholar will still consult Henley and Henderson for their printing of some sources and analogues; but its sophistication and apparently effortless combination of bibliographical and critical skills render the Oxford *Burns* the best edition of a major Scottish poet that has yet appeared.

THOMAS CRAWFORD

The Claim of Scotland by H. J. Paton. Allen and Unwin, London 1968. Pp. 279. 42s.

One of the most significant things about this unusual book is its authorship. That it should have been written by someone with the career and background of Professor Herbert Paton is remarkable and surely symptomatic of a rapidly changing climate of opinion. Many similar works arguing the case for greater devolution have been written, particularly in the depressed 'thirties; but never by distinguished Oxford dons in retirement. Professor Paton is aware of the anomaly. In his foreword he tells us that it was a book that had to be written, preferably by someone else; but no one else obliged, and in taking the task upon himself the author was fully conscious of the dangers he incurred. As he movingly puts it, 'I write this plea for Scotland even at the risk of losing whatever reputation for sanity I may have acquired in the course of a life spent almost equally in Scotland and in England'.

No sensible reader will doubt Professor Paton's sanity for a moment; no fair reader will feel that the book can possibly damage its author's high reputation as a philosopher; and no humane reader, whatever his politics, will find Paton's concern for his country reprehensible. *The Claim of Scotland* is an eminently sane book and in many respects a model of exposition. Its fifteen chapters cover most aspects of present-day Scotland—notably its politics, administration, education and culture. The treatment is somewhat

cursory; and the style cool and lucid. Indeed, the book as a whole is a little too temperate, as the author from time to time recognises by indulging in some delightfully pungent comment. If English readers fail to appreciate the humour they concede the point: they are good at codding others but cannot abide being codded.

Professor Paton admits that a good deal of what he has to say is not new and that much of it may be regarded as trivial. One feels inclined to agree. More factual discussion, less rumination on stereotypes, and fewer anecdotes would have made for a weightier study. But the author has a good plea in bar of criticism. He contends that many of the points he makes may be trivial in themselves but are indicative of an unhealthy English attitude to the union. Indeed, most English people have no attitude to the union, anymore than they have an attitude to osmosis. For them Scotland becomes 'Scotlandshire', and its inhabitants are expected to behave like imitation Englishmen—perfect only if they can drop the letter 'r' wherever it is needed and intrude it wherever it is not.

The trouble is that admirable as all things English may be they are no part of a Scotsman's natural inheritance. As Professor Paton rightly observes, 'the Scots resemble the French rather than the English. These differences are never so sharp as they appear, but it seems fair to say that there is a genuine contrast between the Scottish approach and the English distrust of abstract thinking, their preference for rule of thumb, their dependence on precedents, and—if we may mention this again—their glorification of "muddling through".' The result of this natural disparity and enforced conformity is a shambles. In discussing the whole sorry mess in all its miry reaches, Professor Paton reserves his hardest blows for those déracinés who curry favour with the powers that be by maligning their country and its traditions while rarely displaying much knowledge of either. Incredibly, this is one of the recognised routes for advancement and more in use now than at any other time.

Professor Paton correctly diagnoses the current nationalist fever as a reaction to 'muddling through'. He contends that the government of Scotland is a mockery, that the U.K. political parties have hopelessly discredited themselves, and that as a result of mismanagement by self-styled experts the condition of Scotland steadily deteriorates, and not merely with reference to Mammon. Professor Paton's prescription is that recommended by the Liberal Party—a federal union. His book then is not purely destructive, as some unionist critics have alleged, but is constructive as well. Indeed, it advocates a means—possibly the only means left—of preserving the United Kingdom. But the machine politicians can hardly be expected to appreciate such sophisticated thinking. Besides, the party hacks, so blind in so many ways, see only too clearly that even a measure of genuine self-government (never mind Mr Heath's proposed Assembly) would dispel for ever the vapid nonsense that masquerades as politics in Scotland today.

