

Folk Tales and Superstitions. By Sidney Oldall Addy.

Pp. (xiii), xxxvi + 163, notes, index, new introduction by J. D. Widdowson.
Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield (E.P. Press), 1973. \$8.50 cloth.
Originally published as Household Tales with other Traditional Remains:
Collected in the Counties of York, Lincoln, Derby, and Nottingham.
London: David Nutt in the Strand; Sheffield: Pawson and Brailsford, 1895.

Reviewed by John R. Scott.

We must certainly be grateful when any book which would otherwise be difficult to obtain is reprinted, particularly when the book chosen is as important a work as Addy's Household Tales. In spite of our gratitude, I believe that the editors of such reprints have certain responsibilities toward the author and the readers. If they are to reprint a book, they should at least have enough respect for the author to retain his original title, especially when; as in this case, the author's title is far superior to that chosen by the editors. If availability is the rationale behind reprinting a book, it seems that \$8.50 is a somewhat contradictory price, especially since Mr. Addy has left no relatives to claim royalties.

These considerations, however, do not detract from the value of Addy's work or from the constructive nature of Professor Widdowson's new introduction. As Widdowson says, Addy ". . . represents so much that is admirable in antiquarian scholarship." (p. (vi)) Like other antiquarians, Addy was very well read and was interested in many courses of study. He made contributions to local history (Historical Memorials of Beauchief Abbey--1878), linguistics (A Glossary of Words Used in the Neighborhood of Sheffield--1888), architecture (The Evolution of the English House--1898) and the folklore of games (a contribution to Lady Alice Bertha Gomme's Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland.) This diversity of interest may be characteristic of the antiquarians, but what makes Addy an admirable representative are his editing and glossing, his style and tone and his comparative notes.

As an editor, Addy resisted the temptation to "polish" his material: "In every case I have either written the tales down from dictation, or a written copy has been given to me." (p. ix) On the language of the tales, he states that he made no attempt to reproduce dialect but that "obsolete words" have been retained and explained. (p. ix) Addy's style, which flows as smoothly as Vance Randolph's, is straightforward and unornamented. Furthermore, one does not find in Household Tales any overtones of class consciousness or superiority, such as those found, for example, in W. Roy Mackenzie's The Quest of the Ballad (New York: Haskell House, 1966). Some notes of the Old Norse and to German sources contribute to the value of the work, but Type and Motif numbers would be a valuable addition for the editors to have made.

Addy's introduction contains several theoretical points which show that he was aware of the contemporary theories of folklore scholarship. The concept of devolution is a constant in folklore studies, and Addy expresses this idea when he says that "a deluge of cheap literature" has caused the decay of unwritten lore. (p. ix) He also suggests that tales were spread by "wandering pedlars, tinkers, and merchants, many of whom came from foreign lands." (p. xvii) About the traditional remains, Addy suggests that they are survivals of the kind of

logic which was current among primitives and which may be seen now in the logic of a child who wags a dog's tail to make it happy. He adds that while this logic may have caused the customs, they continue now even though the reasons for their origins are forgotten. (p. xxv) In his discussion of the similarities in the characteristics of witches, ghosts and fairies, Addy cites both Hartland and Keightly.

To say that an author had problems with classifying beliefs is not true criticism, because this could be said of all collections of beliefs. One example should suffice to show the kind of difficulty one encounters. Under "Superstitions about Animals", one finds "If your cat sits with her back to the fire it is sure to rain." (p. 68); while under the heading, "Weather Lore", one sees "If your cat lies with her back to the fire it is going to rain." (p.118)

Addy provides the reader with notes for geographic comparison, and Widdowson's introduction begins to show the way in which a solid collection of this kind can also be valuable for temporal comparison. This reprint edition, Folk Tales and Superstitions, not only acts as a good introductory survey of a region's folklore, but is also extremely useful for geographic and temporal comparison. Furthermore, it provides good, entertaining reading.