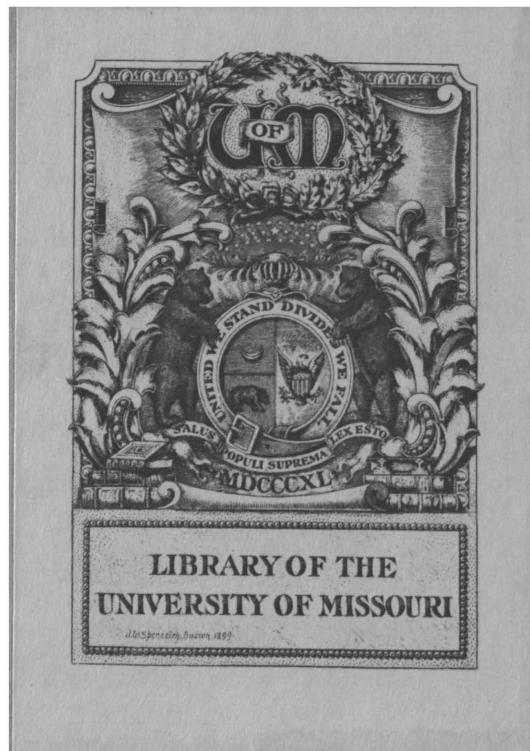


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OMISSION OF THE CENTRAL ACTION

IN THE
ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR BALLADS

by

JOHN ROBERT MOORE, A. B.

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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N O T E

Much of the material of this thesis was contained in an article on Omission of the Central Action in English Ballads, which was published in Modern Philology, Vol. XI, No. 3 (January, 1914).

Since then the present writer has largely increased the number and variety of illustrations, and has corrected several minor errors of citation. A more careful and extensive study of the literature of the subject has been made, with the result of confirming in the writer's mind substantially the same opinions that had been adopted some years before, as a result of reading the ballads alone. However, owing to changes of opinion on minor details of the subject, one or two statements have been omitted from this thesis.

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In order to treat of the central action, which involves what is perhaps most vital in the method of the ballads, a theory of ballad origins is necessary; for unless we have some notion as to who wrote the ballads, we cannot be sure why they were written just as they are.

Let us confess at the outset that the distinction between "true" ballads and "made" ones seems to us misleading; that all ballads seem to be made, some well and some badly, some in conformity with the principles which underlie the type to which (1) they belong and others in imitation of these original ballads. Setting aside the riddle ballads, and one or two survivals of a very early choral dance, we may say that ballads are the products of individuals, and that these individuals belong to (ii) schools- (iii) not the schools whose names appear in literary history, but anonymous schools of expression.

(1) T. F. Henderson, The Ballad in Literature, Cambridge, 1912, p. 8.

(ii) Cf. Appendix A, Authorship of the Ballads.

(iii) W. P. Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, n. d., p. 163: "There is a sort of resemblance which no amount of 'analogues' in different languages can explain, and that is the

likeness in temper among the ballad poets of different languages, which not only makes them take up the same stories, but makes them deal with fresh realities in the same way. How is it that an English ballad poet sees the death of Percy Reed in a certain manner, while a Danish poet far off will see the same poetical meaning in a Danish adventure, and will turn it into the common ballad form? The medieval ballad is a form used by poets with their eyes open upon life, and with a form of thought in their minds by which they comprehend a situation."

When we have an anonymous poem in literature, it can usually be associated with the writings which characterize some well-known school, and may be classed as "an anonymous Elizabethan sonnet," or "an anonymous Cavalier song," or the like. But in the case of the ballads, not only the author is unknown, but the school itself is, and in most cases always has been, an anonymous one. The literary historians have somehow overlooked it, and we find, virtually, its only record in the stanzas which it has left us.

We see something of the same sort today, even now that the personal element is so pronounced. Who writes the articles in a metropolitan newspaper? How many people know or care about the composer when they whistle an air from the music-halls? Who makes the jokes of the day which are passed from mouth to mouth? Of course, the parallel should not be carried too far; the newspapers, at least, are conscious and purposive, the ballads

(i) Henderson, *ibid.*, pp. 57-96; also Ker, Epic and Romance, London, 1908, p. 123: "Ballad, as the term is commonly used, implies a certain degree of simplicity, and an absence of high poetical ambition. Ballads are for the market-place and the 'blind crowder,' or for the rustic chorus that sings the ballad burden. The wonderful poetical beauty of some of the popular ballads of Scotland and Denmark, not to speak of other lands, is a kind of beauty that is never attained by the great poetical artists; an unconscious grace. The ballads of the Scottish Border, from their first invention to the publication of the Border Minstrelsy, lie far away from the great streams of poetical inspiration. They have little or nothing to do with the triumphs of the poets; the 'progress of poesy' leaves them untouched; they learn neither from Milton nor from Pope, but keep a life of their own that has its sources far removed in the past, in quite another tradition of art than that to which the great authors and their works belong." *Ibid.*, p. 131: "The ballad poets are remote from the lists where the champions overthrow one another, where poet takes the crown from poet. The ballads, by their very nature, are secluded and apart from the great literary enterprises."

(1)

were unconscious and without definite purpose. Just what is meant by this distinction? I cannot illustrate better than by recalling the familiar story of Sheridan, the playwright-orator, and the countryman. While passing along an English road, Sheridan met the countryman and asked him what he thought of the new peace with France. The latter replied, in substance; "It is a peace of which ~~we~~ may all be glad, but of which no one can be proud." Sheridan used the epigram at a critical time in Parliament, and electrified that assembly and through it the entire nation. In this case, the countryman spoke unconsciously and without definite purpose the same words that Sheridan, consciously and purposefully, used to express the feelings of his fellow-citizens.

It is quite natural for distinct types of art to observe canons of their own. Who desires or expects to find in the newspaper the personal style of Macaulay? I once had pointed out to me an article by one of the most brilliant of the younger newspaper men in America, and was told that it was his masterpiece. It seemed childishly simple, but I could perceive in it a

(1) G. L. Kittredge, Introduction to The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, Cambridge Edition, Boston and New York, 1904, p. XII: "Their common element is not the personality of the writer but his impersonality; and this distinguishes the ballad, as a class, from the productions of the conscious literary artist." G. M. Miller, The Dramatic Element in the Popular Ballad, University Studies, Univ. of Cincinnati, Ser. II, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 38: "Impersonality is a quality belonging to all folk-poetry; ~~and~~ it is all written by 'anon,' but in a peculiar way is this the property of the popular ballad. A very large proportion of the oldest and best ballads have absolutely no subjective references. Of the three hundred and five titles in the Child collection, not more than a third have any personal reference to the singer, and this third contains a large proportion of the poorest ballads. Such references are found in all the Robin Hood ballads."

quality which gave it significance. There was no personality in it, little of what we often call style; but its effectiveness was due to an anonymous, unindividualized appeal to the sympathies of men. In this sense, the editorial "we" becomes really significant; and some American newspapers lack the subjective point of view as completely as the ballads. ⁽ⁱ⁾

But as the ballads were made at a comparatively early period, when an education in letters was the rare exception, and when the restraint of literary canons did not bind the anonymous muse, it was natural that very great differences existed between the respective literatures of the coffee-house and the farmhouse. ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Though imagery is a prime consideration in modern poetry, we soon learn not to expect much of it in the ballads. The customary quatrain stanza, which would be a fetter to Shelley, is accepted here as the natural thing, and we feel, in many cases, that its very simplicity gives it tremendous force.

This existence of a considerable body of anonymous poetry may be understood better by a comparison. Suppose all the work of the Romantic school were to be lost to literary history (a large supposition, but one which may serve for illustration),

(i) Kittredge, ibid., in defining the ballad, says (p. XI) it is "characterized by complete impersonality so far as the author or singer is concerned. This last quality is of the very first consequence in determining the quality or qualities which give the ballad its peculiar place in literature."

(ii) Ker, Epic and Romance, p. 124: "The ballads of Clerk Saunders or Sir Patrick Spens tell about things that have been

generally forgotten, in the great houses of the country, by the great people who have other things to think about, and, if they take to literature, other models of style....~~These ballads~~ The ballads never had anything like the honour that was given to the older lays." Ibid., p. 132: "The ballad has no weight of responsibility upon it; it does not carry the intellectual light of its century; its authors are easily satisfied." It is for "the simple people who remember, over their fires of peat, the ancient stories of the wanderings of King's sons."

and then were to be rediscovered some centuries hence, surviving anonymously in a somewhat mutilated condition in the mouths of the people. In that case, as in this, new canons of criticism would have to be formulated; and, in order to arrive at a fair evaluation of the poems and a discriminating judgment of them, we should have to select the most vigorous of the versions, discarding as far as possible the dross which a few centuries of forgetfulness, imitation, and bad taste would have given birth to. As before, however, the parallel doesn't extend far; we are reminded that the ballads have not drifted into the mouths of the commoners altogether by accident, and that they are anonymous by nature. We have not merely an anonymous school of poetry; it is a school of anonymous poetry. (i)

Furthermore, the case of the ballads is more complex. We have not one school of narrative poetry, but four. There is also a group, that of flyting, in which the theme is not even of a narrative nature. Why have these different ballad schools become confused? Do they represent different and successive stages of artistic development, as Professor W. M. Hart concludes; or have they been thrown together rather indiscriminately, merely because they were found mostly in oral currency, and generally

(i) H. W. Mabie, Introduction to A Book of Old English Ballads,^{New York, 1876,} p. 9: "The note of the popular ballad is its objectivity; it not only takes us out of doors, but it also takes us out of the individual consciousness. The manner is entirely subordinated to the matter; the poet, if there was a poet in the case, obliterates himself. What we get is a definite report of events which have taken place, not a study of man's mind nor an account of man's feelings. The true balladist is never introspective; he is concerned not with himself but with his story. There is no self-disclosure in his song." I may remark here that I put no faith in the theory, hinted at by Mabie, that the ballads had no individual authors. The matter is discussed more fully in Appendix A.

(ii) W. M. Hart, Ballad and Epic; a Study in the Development of the Narrative Art, Boston, 1907.

independent of any recognized literary school? The first position I shall undertake to prove untenable, somewhat hereafter; and the second position, which I maintain, will have to be modified somewhat before it will be worthy of acceptance.

There are some ballads in the Child collection which are not of anonymous origin, or which are anonymous only in part, most of them being broadsides, the work of public hack-writers. As for this problem, two solutions offer themselves. Perhaps Professor Child made a slip in admitting them into the collection; or perhaps, because they deal with kindred subjects, they have been drawn in by the attraction of the undoubted anonymous ones. In any case, they belong to a different school, anonymous only in part, a school which should be kept distinct from the purely anonymous ones. Except in cases where a ballad springs from a broadside or a broadside imitates an existing ballad, there is always a marked difference in the productions of the two schools. In general I shall slight the broadsides, and shall make but glancing reference to them in this discussion; for they do not illustrate any of my points except by contrast.