I have few basic criticisms to make of Professor Paton's readable and thought-provoking book. He tends to assume throughout that complete independence for Scotland is a chimera or at any rate highly undesirable. He may well be right. But as a philosopher he ought to have seen that this judgment cannot be an absolute: his book

would have been all the better for some contingent discussion of this fundamental question. It is a weakness characteristic of far too much writing on the subject. What is the good, for example, of desiring the survival of Scotland, as Mr Linklater does in his recent book of that name, only to shy clear of the real issues in the last few paragraphs? In short, even the most patriotic rhetoric is no longer enough. The need is for some very hard, very searching, and ruthlessly honest thinking on the whole subject. We do not always get it from Professor Paton. In particular I regret the general tone of his references to the Catholic Irish in Scotland, or, to give them their proper title now, Scots Catholics. Here the author tends to be unjust, simply underwriting the prejudices of an age that has gone. Indeed, there is still in his approach much that is conventional and unsubstantiated. I wonder, for example, if youthful Scots venerate the crown and worry about Scottish heraldic devices. I very much doubt it. Yet many of them do seem to care a great deal about Scotland and to worry about its future. And as the young go, so will Scotland—let the 'experts' (economic, political, or whatever) huff and puff as they please.

WILLIAM FERGUSON

Arbeit und Volksleben: Deutscher Volkskundekongress 1965 in Marburg. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für mitteleuropäische Volksforschung an der Philipps-Universität Marburg-Lahn. A. Allgemeine Reihe, herausgegeben von Gerhard Heilfurth und Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann. Band 4. Otto Schwartz & Co, Göttingen 1967. Pp. xi+442. 36 plates.

Presumably Proceedings or Transactions of a congress are published for four main reasons: first, to enable participants to read again the papers which they heard when attending the conference; second, to allow them to study the contributions which, for one reason or another, they were unable to go to at the time when they were delivered (parallel sessions would come under this heading); third, to give those who were unable to attend the congress a chance to familiarise themselves with the contents and trends of the lectures given; and fourth, simply to provide a permanent record of the conference programme. The usefulness of such Proceedings largely depends on the quality of the programme itself. Even excellent standards of scholarship are not enough if they are not moulded into a framework. Transactions of conferences with a theme are therefore more likely to be successful as publications than those which cover a lot of ground without any thematic thread running through them: unequal standards of contributions are less noticeable if they all shed light on a central subject. However, whatever the merit of any Proceedings of any congress on any subject may be, the published account is most likely to appeal and be useful to those who actually attended the conference in question.

The present reviewer was one of the almost five hundred members of the German Folklore Congress which took place in Marburg in the autumn of 1965. This was a congress with a theme: 'Die Arbeit in ihrer Bedeutung für die menschliche Welt' (work in its significance for the human world), a subject which could naturally not have been expected to be covered in its entirety and therefore received the kind of limited treatment which falls within the competence and range of knowledge of a conference of this nature, *i.e.* work as observed, analysed and interpreted by the cultural anthropologist, the ethnologist, and the folklorist. Of the various aspects which immediately suggest themselves, eight were assigned to special 'working parties': settlement history and vernacular architecture; (agricultural) implements; traditional art; language; folk narrative; song, music and dance; custom; and the specifically German problem of East German folklore, relating particularly to the large section of refugees and displaced persons. This proved to be a very fruitful arrangement which not only allowed for the detailed analysis of particular problems in each section but also for the subsequent discussion of important points by anybody who cared to contribute.

In the Congress Proceedings which appeared two years later under the title of *Arbeit und Volksleben* (Work and Folklife), these working groups are also used to break down conveniently the published material. Not only are all the papers assigned to their respective sections but each resulting group of articles is prefaced by a short 'chairman's report' on the work of the section, summarising the particular nature of the problems discussed and the results obtained through such discussion. This is a good and desirable innovation in the editorial treatment of such Proceedings and can only be welcomed, not only by those who were in the midst of this or that sequence of argument, and perhaps contributed their own little stone to the mosaic, but also by those who would like to know what kind of lessons were learned at Marburg and what the special significance of this particular gathering of scholars is likely to be in the development of our knowledge of the subject. In addition, three very full indices—one of personal names, one of place-names and one of objects and ideas—open up the contents of the 37 papers in an especially useful fashion. Mainly because of this very solid and imaginative editorial work do we have a well-produced volume (with a surprising number of excellent half-tone illustrations) which is so much more than just another collection of papers which happen to have been delivered during the same week to more or less the same audiences.

