

Eckenstein, Lina. Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes; Reissued by Singing Tree Press, Detroit, 1968. 231 + viii pp. List of foreign collections; index. \$8.50.

Children's lore, primarily nursery rhymes and games, was a popular subject for study in the nineteenth century, inviting the attention of eminent antiquarians such as Joseph Strutt, James Halliwell, and the Scottish publisher Robert Chambers, and culminating in Lady Alice Bertha Gomme's The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland, published just before the turn of the century. Such firmly established notions as the theory of unilinear cultural evolution, the concept of survivals, the search for origins and the comparative method pervaded many nineteenth folklore studies, and, when applied to children's lore, led to certain inevitable conclusions, the most popular of which were that many children's games are survivals of ancient heathen rituals or customs and that many rhymes are survivals of ancient mythology.

Lina Eckenstein's Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes stands in the shadow of Lady Gomme's pioneering work which had been published only eight years before. Eckenstein's title is somewhat misleading because she considers both lore of the nursery transmitted from adults to children and lore of the playground transmitted from children to children. She focuses upon rhymes, games and dances. Of the eighteen chapters, those of most lasting value are the first five, in which the rhymes are traced through early ephemeral printed sources, their first appearance in print noted, and their relationship to popular song, broadsides and ballads discussed. In the subsequent chapters, the comparative method is applied with increasing enthusiasm; although Eckenstein is to be commended for concentrating upon European parallels, this still leads to more fantastic hypotheses which are no longer fashionable. In the case of Chapter VII, "The Game of Sally Waters," very little is added to what Lady Gomme has already done.

In tracing the diverse origins of children's rhymes, Eckenstein, also the author of a work curiously titled Woman under Monasticism, relies heavily upon the findings of Halliwell, Gomme and Mannhardt (Germanische Mythen, 1858). "Three Blind Mice" and "A Frog He Would a Wooing Go" are examples of popular songs which have found their way into early nursery collections (pp. 22-32). "Hey diddle diddle the cat in the fiddle" is traced back to festivities associated with Twelfth Night and to a blackletter ballad (pp. 32-35). Child found some of his ballads preserved in nursery literature whereas some nursery rhymes utilize the same motifs and names found in traditional ballads. Thus Tam Linn figures in several short nursery rhymes:

Ding dong bell, poor pussy has fall'n i' th' well,
 Who threw her in? Little Tom O' Linne
 What a naughty boy was that
 To drown poor pussy cat,
 That never did any harm,
 But catch'd a mouse i' th' barn. (p. 54)

Jack and Jill are said to descend from Scandinavian mythology and the rhyme, "Lady bird, lady bird, fly away home; your house is on fire and your children are all alone" is said to be a survival of an ancient charm "intended to speed the sun across the dangers of the sunset" (p. 95).

Humpty Dumpty is associated with the world egg which appears in the work of Aristophanes and in the Kalevala.

Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes is most valuable as a bibliographic tool and guide to the early appearances of nursery rhymes in print, but even here it must give way to a modern and authoritative work, The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes (Oxford, 1958). Relative to such early classics as Robert Chamber's Popular Rhymes of Scotland (enlarged edition, 1870) and James Halliwell's The Nursery Rhymes of England (enlarged and annotated edition, 1846), Eckenstein's work is a minor, somewhat redundant contribution, which merits attention only after the great classics have been reprinted.

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IN BRIEF

Recently republished by Gale Research Company (Detroit), Elizabeth Mary Wright's Rustic Speech and Folklore (342 pp.; \$12.50) contains an amazing potpourri of information on dialect speech and such folkloristic topics as superstition, folk medicine and divination. Her approach to her subject matter is personal and often entertaining. At times she sounds quite modern, as when she rejects the concept that dialect speech patterns do not conform to syntactical structure. She correctly states that dialects have their own patterns of syntactical and phonological structure. Unfortunately, her comments tend to be speculative and non-cohesive rather than part of a structured hypothesis. Her folklore items similarly tend to be personal recollections rather than the result of scientific fieldwork, but they are nonetheless entertaining and interesting for all of that. --- James Durham

A recent reprint of Thomas Frederick Crane's Italian Popular Tales (Gale Research Company, Detroit, 1968; 389 pp.; \$12.50) as one of Gale's usual fine but expensive editions represents a limited attempt of the author to establish a classification system employing the methods of comparative folklore. His tales---nursery tales (fables), fairy tales (Märchen) and jests---are for the most part genuine texts taken from earlier Italian collections, arranged and translated by Crane. Although his notes are copious and his attempt at classification fascinating, Crane's concern was to present an overview of popular tales in Italy rather than to present pristine texts; therefore his work will be useful to the modern folklorist as an interesting historical sidelight. --- Yvonne Milspaw

Correction: the correct price in American dollars for Bela Bartok's Rumanian Folk Music is \$47.50, not \$42.50 as stated in the FORUM, II, 2, p. 57.