It is apparent, even to the listless reader of English and Scottish ballads, that they fall into several well-defined groups. Professor Hart classifies them into four main divisions:

(I) Simple Ballads; (2) Border and Outlaw Ballads, including (a)

(1) Cf. No. 154, in F. J. Child's The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, Cambridge, 1882-1896. So throughout where ballads are cited by number.

(ii) Buchan's version of No. 94.

(iii) Examples of this inter-relation of ballads and broadsides may be found in No. 73, D; No. 81; No. 84; and No. 104, B.

(iv) Ballad and Epic, p. 4.

Border Ballads, (b) the Robin Hood Cycle, and (c) "Adam Bell"; (3) the "Gest"; and (4) Heroic Ballads, more common in the literature of some other countries. The classification is good as far as it goes; but I wish to provide for a few exceptions. The Riddle Ballads, such as Nos. 1, 2, and 3, and probable survivals of the dance-dialogues, such as No. 95, are not essentially narrative; the story, as far as any exists, serves merely to furnish a background for the dialogue. Perhaps also the comic tendencies of some of the later ballads justify putting them in a separate class; for the earlier ballads are mostly tragic, and deal not with a mere anecdote but with a story of real significance. Even after limiting ourselves to the simple ballads, we have still something like four rather distinct types to deal with: the perfect simple ballads, the fragmentary simple ballads, the Buchan versions, and the Broadsides.

In many of the fragments, the story has been lost so completely that only a name or two serves to associate these fragments with the complete ballads. In such cases, there is a marked tendency for the chips to lose the chief characteristics of the old block, and to become lyrical in character. It is the situation, with the lyrical comment upon it, which remains. This is a point which directly controverts the theory of Professor

(i) "Our Goodman," No. 274, is an example.

(ii) Ker, Epic and Romance, p. 125: "Ballad poetry may be trusted to preserve the sense of the tragic situation. If some ballads are less strong than others in their rendering of a traditional story, their failure is not peculiar to that kind of composition. Not every ballad-singer, and not every tragic poet, has the same success in the development of his fable." This is not true, unless allowance is made for the fragments mentioned above.

(iii) Examples are too numerous for citation. The following are typical: No. 58, N, O, P, Q, R; No. 62, H; No. 67, C (here we have the other incidents almost intact in eleven stanzas, but the central action lost); No. 68, I; No. 76, H, I, J, K; No. 81, N.

Hart, and one which he seems to have overlooked.

The narrative qualities of the broadsides have been mentioned before. Let me repeat here that except in those cases where they were but reworkings of existing poetry of the anonymous school, the broadsides were innocent of every one of the artistic devices which characterized the best ballads. There is an almost invariable tendency to subordinate the story to an ulterior consideration by appending a sort of moral. If the morals were good, such supplements would still detract from the narrative power of the poems; but in almost every case the conclusion is either irrelevant or is so feebly and insincerely phrased that it is painful. (i)

But the worst productions of the broadside school are not to be compared with the offerings of Buchan. Sometimes Motherwell is just as bad an offender, but in many of these cases he seems to have been led astray by bad company. I have collected (ii) statistics to show that Buchan's ballads are the longest, the (iii) fullest, and seemingly the most carefully padded of any; and a little reading should convince anyone that they are also the (iv) worst. Is there a fundamental connection between this fulness

(i) Henderson, *ibid.*, pp. 29, 30. Cf. especially No. 81, C. Mabie, *ibid.*, p. 10: "The popular ballads are, as a rule, entirely free from didacticism in any form; that is one of the main sources of their unfailing charm. They show not only a ~~childlike~~ childlike curiosity about the doings of the day and the things that befall men, but a childlike indifference to moral inference and justification. The bloodier the fray the better for ballad purposes; no one feels the necessity for apology either for ruthless aggression or for useless blood-letting; the scene is reported as it was presented to the eye of the spectator, not to his moralizing faculty..... In those rare cases in which a moral inference is drawn, it is always so obvious and elementary that it gives the impression of having been fastened on at the end of the song in deference to ecclesiastical rather than popular feeling." (ii) Nos. 96, C; 110, E.

(iii) Cf. Appendix B, The Case against Buchan.

(iv) Kittredge, *ibid.*, p. XXX, uses Buchan's collector, James Rankin, as an overwhelming argument against minstrel authorship. How can the products of the worst of minstrels be used as arguments against the class in general, any more than the plays of Colly Cibber may be charged against Shakespeare? Scott, Burns, and Aytoun *could write ballads, even at that late day.*

and the coexistent badness of these productions? Professor Child
 (i)
 seems to imply that there is, when he states that "the silliness
 and fulsome vulgarity of Buchan's ballads often enough make one
 wince or sicken, and many of them came through bad mouths and
 bad hands: we have even positive proof in one instance of im-
 (ii)
 posture." In another place his opinion is even more unmistakable:
 "Buchan, who may be relied upon to produce a longer ballad
 than anybody else, has 'Young Waters' in thirty-nine stanzas,
 'the only complete version he had ever met with.' Of the copy I
 edition
 will only say that everything which is not in the ~~copy~~ of 1755
 (itself a little the worse for editing) is a counterfeit of the
 lowest description. Nevertheless it is given in the appendix;
 (iii)
 for much the same reason that thieves are photographed."
 (iv)

Returning to Professor Hart's classification, it is noticeable that there is here not only a difference of technique but also a difference of subject-matter. The simple ballads are concerned almost solely with the relations between men and women; in the vast majority of cases the story deals with some phase of
 (v)
 the domestic relation. Even in "Sir Patrick Spens," where it

(i) Child, ibid., II, 170. (ii) Ibid., II, 342.

(iii) J. H. Dixon, Scottish Traditional Versions of Ancient Ballads, London, 1845, p. X of Introduction, quotes Mr.

Alexander Whitelaw in regard to Buchan: "He has indeed been by far the most successful ballad hunter that ever entered the field; and his success is to be attributed, partly to his own unwearied ~~ingenious~~ researches, and partly to the district which he explored; a district, Aberdeenshire and Banffshire, comparatively fresh and untrod by ballad gatherers." Mr. Whitelaw's judgment has been reversed by the ballad students who have labored over Buchan since 1845.

(iv) Supra, p. 6.

(v) No. 58.

would seem that women could be excluded entirely, we find the mention of them more persistent than any other part of the ballad. The skipper may be Sir Patrick or Sir Andrew, but the ladies remain. This is in sharp contrast with the border and outlaw ballads, where some one vigorous action is the center of interest; or the "Gest," where the life-history of the hero is to be considered; or the heroic ballads, which treat of the heroic exploit, or a series of exploits. This difference of subject-matter alone is so complete as to serve in itself to distinguish the school of the simple ballads from the other three. We have here our single school of romantic anonymous poetry, and our threefold school of the poetry of heroic
(i)
adventure.

There are equally striking differences of technique, among which may be mentioned those of diction, of characterization (as far as any exists), and, in many cases, of the movement of the verse; but it is with the differences of the narrative method that we are primarily concerned. In many of the best and most characteristic of the simple ballads, the central action or the central motive is omitted entirely, or else is withheld to furnish a climax at the end. Sometimes this suspense exists only for the characters in the story, but more often and more effectively it exists for readers and actors alike. There is also little effort on the part of the balladist to attribute speeches to the characters who utter them, or to supply transitions in
(ii)
the story. Leaping, broken narration is characteristic, rather than exceptional. In each of the other types the contrary is

(i) The ballads of Christian and knightly legend are not classified here, because it seems to me that they do not belong within the scope of this discussion.

(ii) F. B. Gummere, The Popular Ballad, Boston and New York, 1907, pp. 91, 117.

true. The story proceeds smoothly, especially in the "Gest"; there is no omission of the central action; and suspense, when it does exist, is incidental rather than fundamental. There is no effort to select a striking situation and linger upon it, but rather the action begins at the beginning of things and proceeds in an orderly fashion to the end.

Professor Hart concludes, for these and similar reasons, that the simple ballads, which were the last to receive public notice, nevertheless represent an earlier stage in the process of development; and that the longer and more developed forms (i.e., the border and outlaw ballads, the "Gest," and the heroic ballads) represent a higher form of narrative art and a later period of evolution. (i)

This view is acknowledged to be startling, and it seems to me to be equally false.

I shall quote from his own conclusion:

As a result, now, of the poet's increasingly exclusive possession of the material, of his disinclination to limit himself to matters of common knowledge, with his increasingly rational method, elaboration comes more and more to take the place of the peculiar omission and suggestion of the simple ballad..... this elaboration, combined with the tendency to unite two or more stories into a single whole, necessitates a greater length, and greater and greater demands are made upon the poet's architectural power. It is easy for the simple ballad, with its love of symmetry and repetition, to achieve, within its narrow limits, a remarkable perfection of structure; the compiler of the Gest, striving to unite a series of independent incidents, solves a more difficult problem. (ii)

(i) Professor Gummere's opinion is similar; Pop. Ballad, 85, 92. Ibid., p. 310: "Ballads recovered from late Scottish tradition may be older in fact, as they certainly are older in structural form, than ballads handed down in manuscript three or four centuries old." P. 78: "The epic poem, later and more finished in form, is actually of older record than most of the ballads." He speaks (p. 75) of lyric poetry as everywhere preceding epic. Here he refers to songs rather than to the true lyrics, however. I suspect strongly that he takes this for granted to support his theory of communal authorship. The evidence is against him, as are nearly all of the British critics.

(ii) Ballad and Epic, p. 310.

Is it not an evidence of bad art, rather than of advanced development, that the compiler of the "Gest" undertakes to put together so much unrelated material? If the smooth linking of unrelated facts were the supreme test, then the chronicles and historical plays would be among the most artistic productions in the language. Some of our elder poets attempted to write histories of the world in verse, "striving to unite a series of independent incidents," and certainly contending with a "difficult problem"; but do we rank these writings as high art? Is there any underlying unity in these rambling narratives which would justify one in calling them epics, in the sense that the Iliad is an epic? Or even granting the use of the term, is not the epic, historically, a rather primitive form of literature, giving way in later times to shorter and more perfect forms? With slight modification, we may read Macaulay's words: "As civilization advances, epic poetry almost necessarily declines." On the contrary, the simple ballad, with its selection of details, with its deliberately chosen situation, with its antecedent action implied or but slightly expressed, with its resultant action in many cases merely foreshadowed, with its powerful suspense, is in close conformity with the principles which underlie the modern short-story, the most highly developed form of the narrative art. It is strange that Professor Hart, who has made a special study of the short-story, should have overlooked the resemblance. If the principles which he lays down for the ballads be brought over and applied to prose narration, then we

(1) Henderson, ibid., p. 97.

must conclude that greater demands were made upon the authors in the rambling narratives of former times than in a story like The Necklace of De Maupassant. For in the first instance, we have Professor Hart's series of "independent incidents"; in the second, we have a few carefully chosen and closely related ones. In the first case, there is a commendable effort to tell everything that happened; in the second, there is deliberate and exclusive choice of two situations for emphatic treatment. In the first instance, we have the story told in chronological order; in the second, we have complete suspense of the central point of interest, which fact is not even hinted at until the last sentence. There is another striking resemblance between the simple ballad and the short-story. In both cases the central action is not only suspended to the close, but is often projected on beyond it.