There may not be much in such a volume that can be said to have any direct bearing on Scottish studies in the same field. On the other hand, there is a good deal which from a comparative point of view may serve as an example, or if not that at least provide a stimulus or food for thought, for similar researches in Scotland. In this respect, one notices chiefly the idea of giving ergological studies a perhaps unaccustomed but valid place in ethnological research, always of course as part of the total culture in which the work to be studied is carried out. That this is not a plea for a kind of folkloristic time-and-motion man is obvious although even this sphere of economic

endeavour may already have developed its own folklore and customs. The interpretation of vernacular architectural traditions within the context of the economy of the region and the structure of society rather than as manifestations of ethnic qualities might be another notion which, although not new, might deserve a new emphasis in Scotland at a time when the term vernacular in its architectural implications has found a new platform for discussion. In the field of traditional narrative, at present undergoing an almost violent change in the reassessment of the whole question of categories, both of form and contents, the practically shapeless although by no means unstructured *Arbeitserinnerungen* (memories about one's work) emerge as a folkloristic phenomenon, whether as part of a more comprehensive life story, an exchange of views and experiences, or the mere bragging in front of one's workmates, friends in the pub, or family (a category of function here). Related to this is the study of the kind of narrative genres and subjects which are found suitable, or even necessary, to accompany work. Work songs have had considerable attention over the years but the 'work narrative' and the place of work as a story-telling situation and locale seem to demand their share of analysis too. Similarly the attitude to work as shown in traditional narratives of all kinds deserves some scrutiny. Finally, and the list is really much longer, the whole spectrum of relationships and interactions between work and custom calls for far more detailed examination in depth than it has had so far. Particularly the creative or recreative use of leisure hours, the beginning and end of a particular job or process of work as the dominating factors in traditional practices, superstitious elements and taboos, seasonal employment and calendar festivals, and many similar aspects offer themselves immediately. In this way, the folklore and traditions of the working day emerge as attractive and essential subjects demanding our attention, and the notion is forever silenced which would exclude the urban industrial society from the territory in which the investigator of such matters is allowed to move with approbation.

W. F. H. NICOLAISEN

Folktales of Norway, edited by Reidar Thorwald Christiansen. Translated by Pat Shaw Iversen. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1964. 284+xlv pp. 28s.

As the first volume reviewed in *Scottish Studies* of a fine series of 'Folktales of the World', this deserves a welcome. The plan is roughly that of all the volumes in the series. The general editor, Professor Richard M. Dorson, as learned a student of folklorists as of folklore, has supplied a foreword on the collection and study of folktales in Norway: much of it is devoted to an account of the great nineteenth-century collectors P. C. Asbjörnsen and Jörgen Moe, their correspondence with Jacob Grimm, and their translator Sir George Dasent, whose work inspired J. F. Campbell of Islay to begin

collecting folktales in the Highlands. Professor Dorson seems also to be responsible for the comparative notes at the head of each story, which refer to Christiansen in the third person. These are not always as complete as they seem: for instance *Giske* ends with a variant of AT 1791 (*Cailleach nan Cnò*), which is more closely connected with the unclassified motif which occupies the bulk of the story than the opening AT 1383, under which alone it is classified.

