

BOOK REVIEWS

Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript. Ballads and Romances. Edited by John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnivall. 3 vols., London, N. Trübner & Co., 1868. Now reissued by Singing Tree Press, Detroit, Michigan, 1968, with a preface by Leslie Shepart. Vol. III includes Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript. Loose and Humorous Songs. Edited by Frederick J. Furnivall, London, printed for and by the editor, 1868. \$87.50.

It is certainly no coincidence that F. J. Furnivall's edition of the Percy Folio Manuscript of 1868 was reissued in 1968. Bishop Percy had published his Reliques of Ancient Poetry in 1765, and the scholarly world as well as the public had to wait a hundred years for the publication of the manuscript Percy had drawn upon. However, at least for the last decades, Furnivall's edition has been almost unobtainable so that a reissue became imperative. The Singing Tree Press which has reissued several other important folklore collections has shown much understanding to choose the hundredth anniversary of Furnivall's edition for its reissue.

Much has been written about the importance and the manifold consequences of Percy's publication of the Reliques: they have both stimulated and at the same time hampered the study of oral folklore to an enormous degree. The Reliques gave rise to the collecting and the study of folklore in Britain and most other European countries; their influence on Herder, Goethe, and the romanticists is well known. On the other hand, Percy's treatment of his materials, his "improvements," additions, and—even more important—his omissions have directed and influenced the study of oral folklore in a very negative way. The romantic idea that folksongs were pure gems of a "natural" poetry of the people and that the reliques of this ancient poetry had to be harvested by antiquarians, has persisted with some scholars into our century. Prof. Child who urged his British colleagues to publish the manuscript was himself an adherent of this antiquarian and puritanical way of thinking and consequently his attitude toward Furnivall's plan for the edition was similar to that of Percy: it is chiefly through Child's influence that all ballads and songs which he considered unfit were excluded from what should have been a complete edition of the manuscript. Furnivall, it seems, was a much more far-sighted scholar than most of his contemporaries: he published all the ballads and songs Child or the publisher considered vulgar, bawdy, or obscene in a separate volume entitled Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript. Loose and Humorous Songs (London, 1868), which was reissued only a few years ago (Folklore Associates, Hatboro, Pa., 1963). It is definitely the greatest achievement of the present edition that these "loose" songs and ballads, too, are incorporated in the work so that 200 years after the publication of the Reliques this reissue is really what all previous editions failed to be: the first complete edition of Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript, presented as one opus.

"Bawdy ballads are of great importance for our understanding of the outlook and mores of the day . . .," Shepard remarks in his preface. This fact has to be recognized by all folklore scholars, particularly those of the Anglo-Saxon countries. Ballads are not, as some scholars wanted to make everyone believe, necessarily tragic or sentimental: the comic, the humorous,

and the bawdy elements are just as well integral parts of balladry (cf. Warren E. Roberts, "Comic Elements in the English Traditional Ballad," Journal of the IFMC, III [1951], 76-81). In this respect the Loose and Humorous Songs are of great interest: among the 46 pieces we find proper schwank ballads (e.g. "Panache," "Fryar and Boye," "The Sea Crab"); "The Sea Crab" is probably the oldest bawdy schwank ballad in English. Most songs are, however, amorous songs.

Leslie Shepard, a non-folklorist who established his reputation as a specialist in broadside ballads with his introductory work on broadsides, The Broadside Ballad (London, 1962), has written the introduction to the reissue. In it Shepard tries to throw some light on the questions where, whence and how Percy obtained his manuscript. On the romantic story of the discovery of the manuscript through Percy Shepard comments: "The reissue of the manuscript is a good opportunity to add an interesting sidelight on Percy's account, since another memorandum which has recently come to light suggests that the MS. may have been discovered and appreciated by someone else before Percy found it. I possess a copy of the 3rd edition of Percy's Reliques (1775) which bears the following autograph inscription on the end-paper of vol. I ...". This memorandum was written in 1826 by William Yonge, a surgeon in Shiffnal, who claims that he had seen and used the manuscript in the house of Humphrey Pitt (where Percy found it) in the year 1757 when he was still a schoolboy. Later Percy had heard of it and obtained it for publication. Percy, according to his own account, left his curacy off Tasley, Bridgnorth, in 1756, one year before Yonge claims to have discovered the manuscript. Yonge's memorandum, too, leaves several questions open which Shepard ventures to solve with conjectures and speculation; it is obvious, however, that much more evidence has to be produced and that all the facts have to be evaluated far more carefully to decide whether or not Percy himself saved the manuscript from "being used by the maids to light the fire." In any case, only on account of Percy's unusual antiquarian interest was this unique manuscript made available for the public, at least partly.

For the reviewer it remains unclear and mysterious why neither Furnivall nor the publishers of the reissue paginated the prefaces, the forewords, the Life of Bishop Percy, and the notes in vol. I (in vols. II and III they are paginated!). Almost 80 pages are thus hardly useful for quotations.

The photographic reprinting itself is neat and flawless, the design of the three volumes is very good. The price of \$87.50 seems high, but for the serious folklorist, particularly for the folksong scholar, for whom the 1868 edition is either unobtainable or too expensive, this complete reissue will be really indispensable.

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Dégh, Linda. Folktales and Society: Story-Telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community; Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1969. 430 and xi pp. Index, Index of Motifs, Index of Tale Types, Appendix, Bibliography, 5 plates, map. \$12.50.

One of the most significant, yet relatively ignored problems in oral narrative research is the influence of the creative individual and the community on the transmission and transformation of the folktale. In her study,