The simple ballads show another tendency, mentioned previously in another connection, which indicates that they are of a late period of development. They have a marked tendency to dwell on the mood of the principal actor, and upon the situation, in many cases to the detriment or less of the narrative aspect. The second part of "Fair Helen," which is in Scott's Minstrelsy, though not in Professor Child's collection, is so intent upon the lyrical phase of the situation, regardless of past or future action, that it ceases to be a narrative and passes over into the realm of lyric poetry; and even "Sir Patrick Spens," perhaps the most perfect and at the same time the most typical of the best simple ballads, is not far removed from The Three Fishers

(i) Supra, p. 10. (ii) In many cases where the story is not lost, it is overshadowed by the lyrical expression which follows. A striking example is found in "Mary Hamilton" (173).
 (iii) Sir Walter Scott's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, ed. by T. F. Henderson, Edinburgh and London, New York, 1902.

of Charles Kingsley. It is a well-known fact, attested by the literary history of every nation, that the intense lyric is one of the latest poetic forms to develop, as more purely narrative types are among the earliest of all. It might be argued that the more direct narration of the Odyssey is a later development than the leaping and seemingly unrelated narration of Pindar; but history speaks louder than speculation. It seems, then, that though the "Gest" may represent a relatively high development of its type in narrative art, the kind itself is an early one historically and a crude one artistically, whereas, when we make due allowances for the peculiarities of style which may seem strange to us now because they are characteristic of a lost school, the simple ballads are found to be in conformity with the principles which underlie the most highly developed form of the narrative art, and show in addition that leaning toward the

(i) F. B. Gummere, Old English Ballads, Boston, 1894, p. lxvii, says: "Steenstrup, Vore Folkeviser, shows that in primitive ballads this lyric note was unknown." In the same author's The Beginnings of Poetry, New York, 1901, p. 108, he says: "In poetry we moderns.... demand the 'lyric cry'; under the conditions which ruled when the earliest ballads were made, men needed the choral cry."

(ii) Ker, Eng. Lit., Medieval, p. 165: "The Little Geste of Robin Hood seems to be an attempt to make an epic poem by joining together a number of ballads. The ballad of Robin Hood's Death is worth reading as a contrast to this rather mechanical work."

(iii) A. Quiller-Couch, The Oxford Book of Ballads, Oxford, 1910, pp. xv, xvi: "I am ready to admit.... that when a ballad is set in a collection alongside the best of Herrick, Gray, Landor, Browning.... it is the ballad that not only suffers by the apposition but suffers to a surprising degree; so that I have sometimes been forced to reconsider my affection, and ask, 'Are these ballads really beautiful as they have always appeared to me?' In truth (as I take it) the contrast is unfair to them, much as ~~is~~ contrast between children and grown folks would be unfair." This saying, though quaintly phrased, seems to me very unfair to the best ballads. I first met with "Sir Patrick Spens" in an anthology of English poems; and my opinion then, as now, was that it possessed more or real poetic quality than any other poem of similar length in the book. Kittredge, ibid., says of the ballads in the Cambridge edition (p. xxxi): "The average of excellence is probably as high as in most volumes of verse of equal dimensions."

lyric which is characteristic of the most intense poetry which deals with a single situation.

Having now outlined our general theory of the ballad, let us come to a consideration of the particular instances in which suppression of the central action occurs. Restricting ourselves to the better ones of the simple ballads- for it is only here that the device is employed to any considerable extent- we find that, as in the case of all schools, some of the poets used the approved methods with effect, others bungled them, and still others failed to make any use of the most powerful of ballad devices- the omission of the central action, including the kindred device of suspense.

There are four main divisions of the examples of omission and suspense: minor omissions, suspense, omission of the central motive, and omission of the central action. The term "minor omissions" includes not only the leaving-out of connecting passages of various sorts- natural enough in narration of a leaping type- but also the omission of details which are subordinated for artistic purpose. In "Brown Adam" (No. 98, A) we ~~are~~ are told simply that-

He's gard him leave his bow, his bow,
 He's gard him leave his bzan;
 He's gard him leave a better pledge,
 Four fingers o' his right han.

The fight has been passed over here, because we are concerned only with the results of it. No. 8, B, is similar:

He's feughten a' the fifteen outlaws,
 The fifteen outlaws every ane,
 He's left naething but the auldest man
 To go and carry the tidings hame.

This is ~~in~~sharp contrast with the border and outlaw ballads, where the fight's the thing, and with less artistic examples of the simple ballads, where the details of a fight are allowed to assume undue prominence in the story. There is also a tendency to pass over the act of death, and even ~~when~~ the death is over, to make only glancing reference to it. This is in direct opposition to the love of detail of Buchan's versions and the broadsides, but it is nevertheless very common. Sometimes this description seems to have been lost, but in other cases the omission is intentional. The clerk of Owsenford (No. 72, A), instead of telling his wife that the two sons are dead, says:

'I've putten them to a deeper lair,
An to a higher school.'

Not only is the news of the death withheld, but in many cases the death itself is left to be inferred. In "Fair Janet" (64, A) Willie gives parting instructions and then is buried. In "Sweet William's Ghost" (77, F) the death of Lady Margaret is passed over. In "Bonny Bee Hom" (92, A) the death of the true-love, here the central action, is left to be inferred from the change in the stone:

He had no been at Bonny Bee Hom
A twelve month and a day,
Till, looking on his gay gowd ring,
The stone grew dark and gray.

-
- (i) No. 93, C, D, E, etc. (ii) Nos. 64, A; 67, A; 69, B; 259.
 (iii) Other examples, Nos. 42, A, B; 169, A; 173, A, E.
 (iv) As might be expected, Motherwell found a version (B), obtained from the recitation of Agnes Lyle, Kilbarchan, which has no omission.
 (v) Buchan's version contains a similar omission, but the story is spoiled in the telling, by the excess of inappropriate detail.

In "Glasgerion" (67, A) the hero prepares to slay himself, and then we leap to a reflection on the whole tragedy. In "Lady Alice" (85, B) the lady predicts her death, and then is buried. In "Lamkin" (93) some of the versions are so fragmentary as to omit all account of the killing, which is here the central action. Is this omission a stronger device than detailed ~~XXXXXXXX~~ narration would afford? Obviously it is. The only objection to the method is that it may make the story too vague and obscure if carried to an excess.

Our second division, suspense, covers a much greater field, including four principal varieties. These are as follows: suspense for one or more of the characters, but not for the reader; suspense of a single detail of the story; suspense of the general significance of the story; and suspense of the identity of the principal character. The last two divisions overlap, but they may be considered separately to advantage.

In "Brown Robin" (97) the point of the whole story lies in the identity of the lover, which is concealed from the girl's father by Robin's disguise as one of the maids. In "The Two Knights" (263) the identity of Maisry is concealed from the Squire, and upon that deception hangs the rest of the plot. In "Glasgerion" (67) the page passes himself off for his master, and this gives rise to the tragedy. In "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington" (105) it is quite clear to us that the girl is in disguise, but the apprentice is made to think she is dead. It is well to note that the only version of this is a broadside, and that the conclusion is spoiled by the unnecessary stanza:

O farewell grief, and welcome joy,
 Ten thousand times and more!
 For now I have seen my own true-love,
 That I thought I should have seen no more.

In "The Gay Goshawk" (96, A) the suspense for father and brothers is pretty effective; and the disillusionment of the lady in "Old Robin of Portingale" (80) is really powerful:

Upp then went that ladie light,
 With torches burning bright;
 Shee thought to haue brought Sir Gyles a drinke,
 But shee found her owne wedd knight.

And the first thinge that this ladye stumbled vpon
 Was of Sir Gyles his ffoote;
 Sayes, Euer alacke, and woe is me,
 Here lyes my sweete hart-roote!

But perhaps the most successful suspense for one or more of the characters is to be found in "Clerk Saunders" (69, A), where, after a definite statement for the reader that Saunders is slain, the poem continues in this fashion, lingering not upon the mere details but upon the poetic quality of the tragedy:

And they lay still, and slept sound,
 Untill the day began to daw;
 And kindly till him she did say (1)
 'It's time, trew-love, ye weare awa.'

(1) In "Willie and Lady Maisry" (70, A) we have an exactly similar instance of suspense, though not so fully developed:

In then came her father dear,
 And a broad sword by his gare,
 And he's gien Willie, the widow's son,
 A deep wound and a sair.

'Lye yont, lye yont, Willie,' she says,
 'Your sweat weets a' my side;
 Lye yont, lye yont, Willie,' she says,
 'For your sweat I downa bide.'

Rather similar also is the suspense in "Earl Brand"(7, A), where the dying knight rides on with his lady, without telling her he is wounded:

He rode whistlin out the way.
 An a' to hearten his lady gay.

(Continued on next page, footnote)

Suspense of a single detail is generally employed for the purpose of adornment, or what seems to have been considered ornamental. In one form or another, it is found almost universally in the simple ballads. It is generally of a conventional type of elaboration, which Professor Gummere calls incremental repetition. In this sort of suspense, the balladist, or one of the characters, mentions two or more rather irrelevant things, and then comes suddenly to the point with a swoop like that with which a hawk descends upon chickens. The device is frequently used for padding, especially in the hands of Buchan, and I am disposed in any case to attach much less importance to it than is ascribed to it by Professor Gummere; but sometimes it is really effective, as in the famous stanza from "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard" (81, A):

'Methinks I hear the thresel-cock,
Methinks I hear the jaye;
Methinks I hear my lord Barnard,
And I would I were away.' (ii)

(iii) (Continued from p. 18)

'Till he came to the water-flood:
'O guid Earl o Bran, I see blood!'

'O it is but my scarlet hood,
That shines upon the water-flood.'

Like this is the suspense of the bride's death wound in "The Cruel Brother" (II). In the B version, eleven stanzas are occupied after this fashion:

It's then he drew a little penknife,
And reft the fair maid of her life.

'Ride up, ride up,' said the foremost man;
'I think our bride comes hooly on.'

'Ride up, ride up,' said the second man;
'I think our bride looks pale and wan.'

(i) The Pop. Ballad, p. 42.

(ii) A somewhat similar method, on a much larger scale, is used to betray the lady's cause of shame, first eight stanzas of "Lady Maisry" (65, B). Cf. also stanzas 3-5, "Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet" (66, A)

Suspense of identity is used for a variety of purposes. In "The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter" (110) and "The Beggar Laddie" (280) it serves to give piquancy to rather scurrilous tales which are not entirely redeemed by attempts at romantic conclusions. In "Queen Eleanor's Confession" (156) King Henry masks as a friar that he may learn of his queen's unfaithfulness by hearing her confession. He un masks himself at the end. In "Willie and Earl Richard's Daughter" (102, A) the secret that the child is Robin Hood is withheld until the conclusion; but in the Buchan version (102, B) the principal point of interest is exposed in the first stanza, with the infallible instinct of a peddler. In "Fair Annie" (62) and "The Lass of Roch Royal" (76) the whole story hangs upon the concealment of the identity of ^a ~~Fir~~ Annie, in the first case, and of the mother in the second; and yet we observe that in most versions the identity of Annie is hinted at as soon as the bride arrives, and in the latter case the imposture is detected long before the story closes.