The editor of this volume, Professor Christiansen, is particularly well known in these islands for his work on Gaelic tales and ballads. He has clearly selected stories relevant to his own recent work: well over half the book is taken up with *sagen*, local historical and supernatural legends, most of them concerned with *huldre* and other Norwegian beings resembling our own fairies. Christiansen's own introduction is largely a fascinating description of the different varieties of these creatures and their doings, with a brief note of other national characteristics in the tales. International wonder-tales (*eventyr*) and comic anecdotes seem under-represented, and there is no example of the animal fables which have certainly been collected in Norway. A closer look, however, shows some justification for this apparent imbalance, at least if the selection is intended to do justice to recent collectors and introduce new tales to English-speaking readers. Of the sixteen international tales ('fictional folktales') in the final section only one was collected after 1900, and all but four are in Dasent's *Popular Tales from the Norse*. In the rest of the book tales collected in the nineteenth century are only slightly in the majority. The selection of *sagen* is an interesting one, with several types given in two or three different forms for comparison, and the *märchen* at the end will at least encourage the reader to look for more in Dasent.

Though some quarter of each volume is scholarly material, anyone who likes stories can find good reading in the series, and a cheap paperback re-issue with fewer notes could make an invaluable introduction to folktales from countries as near as Ireland and as distant as China. It is a pity therefore that, though Mrs Iversen has translated Norse tales before, her renderings are not more attractive. Perhaps this is a judgment coloured by Limey prejudice against an American idiom which often seems an uneasy mixture of the formal and the folksy. Perhaps also the greater accuracy of her translation makes it flow less smoothly than Dasent's (whose freedom, however, might be forgiven in view of Asbjörnsen and Moe's own mild 'improvements' of the texts they collected.) But surely Dasent's 'I can sleep in the side-room' is clearer than 'I guess I can lie in the closet', and 'maybe there's witchcraft in it' more natural than 'there can be some devilment about it'. Mrs Iversen's constant use of constructions like 'You'll have to do it, you will', though less common than the literal equivalent in Norwegian, jars in English. Occasionally she improves on a mannered rendering of Dasent's such as 'Ritter Red' for 'the Red Knight' or 'the Man o' the Hill' (from *Tom Jones*?) for 'mountain troll'; but what is the point of her 'Whittenland', half-way between *Hvidtenland* and Dasent's obvious 'Whiteland'?

In any case this collection can be no substitute for *Popular Tales from the Norse* and

Tales from the Fjeld: but the selection of the shorter local tales which makes up the greater part of the book is unique in English, and justifies this volume's place in a series which as a whole cannot be too strongly recommended.

ALAN BRUFORD

Irish Wake Amusements by Seán ÓSúilleabháin. The Mercier Press, Cork 1967. 188 pp. 8s. 6d.

The *cluiche caointe*, coupled by convention with the raising of an ogham stone in descriptions of funerals in Modern Irish romances, was translated by nineteenth-century country scholars as 'wake games'. Nowadays older sources such as the Dindshenchus of Carmun and the Homeric parallels may lead us to visualise something rather more like a school sports day: but there can be little doubt that the parlour games and by-play which formed part of every Irish wake until this century were the worn-down remnants or the common man's imitation of these athletic contests at the burial of pagan heroes. Traces of other ancient beliefs can be glimpsed too, along with the simple desire to pass the time and dispel the gloomy thoughts natural with a corpse in the middle of the company. There is an element of mischief-making which recalls the tricks played at Hallowe'en by young people impersonating, according to the usual theory, the dead who were supposed to roam that night: at wakes, perhaps, they were in the house to welcome the newcomer to their number. Again, the spirit of the departed had to be placated with blood; at any rate, a fight was considered an indispensable part of a funeral in Ireland as in the Highlands, and there was often fighting at the wake also, where some of the wake games were apparently deliberately aimed to make people angry. The tricks played on the unwary and the matchmaking games carry a suggestion of initiation ceremonies, as if the wake-house were the place where young people were received as members of the adult community. But the basic purpose of the ceremony, as Seán Ó Súilleabháin points out in his last chapter, was to show respect to the dead man with a farewell party before his departure to the other world, just as emigrants to the New World were seen off with an 'American Wake'.