(1) Similar suspense, without the romantic conclusion, exists in No. 279.

(ii) "Gil Brenton" (5) is similar in its use of suspense, except that the secret of the bride's identity is given away much sooner.

(iii) The counterpart to this is "The Mother's Malison" (216, A, C), where the girl's mother pretends to be the daughter and sends Willie away from the door.

(iv) Cf. especially versions C, I, and J.

There is a special class of ballads in which suspense of identity is typically used. These ballads are all based on essentially the same plot. A long-lost brother attacks his sister in the wood, ignorant of their relationship. When they discover their kinship, the horror of the crime overwhelms them, and death for one or both is the inevitable result. Examples of this are "Babylon" (14); "The Bonny Hind" (50); "The King's Tochter Lady Jean" (52). Suspense of identity of people under a charm (usually lovely damsels) is illustrated by "The Marriage of Sir Gawain" (31), "King Henry" (32), and "Kemp Owyne" (34). In "Allison Gross" (35) and "The Laily Worm and the Machrel of the Sea" (36) the suspense is destroyed by the introductory explanations. Suspense of identity is often used as a means of testing the loyalty of the loved one, as in "The New Slain Knight" (263), and "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington" (105). There is suspense in the identity of the palmer, presumably Christ, in "The Maid and the Palmer" (21). The Earl of Aboyne's name is withheld half-way through "The Rantin Laddie" (240). A minor example of the suspense of identity is found in "Lady Elspat" (247), where the suddenly revealed fact that the Lord Justice is Sweet William's uncle accounts for the Justice's clemency and his bequest of land.

(1) Gummere, The Beg. of Poetry, p. 198: "It is not to be explained by any ~~omission~~ abbreviation in the record.... The ballad omission is progressive, and has nothing of that strain and doubling which makes Germanic epic, in Ten Brink's phrase, spend such a deal of movement without getting from the spot."

The abrupt dialogue at the beginning of many ballads often causes a sort of suspense. An example of this, among many, is found in "Allison and Willie" (256) where neither character is ~~mentioned~~ named until the fourth stanza.

In "Child Maurice" (83, A) we find perhaps the most effective use of suspense which occurs anywhere in the ballads; here the relationship of mother and son is not only the keynote of the entire ballad, but it is withheld perfectly until near the end, to be uttered in a marvelous stanza:

But when shee looked on Child Maurice head,
Shee neuer spake words but three:
'I neuer beare no child but one,
And you haue slaine him trulye.'

In the next two stanzas we are told that she is dead. Could a more perfect bit of narrative art be imagined? In some of the poorer versions of this ballad (83, B, C, F) the secret is given away by Child Maurice before the climax. By comparing these versions with that of the Percy Ms, we are made to realize that the narrative of suspense surpasses straight narration in the "architectural power" mentioned by Professor Hart.

It will be noticed that in ^{many of} the preceding instances, the significance of the whole story rested upon the suspense of identity; but there are other cases in which suspense of the former exists independently. In one version of "Young Benjie" (86, B) the story is not begun until the brothers are searching for the drowned body of Maisry, and considerable antecedent action makes more or less suspense necessary. In "Lord Randal" (12) the suspense is an integral part of the ballad; and in "Edward" (13, B) this is coupled with unusual felicity of phrase, and dramatic interest of situation. In "The Baren of Brackley" (203) we have an exceptional Scottish ballad, corresponding in most respects to the border type, but possessing complete

suspense of the central motive until the last few stanzas, where we learn by the lady's rejoicing that she has been a party to her husband's murder.

Omission of the central motive is rare, except in fragments, and it is safe to suppose that it is due in any case either to loss of explanatory stanzas or to an uncommon artistic suppression. In some versions of "Lamkin" (93, D, E, G) the first stanzas, telling of the original quarrel, have almost certainly been lost by accident. In some cases the result of this is to make a sort of bugbear of Lamkin, to frighten children, and the tragedy of the lord's injustice to the mason and the terrible revenge which followed is quite gone. There can be no doubt that in this instance, and in many similar ones, where the character of the story is lost, the omission of the central motive is a source of weakness. In "Bonny James Campbell" (210) the reason for his riding out and the way of his death are gone, and the poem in consequence is little more than a song, with only a hint of story. In the case of the seemingly intentional omission of the motive, such as that in "Young Johnstone" (88), the device is an element of strength. Though it confuses us to some extent, the mystery of the unexplained killing gives an added emotional appeal. The lady's dying question is made more pathetic by
(1)
Johnstone's evasion of it.

(1) In the A version, omission of the final action (here death) gives the ballad a sort of climax more common in poems of acknowledged literary art:

'How can I live? How shall I live?
How can I live for thee?
See you not where my red heart's blood
Runs trickling down my knee?'

This has the flavor of the poetry of literary schools we are familiar with, and is mildly suggestive of Whitman's "My Captain". Only in E (a Buchan version) is there any reasonable explanation, beyond the presumption that Johnstone suspected treachery:

'Ohon, alas, my lady gay,
To come sae hastilie!
I thought it was my deadly fae,
Ye had trysted into me.'

We come now to the last of our four divisions, omission of the central action. In this, as in the preceding, we find instances due to accidental and others to artistic suppression. In one version of "Lamkin" (93, Q) we have all the important action lost; in one version of "Johnie Scot" (99, M) the same is true. In the last version of "Glasgerion" (67, C) the poem does not become a fragment, but instead the omission serves in a way to increase the effectiveness of the whole. In "The Wife of Usher's Well" (79, A) ⁽ⁱ⁾ there is a suggestion in the last stanza that may be taken to indicate that either the central action or the central motive for action has been omitted, though it may mean nothing more than a pathetic farewell to the recollections of childhood:

'Fare ye weel, my mother dear!
 Fareweel to barn and byre!
 And fare ye weel, the bonny lass
 That kindles my mother's fire!'

This omission, if omission it is, throws the whole story in doubt, but it makes a better poem of the ballad.

Many of the ballads of the Percy Ms have been mutilated by the caprice of a careless chamber maid~~s~~ and the exigencies of kindling fires, and the stories are left more or less incomplete. This is true of such ballads as "Sir Lionel" (18, A), "King Arthur and King Cornwall" (30), "The Marriage of Sir Gawain"(31), "Young Andrew" (48), and "Sir Cawline" (61). No significance can be attached to this form of omission. The version of "**Little** Musgrave and Lady Barnard" (81, B) is notably deficient.

(i) In the only other version (79, B) no mention is made of the bonny lass, and no motive is even suggested for the sons' return. Later versions have been found in the United States which permit of still different interpretations, but we must restrict ourselves in this discussion to the British versions.

Though the ballad is so tenacious of some situations and the corresponding details, it is equally sure to omit others from the story. The particulars of a trial are commonly omitted, whereas the hanging or burning which follows is fully set forth. "The Laird of Wariston" (184, A) is a good illustration.

Quite often it happens that, in a fragment, everything has been forgotten but a few striking bits of detail or dialogue. An example is found in version B of "The Maid and the Palmer" (21), of which only these lines remain:

'Seven years ye shall be a stone

For many a poor palmer to rest him upon.
And you the fair maiden of Gowden-gane

'Seven years ye'll be porter of hell,
And then I'll take you to mysell.'

'Well may I be a' the other three,
But porter of hell I never will be.'
And I, etc.

In one fragmentary version of "Earl Brand" (7, F) the dialogue and the details of horsemanship are preserved in full, but not a word of the central action, except by inference. The effect here is to make the ballad a fragment. In "Sir Aldingar" (59, C) we have an example similar to the fragment of "The Maid and the Palmer":

They've putten her into a prison strang,
A twalmon lang and mair,
Until the mice and wild rottens
Did tear her yellow hair.

'One shake o your han,' said Rodingham,
'One shake o your han gie me:'
'I can na here for shaking hans,
But to fight maist desperatelie.'

'It's no ten strucken on the clock,
Nor eleven on the beal;'
'We'll doe ill deeds anew ere night,
Though it were strucken twall.'

These fragments, mere dim recollections of striking sayings, defy any effort to find a story in them.

Quite often in cases of omission only those stanzas which possess certain curious phraseology have the power to survive.

In "Johnie Cock" (II4, K) all that remains is-

'There's no a bird in a' this foreste
Will do as meikle for me
As dip its wing in the wan water
And straik it on my ee-bree.'

Sometimes it is about a name or two that a fragment lingers. The only version of "The Knight of Liddesdale" (I60) is of one stanza:

The Countesse of Douglas out of her boure she came,
And loudly there that she did call:
'It is for the Lord of Liddesdale
That I let all these teares downe fall.'

When a little of the action still clings to a fragment, it is the details of dialogue, names, situation, etc., that are clearly remembered. For example, ~~of~~ "The Baitle of Harlaw" (I63, B):

As I cam through the Garrloch land,
And in by Over Ha,
There was sixty thousan Highland men
Marching to Harlaw.

The Highland men, with their broad sword,
Pushd on wi might and power,
Till they bore back the red-coat lads
Three furlongs long, and more.

Lord Forbès called his men aside,
Says, Take your breath awhile,
Until I send my servant now
To bring my coat of mail.

It does not matter that the number *of* Highlanders is here six times what is allowed by history. We do not expect ballads to chronicle numbers with accuracy, any more than we expect to read the original words of Lord Forbes. But correctly or otherwise, the ballads retain the names, numbers, distances, and details of a ballad situation long after the story is lost.

An excellent illustration of this is to be found in the case of an old lady of Scottish descent, herself a descendant of the Hamiltons, who was living in Marissa, Illinois, near the end of the nineteenth century. At that late period she could still remember a fragment of "Mary Hamilton," and it was this:

'There was Marie Seton, and Marie Beton,
And Marie Carmichael, and me.'

The story had been utterly lost in the course of three centuries, and only the names remained.

Quite often the central action, though implied beyond mistaking, is not formally expressed. In "King Henry" (32) we are not told that the hero lay by the monster, and he prays that he may never do so; but in the morning it is clear that he has done it. This makes the ballad much briefer and more emphatic. In "Brown Robyn's Confession" (57) we are not told that Robyn is taken up to heaven, but it was clearly so.

This sort of omission is especially common for certain types of narration. The birth of a child is often passed over entirely in this manner, as in "Fair Janet" (A). Attacks upon maidens are also commonly passed over in like fashion, as in "Tam Lin" (59, A), "The Broom of Cowdenknows" (217, B); or if not omitted entirely, it is almost invariably narrated in a conventional stanza or two, as in "The Bonny Hind" (50), "The King's Dochter Lady Jean" (52), "The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter" (110, A, B), "The Broom of Cowdenknows" (217, A). Whether this omission be due to a sense of delicacy or to mere forgetfulness, it serves to concentrate attention on the resultant story, and makes a much better ballad. In the case of child birth, the omission is usually accomplished by having the hero

(and with him the reader) banished from the scene. In "Leesome Brand" (15, A) ⁽¹⁾ this is, in a single line, joined with a rare pathos of speech, which occurs infrequently but very effectively at times in the ballads:

'Ye'll take your arrow and your bow,
And ye will hunt the deer and roe.

'Be sure ye touch not the white hynde,
For she is o the woman kind.'

It is this pathos (which has not received its share of attention from the ballad critics) that constitutes one of their chief qualities of attractiveness. Rhetorical perfection they have little; but what can be finer than this touch of mother love in "The Wife of Usher's Well" (79, B):

O she has gaen an made their bed,
An she's made it saft an fine,
An she's happit them wi her gay mantel,
Because they were her ain.

In "The Whummil Bore" (27) it is rather doubtful if there ever was any central action, since none is ever implied by the lines that remain. However, this description of the toilet of the princess may be an elaboration of a detail from some complete ballad, the narrative and significant part of which is entirely forgotten. In "Burd Ellen and Young Tamlane" (28) the omission of the central action makes the ballad little more than a song with a bare hint of the incōnstancy of Tamlane. "The Queen of Elfan's Nourice" (40) is rather more complete, but has the same tendency to lose its story entirely and retain the lyrical passages and the details of dialogue.

(1) Omission of an identical kind is found in "Willie o Douglas Dale" (101, A); also cf. "Sheath and Knife" (16, A).

Part of the story is lost in the B version of "Hind Etin" (41), and though the temper of the ballad is not affected, it is left incomplete. In "Clerk Colvill" (42, B) the central action is omitted entirely. We pass from the greeting between Colvill and the mermaid to his cries of pain. It serves to draw a veil over the details of his illicit visit and the exact method of punishment employed by the revengeful sprite. In "The Broomfield Hill" (43, B) we have a version where the action is almost entirely lost, and we are left to infer the rest from the introductory bet, and the concluding lament of the master that he was asleep at the time of the maiden's visit. In "The Slaughter of the Laird of Mellerstain" (230) only scattered lines remain, which bring out the situation but give little hint of the story. In the G version of "Young Hunting" (68) the first half of the story, with the central motive, is lost entirely. The version is highly fragmentary, and we can learn only that the lady has ~~been~~ concealed the body of her lover and denied any knowledge of the crime. In the C version of "Fause Foodrage" (89) only the introductory stanzas remain. The same is true of "Willie and Earl Richard's Daughter" (102, C), where we have left only-

Mony speaks o grass, o grass,
 And mony mare o corn,
 And mony ane sings o Robin Heed
 Kens little whare he was born.

He was born in good green wood,
 At the fut o yon olive tree;
 His father was a knight's ae son,
 And his mother a lady free.

Two ballads, "The Bonny Earl of Murray" (181) and "Bonnie James Campbell" (210) are very similar in their omission. Both dwell on the popularity of the hero, and the mourning for his loss, and pass over almost entirely the manner of his death and the motive for the action. In "Johnnie Cock" (114, C) the central action is largely wanting, and with it the motive also. We are left to infer how he came to be attacked by the foresters. The central action of "Willie McIntosh" (183) is omitted in A and B. Almost all that remains is the demand of Huntly that Willie turn and fight, Willie's defiance, and later his regret for the men he has lost in the fight. Very similar in type is "James Grant" (197).

Of the foregoing illustrations, the great majority illustrate the faulty memory of the reciters, and the tendencies at work in the decadence of traditional literature. The best example of artistic omission, for a clearly conceived purpose, occurs in "Sir Patrick Spens" (56, A, a). This is perhaps the shortest of all the very great ballads, only eleven stanzas; and the swiftness of its catastrophe, its certainty, its power- this is no less notable than the method by which it is obtained. It takes us but two lines to get well into the scene of action; in the last line of the stanza we have an indication of the drift of the story; in the following stanza the hero is introduced; and by the seventh, we finish with the forebodings, and are ready for the four final stanzas of regretful contemplation. Of action expressed there is little; this is scarcely a narrative at all, but rather it is one of those ballads that are so

intense as to become fused into a lyrical quality. This is the sort of thing that Professor Hart seems to consider inferior, more primitive, a lower form of art than the jog-trot doggerel of the Robin Hood Cycle. The full force of the method employed in the A version can best be appreciated by comparing it with that of the Minstrelsy (56, H). The latter is much longer, is told in straight narrative order, and is vigorous to a high degree; but we miss the irresistible imaginative suggestiveness of the A version. However, if this lyrical quality be allowed to predominate too far; if, as in "The Twa Corbies" (26), "Fair Helen", "Rare Willie's Drowned in Yarrow" (215, A), or "John of Hazelgreen" (63, A), we leave out the normal beginning which clings to "Sir Patrick Spens" and serves to give it a semi-narrative character; and if we begin frankly at the end, as three of the former poems do, then we have a lyrical poem pure and simple. It is notable that Palgrave includes a version of each of the four in his matchless little anthology of English lyrics, but does not take in "Sir Patrick Spens." "This lyric impulse really creates a third class of ballads, just halting and trembling on the border of pure song."⁽¹⁾

Let us pause now to recapitulate and summarize:

I. Ballads may be told in straight narrative fashion and yet be very effective, as is "Child Waters" (63, A). Here the intrinsic strength of the plot, the simple majesty of the diction, and the climactic arrangement of the details serve to

(1) Gummere, The Pop. Ballad, p. 118.

(1) Francis T. Palgrave, The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics, Chicago, 1908.

make the ballads effective. Examples are found in the best border ballads, as "The Hunting of the Cheviot" (162) and "John-
ie Armstrong" (169, A, B). Especially in the latter is the ~~di~~
diction felicitous- a rare thing in balladry, but by no means
unknown- in such passages as-

Asking grace of a graceless face

or that deathless speech of a dying hero-

Said John, Fight on, my merry men all,
I am a little hurt, but I am not slain;
I will lay me down for to bleed a while,
Then I'll rise and fight with you again.'

It was ~~an~~ another of the border ballads of the same sort that Sir Walter Scott recited with tears in his closing days- "The Battle of Otterburn" (161, C). We read ⁱⁿ Lockhart's entry for July, (1) 1831, "He phanted, rather than repeated, in a sort of deep and glowing, though not distinct recitative, his first favorite among all the ballads..... down to the closing stanzas, which again left him in tears-

"My wound is deep- I fain would sleep-
Take thoug the Vanguard of the three,
And hide me beneath the bracken-bush,
That grows on yonder lily- lee."

But ~~if~~ the plot were less significant, or if the ~~tone~~ of the whole were not so well maintained, there would be nothing in it to make for strength.

2. Minor omissions occur in almost all of the ballads, to a much greater extent than in most other types of poetry, and are used for euphemism in mentioning unpleasant occurrences or for subordination in dealing with matters of varying degrees of importance. Such omissions not only economize time, but they also make a greater or less appeal to the imagination of the reader,

(1) Quoted pp. 151, 152, in English and Scottish Popular Ballads Boston, New York and Chicago, 1909, ed. by R. A. Witham.

or hearer, if one insists upon the distinction.

3. Suspense is of several degrees and varieties. To some extent it is found in almost all of the ballads; for in any narrative a limited degree of it is almost unavoidable. But the artistic use of suspense is a means of securing unusual power, and is found for the most part only in the best ballads. It appears chiefly in one of four phases: suspense for one or more of the characters, but not for the reader; suspense of a single detail; suspense of the general significance of the story; and suspense of the identity of a principal character, which is a special phase of the suspense of significance, ordinarily. In all cases it seems to be the result of the author's artistic sense, and ranges in importance from a mere ornamental device to the fundamental thing in the poem. The finest example is that of "Child Maurice", where by the sudden revelation of the key fact of the story, we are obliged to reconstruct our conception of the whole, at the moment of the greatest intensity. In this connection it will be noted that those of the versions that to employ suspense or omission are infinitely weaker than the corresponding ones that make use of these devices.

4. Suppression of the central motive is rare, and if badly handled it results in obscurity. It exists principally in fragments, and is there apparently accidental; though even in those cases, the fact that the motive drops out may be significant. The chief example of what serves as an artistic use of this omission is "Young Johnstone", though it is possible that even

(1) Supra, p. 22.

(ii) Supra, p. 23.

in this the omission is due to the forgetfulness of the reciter. Buchan's version does not contain this omission- an unconscious tribute to its artistic merit.

5. Complete suppression of the central action, except in fragments, is rare, and seems to be due to consummate art; consequently it is not to be found in the ballads of heroic adventure, nor in the independent broadsides, nor in the worse sort of simple ballads. In an overwhelming majority of cases, it is the result of a torn manuscript, as in the Percy Folio, or of the capricious memory of ⁽ⁱ⁾ ignorant through a long lapse of time. Where such omission is due to forgetfulness, the stanzas that remain are preserved by some peculiar phraseology, some name, some vigorous expression, that seems to have taken the popular fancy. Loss of the central action often involves a loss of the central motive.

Most of even the best ballads do not omit the central action. Complete omission is by its very nature essential and structural, and determines the character of the ballad; whereas suspense is generally subordinate and decorative. But the examples of ~~SUSPENSE~~ complete suspense, even, are much more numerous than the best ones of omission, and fall into three classes of chief importance: suspense for wit flavored with a low sort of romance, as in "The Beggar Laddie" (280) and "The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter" (110); suspense for a romantic conclusion, as in "Bonnie Lizie Baillie" (227), "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington" (105), and "Glasgow Peggie" (228); and suspense for tragedy, as in "Glasgerion" (67),

(i) Supra, p. 24.

"The Lass of Roch Royal" (76), "Babylon" (14), "Child Maurice" (83, A), and "Edward" (13). There is a marked difference between these two last. In "Child Maurice" the suspense of a fact leads to a tragedy; in "Edward", the action has already occurred, and we are simply told of it in the most effective way. As might be expected, suspense is also used to further various schemes requiring secrecy: to further an escape, as in "Brown Robin" (97) and "The Gay Goshawk" (96, A), or to make possible an espial, as in "Queen Eleanor's Confession" (156). Complete suspense, then, is to be considered a more frequently used and more typical device than omission of the central action, and it is more nearly in conformity with the methods of modern narrative art.