From another point of view the wake was one of the main social functions in rural Ireland: in Irish love songs the man often says that he met the girl first either in church or at a wake, *ar an dtórramh thíos ar an Mullach Mór*. So the games were often of the sort calculated to get a party 'warmed up': Hunt the Slipper, Hide and Seek and dancing were common entertainments, as well as matchmaking games—like those played by schoolgirls, or waulking women in the Hebrides—kissing games and even mock marriages. But every sort of game could appear: cards and board games, trials of strength and skill—sometimes actual athletic contests followed in the morning—charades of various sorts, and tricks like 'The seat between the King and Queen' or catch games for

the company on the lines of 'Simon says' or 'The Minister's Cat'. Many of these last kinds are still played by schoolchildren in Britain. Riddles, tongue-twisters, songs and story-telling were other amusements.

Seán ÓSúilleabháin, Archivist of the Irish Folklore Commission, describes all these customs in detail, with full references to printed sources for each. (Curiously enough there is no direct reference to the Folklore Commission's own MS collections, whether because these were made too late or concentrated on other subjects, or simply because there were enough references without them.) An interesting but all too short chapter deals with the lost custom of keening and the composition of impromptu elegies. The constant opposition of the Church, from the seventeenth century on, to drinking, dancing, mock marriages and other merriment at wakes is fully documented, and the survival and eventual decline of these customs is traced up to the present day, with frequent parallels from Scotland, England and the Continent. The description, at the beginning, of country wakes today is useful for non-Irish readers, and there is an index to the various games. The book, smoothly translated by the author from his *Caitheamh Aimsire ar Thórramh* (An Clóchomhar Tta, 1961), makes one of the most interesting additions to the Mercier Press's prolific outpouring of paperbacks on Irish themes.

ALAN BRUFORD

Scottish Pageantry by Albert Mackie. Hutchison, London 1967. Pp. 256. 45s.

Throughout Scotland the spirit of the past has strikingly survived and expresses itself in colourful ceremonies and pageants. In this book Mr Mackie surveys the whole scene in prose and picture, and in tracing the origins and development of our Scottish pageantry throws many fascinating sidelights on our history. The book is illustrated with nine colour-prints and forty black-and-white pictures.

Whilst the Scottish Court has promoted much of the national pageantry, beyond the long line of kings stands the imposing figure of the Lord Lyon King of Arms—the direct descendant of the High Sennachie of Druidic times, one of whose duties was to recite the genealogy of the King at each successive Coronation. Lyon has preserved the heraldic glories of medieval times, and his skill and knowledge are manifest in our coronations (up to and including Charles I), Royal Progresses, Parliamentary Processions and other great occasions. Many of these are described here in detail, culminating in our present Queen's Accessional Visit to Scotland in 1953, with its climax in the Kirk of St Giles, where the Queen entrusts the Honours of Scotland—the Crown, the Sceptre and the Sword of State—to their noble bearers. The scene was enriched by the colourful ermine-caped robes of the peers and the civic dignitaries, the scarlet and gold and the tartans of the military uniforms, the green uniforms and high-plumed hats of the Royal

Archers, the Court dress of the ladies—with the added colour of the stained-glass windows and the banners and the tabards of the Lord Lyon and his heralds.

On all high occasions the Knights of the Thistle—roughly the Scottish equivalent of the Knights of the Garter—the High Constables of Holyrood, and the Royal Company of Archers—the Queen's Bodyguard in Scotland—are conspicuous.

Since the prorogation of the Scottish Parliament, the pomp and pageantry associated with the Riding of the Parliament has been largely transferred to the Opening of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, when a Guard of Honour attends the Lord High Commissioner (the Queen's representative) and a Royal Salute of twenty-one guns is fired from the Half-moon Battery at the Castle.

The pomp and splendour of the Lyon Court survives in the Royal Proclamations at the Mercat Cross, when the Lord Lyon, with a Guard of Honour, is hailed by sound of trumpet.

Our Scottish regiments have been foremost in preserving our national identity, our local patriotism, our traditions and ceremonies, as well as the dress, music and dancing of the Gael. The Military Tattoo on the Castle Esplanade is the supreme attraction each year at the Edinburgh Festival.