6. Omission of the central action requires more or less deviation from the normal path of the simple ballad, and presupposes on the part of its author at least a limited degree of the highest poetic art. It presupposes, also, no small degree of appreciation on the part of those who perpetuate it by oral transmission. The intense suppression of those details on which the unlettered mind loves to linger does not find ready recognition among such ~~and~~ people as the milkmaids and female

(i) Gummere, p. 327 of The Pop. Ballad, says: "The leaps and omissions of narrative have been noticed already; they form no intentional feature of style, but spring from the choral origins of the ballad and are of the essence of its traditions." If this be taken to apply to "Spens" the entire statement is entirely false; for "Spens" is not choral in its origin and its omission is the most "intentional" feature about it. In justice to Professor Gummere, I must cite another pronouncement of his on the subject (O. Eng. Ballads, p. lxxvii): "Of the shorter ballads, 'Spens,' 'Brackley,' 'Mary Hamilton,' and others, reveal the charm of tradition and that pathos which springs from the feeling of a community and not from the sentiment of a poet; while ballads like 'Bonnie George Campbell' and 'Three Ravens' show a note of the lyric slowly detaching itself from pure narrative." Again I must dissent. "Spens" is not due to the charm of tradition, for tradition would have made a fragment of it, if "Spens" had been on the popular rack as long as "Lanekin." The statement about the lyric emerging from the epic directly contradicts his theory mentioned on p. II, footnote, as well as the elaborate system of Professor Hart.

servants and very old men who furnished so many of the ballad versions; and if Buchan's collector had met with such a monstrosity, he would no doubt have hastened to fill in the vacancy. There is more reason than is at first apparent why the best versions of "Edward" and "Sir Patrick Spens" occur only

(1) Ker, Eng. Lit: Medieval, pp. 158, 159: "What would the story of Sir Patrick Spens be worth, if it were told in any other way- with a description of the scenery about Dumferline, and the domestic establishment of the king of Norway, and the manners at his court?"

The Motherwell versions (C, E) contain no omission, and in the third one (F) the omission is incomplete, and ~~spoiled~~ spoiled by the details of cracking ships and the floating feather beds. It is interesting to note that C was from the recitation of Mrs. Notman and F from that of Mrs. Thomson. Scott's collated version (H) is also without the omission, as is Buchan's (I). The latter even undertakes to explain what precautions were taken to save the ship:

'There are five-an-fifty feather beds
Well packed in ae room;
And ye'll get as muckle guid canvas
As wrap the ship a' roun.

'Ye'll pict her well, and spare her not,
And mak her hale and soun:'
But ere he had the word well spoke
The bonny ship was down.

It would seem that the least omission (and with it the worst versions as well) comes from the recitation of women in the nineteenth century and from the collated versions.

(i)

in the Reliques of the cultivated Thomas Percy. The suspense of the former would be a little beyond the ordinary mind (though "Lord Randal," with its excess of detail and contagious refrain, has remained very popular despite the suspense employed); and as for the latter, what village gossip would be content to sing the fate of Sir Patrick in eleven stanzas, omitting all mention of the rebellious cabin boy and the floating mattresses, when she might just as easily, and with much greater satisfaction, retain all those delectable details and spin the yarn out to a decent length?

Child, ibid., Vol. II, p. 18, speaking of "Spens": "Percy's version remains, poetically, the best. It may be a fragment, but the imagination easily supplies all that may be wanting; and if more of the story, or the whole, be told in H, the half is better than the whole."

Gummere, The Beg. of Poetry, p. 172: "Improvisation in a throng cannot give the unity of purpose and the touch of art which one finds in Spens; that comes partly from ~~the~~ individual and artistic strands woven in with the communal stuff, and partly from the process by which a ballad constantly sung in many places, and handed down by oral tradition alone, selects as if by its own will the stanzas and phrases which best suit its public." Just so; but we have recently seen what those stanzas and phrases are, which tradition lovingly singles out for its own: the details, the peculiar ~~names~~ phraseology, the names and places, the inessential generally. The story is lost with a reckless indifference; only of the situation is tradition tenacious. Tradition might turn a story like "Bonny James Campbell" into a beautiful song, with only a hint as to its original significance; but it could never make of "Spens" a powerful bit of narrative art, with its eleven stanzas so compact with suggestion as to burn ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~memory~~ of its tragic happening on the memory of the world.

APPENDIX A

AUTHORSHIP OF THE BALLADS

"There is..... no agreement among scholars as to the origin and history of what are called popular ballads." In the following pages I shall not attempt to present a view which others must, of necessity, accept; that is not to be hoped for, since positive proof is not to be arrived at, by the very nature of the case. I shall be content with a synopsis of the chief arguments which I am unwilling to accept, and an attempt to state my own conclusions so that they will at least be understood.

Rather less than a century ago it was fashionable to speak of the chief ballads as modern forgeries. This view was advocated chiefly by Mr. Robert Chambers, and was accepted by some ~~others~~ others. We read in a collection of sixty years ago that Lady Wardlaw "is now known to be the author of Edward! Edward! and Sir Patrick Spens, in addition to Hardyknute." Since that time the contention has been thrown out of court by all scholars. Professor Child dismissed it with these words: "I have not felt called upon to say anything of the attempt of the late Mr. Robert Chambers to prove 'Sir Patrick Spens' a piece of literary work of the last century, by arguments which would make Lady Wardlaw author not only of most of the romantic Scottish ballads, but also of ~~xxx~~ a good part of the ballads of Europe. The flimsy plea of Mr. Chambers has been effectually disposed of by Mr. Norval Clyne, The Romantic Scottish Ballads and the Lady Wardlaw Heresy, Aberdeen, 1859, and by Mr. James Hutton, Watkins, Early Scottish Ballads, Glasgow, 1867."

It is true that of recent years Scott's work as an editor

(i) Kittredge, ibid., p. xi. (ii) Dixon, ibid., p. xi.
 (iii) Child, ibid., Vol. II, p. 20.

has come in for sharp criticism; but the question of the genuineness of "Kinmont Willie" is not sufficient to alter our general statement: the ballads are not modern forgeries, and are not so considered by scholars.

Who, then, did write these anonymous poems? We shall never be able to name the authors, of course; but can we even approximate their identity? Two chief solutions of this problem are offered at the present time. Grimm's mystic declaration which is summed up in the words das Volk dichtet has been supplanted by a more plausible contention along much the same lines, the recent communal origin theory of Professors Gummere and Kittredge, followed by others in this country, chiefly graduates of Harvard, and by Mr. Andrew Lang in Europe. Professor Child was probably a moderate supporter of this view; but as he did not live to make a final declaration on the subject, and as the material in his ballad-introductions is read in contrary ways to support opposing arguments, it is scarcely fair to count much on his support.

Professor Kittredge's contentions in favor of the communal theory may be summed up by the following excerpts from his introduction to the Cambridge edition of Professor Child's collection of the ballads:

(p.xii) They belonged, in the first instance, to the whole people, at a time when there were no formal divisions of literate and illiterate; when the intellectual interests of all were substantially identical, from the king to the peasant.....
 (xvii) The composition of an ode or a sonnet..... may be regarded as a single creative act. And with the accomplishment of this creative act, the account is closed; once finished, the poem is a definite entity, no longer subject to any process of development. Not so with the popular ballad. Here the mere act of composition(which is quite as likely to be oral as written) is not the conclusion of the matter; it is rather the beginning..... It becomes the possession of the folk, and a new process begins, that of oral tradition, which is hardly second in importance to the original creative act. As it passes from singer to singer it is changing unceasingly.... These processes of oral tradition amount to a second act of composition.... which may be as

effective a cause of the ballad in question as the original creative act of the individual author... (xvi-xvii) It follows that a genuinely popular ballad can have no fixed and final form, no sole authentic version. There are texts, but there is no text. Version A may be nearer the original than versions B and C, but that does not affect the pretensions of B and C to exist and hold up their heads among their fellows. It would be interesting if we could have every one of Mr Child's three hundred and five ballads exactly as it came from the lips of its first composer; but such versions, if we could arrive at them, would not cancel the variants that have come down to us. Oral transmission and its concomitants are not the accidents of the ballad, they are essential to it; they are constituent elements of its very nature. Without them the ballad would not be the ballad... (xxiv) The extant ballads of England and Scotland represent, in the main, the end of a process of which the beginning may not improbably be discovered in the period of communal composition. They were not themselves composed in this way, but were in the first instance, the work of individual authors, at least in the great majority of cases... (xxvii) We have described the characteristic method of ballad authorship as improvisation in the presence of a sympathetic company which may even, at times, participate in the process. Such a description is in general warranted by the evidence; and though it cannot be proved for any of the English and Scottish Ballads, it is not impossible for some of them.

(i)

Henderson is disposed to make merry over this argument ~~which offers no concrete evidence, and then~~ which offers no concrete evidence, and then concludes that the decision arrived at is warranted by the evidence; and which grants that the ballads we know were almost certainly written by individuals, and yet concludes that the characteristic method of ballad authorship is more or less communal. It seems too much an attempt to reconcile the ballads as we have them with a theory of ballads as they may conceivably have been. In such a case, we are concerned only with the former.

Professor Gummere's opinion is more difficult to sum up, scattered as it is through his works on the subject. The following excerpts give some notion of his contentions:

Poetry of the people is the poetry which once came from the people as a whole, from the compact body as yet undivided by lettered and unlettered taste, and represents the sentiments neither of individuals nor of a class. It inclines to the narrative, the concrete and exterior, and it has no mark of the

(i) Cf. The Ballad in Literature.

(i)
artist and his sentiment.

According to this definition, I must deny flatly that the ballads under discussion are "poetry of the people." Professor Gummere himself states that objectivity and impersonality were (ii) typical of all medieval literature. Art itself made a point of impersonality at that time (when the ballads originated). Two extracts from a study of Danish ballads are applicable:

All Europe seems at that time to have had the same literary taste, as it had the same taste in chivalrous usages, in architecture, and even in handwriting. It is not only the tales themselves that are so widely spread. The same forms of conventional phrases were common to all the ballad poetry of Europe. The meter, too, the common stanza, was the same. (iii)

They date from a time.... when the tastes of all were incessantly cultivated for a peculiar style of composition, the mediaeval romance, that for a time was equally the favourite over all the North and West of Europe. The lays that were ~~app~~ approved were sure to be carried by the wandering minstrel to other halls and other districts, and from these was formed the popular ballads. (iv) ✓

May not the impersonality, the narrative, the objective, the non-partisan character of the ballads be due to their probable source in medieval literature? Is this not more plausible than a hypothetical origin from a literature whose very existence is somewhat shadowy, and which is supposedly the work of a community which cannot definitely lay claim to anything even approaching the ballad in artistic qualities or literary merit?

Professor Gummere speaks of "the great factor of oral tradition, which has made over and over again the stuff of communal (v) song." Setting aside the "communal song" expression, which seems to me too intangible for discussion, we may observe again that oral tradition does not improve the ballads but destroys

(i) Old English Ballads, p. xvi. (ii) Ibid., p. xii.

~~***The Popular Ballad***~~

(iii) Prior, Ancient Danish Ballads, London and Edinburgh, 1860., p. xxi of Introduction. (iv) Ibid., p. vii.

(v) The Popular Ballad, p. 62.

story, rhyme, and finally even situation, leaving in the end but an unintelligible fragment of a few lines.

Again we read, "There is no need to point out the personal note of the folk song as distinct from the impersonal note of the ballad." Why so? If both were "poetry of the people" why should not they share this quality of impersonality? Is it not true that the impersonality of the ballad is due to the artistry of the anonymous school to which its authors belonged, and that the impersonality itself is a heritage from medieval narrative art? Again we find, "The particular ballads of the present collection cannot be referred directly to communal authorship; but their differencing qualities, the impersonality, the hint of something which we cannot define but as little can deny, are due to this older connection." Why refer the impersonality to this mythical communal origin? The relation of many of the ballads to the work of older story-tellers has been clearly established; why may we not infer a similar influence on the simple ballad style? Again we read, "The ballad is a conglomerate of choral, dramatic, lyric, and epic elements which are due now to some suggestive refrain, now to improvisation, now to memory, now to individual invention, and are forced into a more or less poetic ~~form~~ unity by the pressure of tradition in long stretches of time." This cannot be accepted at all. "Sir Patrick Spens" is not a conglomerate of anything, but is a unified poem. The effect of improvisation and individual invention is admirable when Burns or Scott is the emender, ^{ator} atrocious when Buchan makes the change.

But the argument which Professor Gummere is most tenacious

(i) The Popular Ballad, p. 66. (ii) Old English Ballads, p. xvii
 (iii) The Popular Ballad, p. 321.

of is this: the reffains of ballads, the progressive repetition which he calls "incremental repetition," are said to be a sure indication of communal origin, and the Faroe Islanders of today are repeatedly instanced as examples of such a process of improvisation. Do these islanders really make ballads today about their fishing, and in their dances, which throw light on the origin of the ballads?

In a recent study of the Faroes, we do read that there was formerly a custom among them which required each man to make a couplet at a feast; but that is not similar to the making of our ballads, and is not much different from the game we still play in America, which requires that each guest, or group of guests, at a party write an acrostic. As for the actual ballads which are sung at their dances, we are told that-

Both the words and the tunes of the ballads are fine and spirited; but they are often howled rather than sung, and a lamentable ignorance of the words is frequently displayed. (i) Is this howling "the great factor of oral tradition," and do we find, even among the Faroes, that communal influence serves only to obscure and lose the fine words of an original work of art? Why should it be necessary to remember words, if the individual author counts for nothing, and "oral tradition" is "scarcely second in importance to the original creative act"?

What are these ballads about? Let us see a specimen-

The following is a translation..... of the first few ~~lines~~ verses of **one** of the best-known ballads:-

In Norway dwells a christened man,
Ye Norway men, dance so fair and free!
 And Olave Trigasson is his name.
Hold your peace, ye good knights! all!
Ye Norway men, dance so fair and free!

King Olave made a feast so fine, etc.

(i) Nelson Annandale, The Faroes and Iceland, Oxford, 1905, p.64.
 (ii) Ibid., p. 63.

This, of course, is one of the older ballads; but it is not thought to be very old, at any rate in its present form. (i)

So this, then, is "communal stuff" which has been reworked by the great factor of oral tradition. Let us see what sort of improvisation we can find in the primitive fishing communities of the Westman Islands:

When the fishers put off, they doff their caps and cross themselves, and then resume conversation. A song is often started- generally either the Farish ballad of King Olaf Triggasson or else an Icelandic version of some English music-hall ditty. It is a curious sign of the times how songs of the latter kind fly all around the world. A favourite of the natives of the Malay peninsula, even in remote Patani, is a translation of "A Bicycle Built for Two," which is also appreciated by these Westman fowlers, having been adopted into Icelandic as well as Malay. (ii)

This is oral tradition with a vengeance, but is this "communal stuff"? It was so in the later medieval period, when the ballad proper began to spread over Europe. We know that Blondel went to Palestine and later wandered over the continent, singing as he went from place to place; did not hundreds of others after his time ^{do} the same thing?

With due respect ^{to} Andrew Lang and to the communal school of this country, I am unable to subscribe to their theory. The mere weight of authority counts for nothing in such a case. When the hounds are off on a false scent, it matters not how loud they may bay; they will never overtake the fox. Therefore, when we read such statements as this-

Few will now care to dispute the fact that there are two great classes of ~~popular~~ poetry, artistic and popular, 'poetry of the schools and poetry of the people.' Whatever critics may hold as to the origin of popular poetry, they are agreed that, being in the possession of the folk, it is therefore different from artistic poetry-

(i) Ibid., p. 62.

(ii) Ibid., p. 199.

(iii) G. M. Miller, ibid., p. 9.

Rather strong!

I must reply as follows: there is but one great class of poetry, which is subdivided into numberless schools; and it may be found permanently preserved in books, or in oral tradition, undergoing the mutilation and gradual effacement which is almost inseparable from that unstable sort of record.

Let us lay aside for a time the pseudo-scientific jargon which has crept into this sort of discussion, and deal with the mere probabilities of the matter. I am not sure what "the curve of evolution" ⁽ⁱ⁾ has to do with the ballads, nor do I feel quite sure than in ballads ~~is~~ ^{is} there any regular transition from "the simple, the homogeneous, the undifferentiated, to the homogeneous, the ~~undifferentiated~~ ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ complex, the differentiated." We may observe, however, that "at a particular period of civilization the songs of most nations are narrative, and that at a later period this style is abandoned for the ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ sentimental." This ~~is~~ in keeping with our conception of the relative order of the ballads. "Professor Child assigns the origin of the Robin Hood ballads to the ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ thirteenth century"; and we have strong evidence that the ^(iv) romantic ballads are none of them more than some three centuries old. We shall look, then, for the origin of the semi-epic ballads, and see if they cannot be explained by the literary habits and taste of the later medieval time.

"Some readers seem to think that it detracts greatly from the interest of these ballads to divest them of the vague mystery with which their origin has been shrouded;" ^(v) if so, let them seek elsewhere for the curious, the inexplicable, and the spontaneous. I hold, with Courthope, Henderson, Smith and Prior,

(i) Gummere, The Popular Ballad. (ii) G. M. Miller, ibid., p. 10.
 (iii) Gummere, Old English Ballads, p. 299.
 (iv) Henderson, ibid.
 (v) Prior, ibid., p. xix.

with Ker and Annandale, with Cunningham, with Bishop Percy and
 Walter Scott, that ballads are made by poets, whether minstrels (i)
 or the successors of minstrels, whether 'makiris' or any anony- (ii) (iii)
 mous poets, and by them were given forth to the world; most of (iv)
 what is good in them is due to artistry, and the chief result of
 oral tradition is to produce first atrophy of the story and
 finally loss of the significance altogether.

Let us quote from Prior, who states the case for the Danish
 ballad, but means the words to apply almost equally as well to
 our British productions: (v)

(p. vii) as compositions they are generally very
 beautiful and of great artistic merit. The careless ease and
 simplicity of the ballad is apt to deceive us into the belief
 that it is the unpremeditated spontaneous effusion of an illit-
 erate peasantry. But the truth is, as Ticknor has very well ob-
 served in the words adopted for our motto, that "although there
 is nothing easier than to make a ballad, there is nothing more
 difficult than to make it what it ought to be." Excellence in
 ballad writing is the result not merely of genius but of much
 cultivation, and there cannot be a greater mistake than to sup-
 pose, from ballads being now sung about the streets by a set of
 vagabonds and low people, that these ancient ones too were in-
 tended for that class, and originated with it.... They ~~exhibit~~
 evince a high poetical tone of feeling that never could have
 arisen from that class.

(p. ix) One thing is pretty clear, that in great part they
 are the composition of ladies..... There is almost as conclusive
 internal evidence that they are in great part also the work of
 persons of education and refinement.

(p. xi) It is remarkable that in France and Italy, where so
 many of these fictions originated, they seem to have never
 become popular with the lower classes, but to have been in vogue
 for a time as a recreation for the wealthy, and then to have
 passed out of fashion. (vi)

(p. xx) I believe them to have been for the most part
 formed upon French romances.

(i) See The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, New York, n. d. p. ix, Preface. (ii) Cf. W. J. Courthope, A History of English Poetry, London, 1897, Vol. I. (iii) Cf. Henderson, Scottish Vernacular Literature, Edinburgh, 1910. (iv) Cf. Ker, Epic and Romance. (v) Prior, ibid., Vol. I.
 (vi) More attention has been paid to the Italian ballads of late. Cf. Sophie Jowett's Folk-Ballads of Southern Europe, New York and London, 1913.

(p. xxvi) That many of the heroes and scenes have been adapted from foreign nations is obvious enough; but it was the habit of the old romancers to place their action as far off as possible, in order to allow ~~their action~~ themselves free scope for their invention. So King Arthur became a favourite hero, not because the stories about him are Welsh, but because he was a foreigner, of whom nothing definite was known, and the minstrel was free to sing of him what he pleased. There can be no question that it was from the court of France, and that of our Norman kings, that a taste for these fictions spread over the rest of Europe. That they should have originated at these rather than at any of the other courts, may have been owing to this, that Paris and London were at that time the only capitals in Europe in which a king and nobility resided, and where the poet was repaid with honours and emoluments.

Ten Brink attributes the political ballads of the ~~thirteenth~~
(i)
thirteenth century to gleemen. Chambers holds that the Robin Hood ballads are probably "minstrelsy of a somewhat debased
(ii)
type."

Ker, while holding to the anonymous authorship of the ballads, disagrees with such critics as Prior, who contended that the ballad originated in the romance, or Courthope, who regards ballads as a decadent offshoot of minstrelsy (though in the preface, he seems to have modified his views somewhat in favor
(iii)
of a closer relation of ballad and romance):

(p. 157ff.) By some ~~they~~ ballads are held to be degenerate romances; and they appear at a time when the best of romance was over, and when ~~even~~ the worst was dying out. Also, it is quite certain that some ballads are derived from romances..... But there are a great many difficulties in the way of this theory... The form of the ballad is lyrical; all ballads are lyrical; all ballads are lyrical ballads, and some of them at any rate would lose their meaning utterly if they were paraphrased into a story..... Further, the theory that the ballads are degenerate romances is unfair to those ballads which are descended from romances. The ballad of Hynd Horn may be derived from an older narrative poem, but it is not a corruption of any old narrative; it is a different thing, in a lyrical form which has a value of its own.

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- (i) Early English Literature, New York, 1889, Vol. I, p. 315.
(ii) The Medieval Stage, Oxford, 1903, Vol. I, p. 178.
(iii) English Literature: Medieval.

(p. 166) But the grace of the ballads is unmistakable; it is unlike anything in the contemporary romances, because it is lyrical poetry. It is often vague and intangible. It is never the same as narrative romance.

Henderson holds that the ballads of Scotland are in line of descent from artistic poetry of a bygone day: (i)

(p. 360) We must make allowance for the deterioration effected by possibly some centuries of mangling by reciters; for tradition, contact with the natural man, contagion from 'the heart of the people'- which last, however sincere and strong in its emotions, is now, and probably ever was, wholly untrained in the art of poetic expression- does not tend as some..... assume, towards the elaboration of the consummate qualities of the ballad, but rather, as hundreds of instances could be adduced to prove, towards their obscuration, defilement, and final effacement.