The Law Courts have their own ceremonial, and at the opening of sessions of the Courts the Lord President, the Lord Justice-Clerk and the twelve Senators of the College of Justice walk in procession in their wigs and robes to the Kirkin' Ceremony in St Giles. So with other learned bodies, notably the Universities, all of which have picturesque ceremonies such as installations and graduations. There are solemn and impressive processions consisting of the Chancellor, Principal, Senatus, representatives of the Students' Representative Council, and honorary graduates, headed by the bedellus or mace-bearer, with a display of gowns, vividly coloured hoods, mortar-boards and velvet bonnets.

To our Town and County Councils we largely owe the preservation of local customs and regional pageantry. David I (*c.* 1080–1153) initiated a system of burghs all over Scotland, and for centuries our civic processions have been splendid affairs. Vestments and jewellery are conspicuous trappings of our municipal dignitaries, and their splendour Mr Mackie tells us, goes back to the times when royalty took a direct interest in the conduct of local affairs. Even in the smallest burghs we find admirably arranged local processions.

The author devotes a chapter to the local festivals of Scotland. 'There are festivals and pageants of some kind or other, somewhere or other, for some excuse or other,' he tells us, 'all the year round.' Some, like Beltane and Hallowe'en (the ancient *Samhuinn*) are of pagan origin. The Burning of the Clavie at Burghead and the spectacular festival of Up-helly-aa in Lerwick are among the survivals of the ancient Yule fires meant to aid by mimetic magic the return of the sun from the furthest point in its circuit to fructify the earth anew. The Riding of the Marches, so popular in the Border burghs, dates from the time when a ceremonial riding took place round the common

lands attached to each burgh to see that no encroachments on the boundaries had been made by any acquisitive neighbouring laird.

Mr Mackie surveys the cycle of the seasons, each with its appropriate festivals, and reveals to us an astonishing refloresence of local patriotism throughout Scotland from Shetland to the Mull of Galloway. This will greatly enrich the community life in the new Scotland we are all preparing to re-build.

F. MARIAN MCNEILL

Letters of John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, 1799–1812, edited by Barbara L. H. Horn. Pp. xxviii+346. Scottish History Society, Edinburgh 1966.

Ramsay was well on in his sixties when he began the letters that make this collection, and he wrote them to a comparatively young relative, the wife of his heir James Dundas. The letters have such a completeness, forming the picture of one man and his world, that they must have been one of his main forms of expression. Every week the carrier would take fruit, vegetables, butter, salmon, well aged mutton or Ramsay's first asparagus from Stirling to Edinburgh, and with the parcel went a letter. In return shopping might be done for Ramsay, cabbage seed, haddock or cod come back, but the generosity was predominantly one-sided and Ramsay sent the best of everything. (The earliest pears of June 1805 must be a misreading or miswriting for peas: the other is horticulturally impossible.)

He was living on his own in a small, austerely furnished house, four rooms besides the servants' domain. The £147 19s. 1d. at which his books and furniture were valued after his death would not mean much in middle-class comforts by the standards of the day. There was a large local society of lairds and their families near at hand, though not, according to Ramsay, what there had been once, and he laments the passing of the golden age of Clackmannanshire. For immediate personal contacts he had his tenantry and servants. His intimacy with his household is shown in his care of his servants when they are sick. He sees to it that one of the maids reads *Gulliver's Travels* to his housekeeper during her illness. It cheered her up, even though 'she believed not a word of it'. 'When my old servants fail . . . I shall be a helpless animal' wrote Ramsay with feeling, and fail they did. Mrs Watson, his housekeeper, died, and was found to have embezzled £300 from the butter making. Her successor held gay parties, and that would not do. Then came Mrs Metcalf, who could make broth as the old man liked it, and managed the household with discretion, lent Ramsay her watch when his own was stolen and read to him as his eyes failed, and at the end even wrote for him. Poor woman: she could hardly cope with his love of great words, and he continued to fill his letters with things like 'canebrificous'. He was indeed helpless and the correspondence ground to a halt.

It is a local picture Ramsay gives. His neighbours move around, but they gather their wives from near at hand, usually; their children come back and take over the houses. As befits an old man there is a note of decay. At Menstry in 1801 'the staircase up to the drawing room ruinous and everything bore the marks of desolation'. Tullibody was little better. Then it was reoccupied: parties were held under the lovely curving roof, and Ramsay could recall his youth. And now it lies in ashes. The centres of kinship and company change; Cardross replaces Tullibody. The great extended family, as those of us who still sustain it know, swept its members from generation to generation, muting griefs and giving life to the houses. It provided a world which left little need for a wider one. Miss Horn has faithfully traced the Dundas-Abercromby-Graham network of this world and set it out in a clear and attractive table. If she had had cause to take up the Dundas connection in other directions she would not have been puzzled by the identification of the Mr Trotter who figures with Lord Melville in 1805—surely Alexander Trotter of Dreghorn, Paymaster of the Navy, whose descendants married with Dundas's, and whose financial operations and evidence brought about the fall of Scotland's great man. 'I see not that Scotland is likely to gain aught by his fall' wrote Ramsay. He was right.

There is something of the contemporary in Ramsay's complaints about his world. Who today has not heard, or uttered, a hostile comment on the scantiness of female dress, on the deplorable habit of pulling down sound old buildings for new ones, on the current vice of over-eating, on the attenuation of religious belief? Here is the old man on these themes. 'Semi-Christianity which seems to be ashamed of, at least to keep aloof from, the doctrines and language of its great master and his apostles, is nearly akin, and little less unseemly and reprehensible than the semi-dress or quarter-dress so much in request of late among fashionable belles.' 'Warmth and decency are not incompatible with elegance.' The lack of current morals is contrasted with the past: true he had known a kleptomaniac northern lord, but 'that was disease' whereas today people rob each other under the guise of card-play from a lack of education in morals. Edinburgh is going downhill. It has new fine streets, but Ramsay would prefer 'something nearer Tuscan simplicity': 'when will this building frenzy end?' It is fast becoming a 'little London', 'its luxuries and pursuits are nearly the same'. The houses where Ramsay used to live are pulled down or have become slums, or worse still they are occupied by strangers. 'Nothing but English is now to be heard in Auld Reekie except among the high school boys.' Education is slack. Ramsay held 'the good *old way*, of rigid discipline exercised with discretion on lads of 15, 16 or 17 was the best human wisdom could devize to make good scholars, and prepare them to be good members of society', and we can tell what the 'discipline' means when he recommends the Westminster or Eton method of flogging boys into scholarship. Modern entertainment is too lavish, keeps too late hours, and Ramsay yearns for 'a proper dinner without traces of vanity or excess' and the simple balls and hops of his own youth. The diction may be new to us but not the sentiments.

The interest of Ramsay's mind is that he was intelligent, widely curious about life, letters and society, well read and old-fashioned. Perhaps he narrowed his topics for the particular reader. It was not the convention to talk politics to ladies and Ramsay thought 'mathematics and minerallogy' also not subjects for them. But we get views of Napoleon, 'the proud king of Assyria', or Ramsay's unwillingness to see Britain commit an army against him in the Peninsula, or George III's 'rage for conquest' and 'disposition to quarrel with all the earth'. What we do not hear of is the intellectual march of Scotland. That the country had contributed the greatest economist of the eighteenth century, a philosopher in the world class, mathematicians and chemists of great note, and was even at that time creating modern geology one would not know from these letters. For all his unwillingness to see Scotland copy England, Ramsay's intellectual life is English, not Scottish. It is the English poets and novelists who furnish his mind with quotations and references. Scott is mentioned occasionally, but Ramsay was not moved by his work. Burns's 'Cottar's Saturday Night' has struck home. Otherwise the Scottish contribution is sermons and nothing else.

Ramsay was ambivalent in his resistance to English culture. Boys should get their classics at English schools but resist the deplorable practice of fagging there. The English jury trial cannot be grafted on to Scottish law without bringing over Jamaican judges, jurors and attornies. If his neighbours insist on bringing in English wives he will be ready to be won over to them. 'It is not alwise expedient to tread in the steps of people richer and more polished than ourselves' he writes, but in various ways he has a sneaking affection for some of the changes that come from this foreign connection, besides the wives. But the most marked outside influence on lowland Scotland's gentry seems to be not so much England as the East India Company, bringing in more reliable wealth than London politics, sending back nabobs and captains, offering careers. Even the new religious tenets that Ramsay disliked are locally produced by the Haldane Baptist connection centred on Airthrey. Marriage with this group caused more severance and sadness than marriage into England or India. 'The *saints* are very greedy' he wrote sadly as he saw his cousin Elizabeth Joass drawn into the Haldane household by her daughter's marriage and lamented her growing coldness to him.

Friendship fails for other reasons than religion. The Abercrombys, except for one, ceased to be kind or attentive, and even that one was suffering from 'ossification of the heart', 'incurable', by the end of the letters. Health was failing too. The book shows a man who valued friendship, clung to it and worked at it, perhaps because of his sharp and exquisite sense of mortality. Early on Ramsay strikes a note that is to recur again and again. In 1800 he writes of his 'frail tabernacle', adding 'it is time to one who knows he has the seeds of disease in him, to think of setting his house in order'. He never ceased to remember these seeds. His doctor becomes more and more important to the old laird. In 1805 he is recommending the unusual prescription of five or six glasses of wine a day to counter a 'teazing pain' and insomnia. In 1808 Ramsay is persuaded his course is nearly over: 'one may live too long.' He is on broth with an occasional glass of wine.

In 1810 it is 'sowins', porridge and a little laudanum. But for Christmas he manages salmon and two glasses of burgundy. Only in 1812 with the failure of his sight, do the shadows really close in, two years before his death. Who is to say, exploring this lonely, courageous, loving mind with its active appreciation of place, time and change, that he had in fact lived too long?

ROSALIND MITCHISON

Books Received

Some of these books may be reviewed later in *Scottish Studies*

Sporan Dhòmhnaill. Gaelic Poems and Songs by the late Donald MacIntyre, edited by Somerled MacMillan. Oliver & Boyd for the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, Edinburgh 1968. Pp. 418. 35s.

The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories by Mildred Haun, edited by Herschel Gower. Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, Tennessee 1968. Pp. xxv + 356. $7.95.

English Ritual Drama by E. C. Cawle, Alex. Helm and N. Peacock. London 1967. Pp. 132. 30s.

Strange Things by J. L. Campbell and Trevor H. Hall. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1968. Pp. xvi + 350. 55s.

Scéalta ón nBlascaod by Kenneth Jackson. The Talbot Press, Dublin 1968. Pp. 96. 7s. 6d.

Hebridean Folksongs. A Collection of Waulking Songs made by Donald MacCormick, completed and edited by J. L. Campbell. Oxford University Press, London 1969. Pp. 375. 70s.

Our Scottish District Checks by E. S. Harrison. The National Association of Scottish Woollen Manufacturers, Edinburgh 1968. Pp. 167. £5 5s.

Eday and Hoy, A Development Survey by Ronald Miller and Susan Luther-Davies. Department of Geography University of Glasgow 1969. Pp. 94.

Sir John Scot, Lord Scotstarvit: His Life and Times by T. G. Snoddy. T. & A. Constable, Edinburgh 1968.

Temenos, vol. 4. Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion, Helsinki 1969. Pp. 152. 15 Finnish Marks.

Seeing Scotland. An Official Guide to Countryside, Castles, Houses, Gardens and Places of Interest Open to the Public. The National Trust for Scotland, Edinburgh 1969. Pp. 104. 3s.

The Lime Industry in the Lothians by B. C. Skinner, Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies, University of Edinburgh 1969. Pp. 64.

A Register of Scottish Literary Studies. University Committee on Scottish Literature. 1969.