(p. 385) The old 'makiris' of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and bards and minstrels whose very names have perished: these were its ~~fashioners~~ original creators and fashioners, and it was dowered with much of its rare excellency by inheritance from a poetry which was not popular in the merely vulgar sense, but the work of artists of special training and accomplishment. For many generations the influence of the old poetic school seemed to be dormant, but its very suppression, and the denial by the kirk of the liberty of the new poetic utterance, tended to preserve the old poetic tradition as it was when the voices of those old 'makiris' became silent. Thus Scottish vernacular song is more closely linked to the past than the popular 'minstrelsy' of England; and while it represents more fully the national sentiments, associations, and memories, it includes many numbers which, homely, simple, and popular though they may be, bear the hall-mark of an ancient and noble descent.

Kinloch clearly did not have much regard for "the shaping genius of oral tradition," as he speaks bitterly of ~~at~~ the reciters, who alter the ballads by "interpolating stanzas, curtailing what they do not understand, and substituting whatever (ii) may please their own fancy or caprice." Nor does he seem to suspect that this secondary process of oral tradition is scarcely inferior to the original one of creation. Scott was openly in favor of some form of the minstrel theory of authorship. In his introduction to "Lord Thomas and Fair Annie" in the Minstrelsy

(i) Scottish Vernacular Literature.

(ii) Ancient Scottish Ballads, London and Edinburgh, 1827, p. xi.

(1)

he writes:

The editor is convinced that the further our researches our researches are extended, the more shall we see ground to believe that the romantic ballads of later times are, for the most part, abridgments of the ancient metrical romances, narrated in a smoother stanza and a more modern language.

Professor Child, who is usually looked upon as a mild advocate of the communal theory, made many statements which are strongly in favor of something like minstrel authorship of the ballads, though he himself never adopted that opinion. The following accords exactly with the minstrel-theory: (ii)

... tales and songs were the chief social amusement of all classes of people in all the nations of Europe during the Middle Ages, and ... new stories would be eagerly sought for by those whose business it was to furnish this amusement, and be rapidly spread among the fraternity.

Of late years some effort has been made to establish an analogy between the cowboy songs of Texas and the standard ballads. However, any argument in regard to the authorship of the cowboy songs is inapplicable to the ballads. As Professor (iii) Pound says of the songs-

No doubt it is ~~in~~ compositions of this nature to which may be fairly ascribed the communal origin suggested by Mr. Lomax and sketched out by Professor Lawrence. These might well have found their origin in the improvisation of a community isolated and homogeneous; and they well reflect the life, the tastes, the themes, and song modes, of those among whom they are current. To reiterate, they deal as a mass with the life and the interests of the same class of people that originate and sing them. And among this class, it is tempting to add, the pieces so composed are likely to die!

(i) Quoted in Scottish Vernacular Literature, p. 345.

(ii) Article sub Ballad Poetry, in Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia, New York, 1893.

(iii) P. 4 in The Southwestern Cowboy Songs and the English and Scottish Ballads, reprint from Modern Philology, Vol. XI, No. 2, Oct. 1912.

Indeed, the very illustrations chosen to illustrate this authorless popular poetry are often the strongest evidence against it. Mr. Mabie, after stating in the introduction that "there ~~was~~ was no poet, because all were poets,"⁽ⁱ⁾ includes within his "collection of these songs of the people" such charmingly "communal stuff" as Thomas Deloney's "Fair Rosamond" and Nicholas Breton's "Phillida and Corydon." What would the old Elisabethan poet have thought of a theory that produced such results?

Mr. Gregory Smith calls attention to several very important points in favor of the literary character of the ballads:⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

(p. 182) The ballad is not, aesthetically, a 'popular' genre. It is a 'literary' product, both in matter and in structure; and some of the characteristics which are to modern eyes the hall-mark of ballad-style are proof less of native simplicity and vigour than of the atrophy of romantic tradition.

(p. 183) It would almost appear as if anonymity were a leading attribute of the ballad form.

(p. 188) The first ballads are the best, because they are the outcome of the artistic conditions of the epoch, decadent though these conditions were. (He holds also that the 'popular' quality of later versions is due to vulgarized imitations and re-writings.)

(p. 231) Rule Britannia and Home Sweet Home are not less the work of individual writers (whose names might have been forgotten) because every plain man claims them as his own and bequeaths them with his chattels to his children.

We may add that the names of the writers of such songs are forgotten. The author of "Annie Laurie", young Douglas of ~~Sir~~^{Kirkcubright,} ~~land~~, in the south of Scotland, is a person whose identity is thoroughly established; and yet I have seen the song, in two expensive song-books, attributed in one case to Burns and given in the other case as anonymous. A similar obscurity is beginning to veil the personality of the heroine. I have read that she

(i) A Book of Old English Ballads, p. 25.

(ii) G. Gregory Smith, The Transition Period, New York, 1900.

married an English squire and that ~~her~~ tombstone is yet to be seen in a northern shire; whereas three Scottish authorities that I have read state that she married Fergusson of Craigdarroch, and that her portrait is still preserved in the house of the Scottish family. The ballads were like "Annie Laurie" in this respect of impersonality of authorship;

"Each heart recalled a different name,
But all sang Annie Laurie."

The following passages from Mr. J. H. Millar's discussion
(i)
of the subject are almost identical with my own notion of the matter:

(p. 183) It appears to me as difficult to hold that so artificial a thing as even the rudest and most primitive poetry is not the work of one man, as it is to believe that the simplest domestic utensil is the "work of the community" in the sense alleged, and not that of the individual.

(p. 185) (Speaking of the various ballads) The difference is, not that between two distinct species of art, but, the difference between the work of a botcher and of an artist in the same kind.

(p. 186) It may be said that the ballads as we know them are so adulterated, partly by transmission per ora virum, and partly by editorial industry, that we can catch only a very faint whiff of the genuine communal flavour. That may be so; but if it is, there is an end to ~~all~~ controversy. We can only take the ballads as we find them, and it is a waste of time to argue about the characteristics of productions which no one has ever seen or heard, and whose very existence depends on bare conjecture.

(p. 187) None of the ballads we possess can justly be described as "non-literary." On the contrary, all betray the finger of the professional, whether he was skilful in his vocation or unskilful. The community may have been quick in catching up a new song or a metrical tale, but it could not catch it up before it was made.

(p. 188) We are driven to the conclusion that the great "communal" theory will ~~only~~ hold water if "communal" be so pared down in meaning as to become equivalent to "anonymous." That the ballads are that, no one will probably deny.

(p. 189) The present writer is disposed to think the considerations advanced by Mr. Gregory Smith and Mr. Courthope unanswerable. They have the great merit of taking the ballads as they are— not as they may have been, or ought to have been.

(i) J. H. Millar, A Literary History of Scotland, New York, 1903.

(p. 190) Each ballad as a whole belongs to a literary class almost as well defined as that of the Golden Targe or the Essay on Man.

Having now presented what is meant to be a fair ~~statement~~ of the various theories in regard to ballad authorship, and having ~~urged~~ stated a few of the reasons which have led me to hold to one belief rather than to another, let us summarize the chief points that have been brought out: *me*

The ballad is a poem whose author is not known; that much is sure. To judge by the ballads themselves, we must conclude that there were ballad "schools," to borrow a phrase from the literary histories. These schools are anonymous, both as regards the individual and the group itself. They tell us almost as little of class or group individuality as of the author's personality. The ballad peculiarities may be due in part to the original purpose of the authors, which seems to have been to please their public by following the accepted pattern, or to the effect of oral tradition. As far as we can learn, however, the chief results of tradition are to produce obscurity, verbal blemish, and undue syncopation, or, in the hands of more ambitious reciters, undue expansion. All that smacks of art and purpose successfully achieved, and most of the unconscious-seeming grace as well, is apparently due to the original poet, or to the kindred spirit who improved his lines. It is false to compare Browning's poems with "Lord Randal" and conclude that the first is art and the second not; one is dramatic monologue of the personal style of art, and the other dramatic dialogue of the impersonal style of art. Whether the ballad-makers were minstrels, romancers, or others, matters not in our present discussion. Suffice it to say they were artists.

APPENDIX B

THE CASE AGAINST BUCHAN

In the following table, the Buchan versions of the first seventy-five ballads in Professor Child's collection are compared with the longest of the other corresponding versions, as regards number of stanzas and number of unsupplied words, lines, or stanzas. These seventy-five are chosen simply because they happen to come first; and the number is certainly sufficient to permit of general conclusions. In cases where two Buchan versions exist, the longer is adopted:

<u>Buchan</u>	<u>Longest of all others</u>
No. 3 (D) 17 stanzas	(B) 20 stanzas (a broadside)
4. (D) 30 stanzas	(C) 17 stanzas
5. (D) 56 stanzas	(C) 85 stanzas (many words, lines, and stanzas missing)
9. (C) 14 stanzas	(A) 35 stanzas (a broadside)
10. (O) 18 stanzas	(B) 28 stanzas
12. (L) 9 stanzas	(H) 11 stanzas
15. (A) 47 stanzas	(B) 16 stanzas
17. (H) 34 stanzas	(G) 36 stanzas (one line missing)
20. (I) 17 stanzas	(E) 19 stanzas
25. (B) 17 stanzas	(A) 16 stanzas
33. (G) 14 stanzas	(A) 13 stanzas (indication that a passage is lost)
34. (A) 12 stanzas	(B) 18 stanzas
38. (G) 7 stanzas	(A) 8 stanzas
41. (A) 54 stanzas	(A) 19 stanzas (indications of lost stanzas)
43. (C) 28 stanzas	(F) 19 stanzas (a broadside)
44. -----Buchan has the only version -----	
46. (B) 18 stanzas	(A) 18 stanzas
47. (B) 32 stanzas (one indication of a lost stanza)	(A) 19 stanzas
49. (F) 25 stanzas	(C) 20 stanzas
52. (C) 24 stanzas	(A) 19 stanzas
53 (M) 54 stanzas	(H) 47 stanzas (indication of an omitted stanza)
57. ----- Buchan has the only version -----	
58. (I) 29 stanzas	(N) 26 stanzas (an "made"version, Scott's <u>Minstrelsy</u>)
62. (J) 65 stanzas	(I) 45 stanzas (A "made" version, with numerous omissions)
63. (G) 49 stanzas	(A) 38 stanzas
64. (F) 35 stanzas	(A) 30 stanzas (One omission of a passage)
65. (H) 39 stanzas	(A) 31 stanzas
66. (E) 44 stanzas	(A) 31 stanzas
68. (K) 38 stanzas	(J) 29 stanzas, a "made" version

69. (B) 37 stanzas	(A) 26 stanzas (three lost lines)
70. (B) 25 stanzas	(A) 15 stanzas
71. ----- Buchan has the only version, 48 stanzas -----	
72. (C) 41 stanzas	(A) 17 stanzas (one omission)
<u>Total no. of stanzas- 929</u>	<u>763</u>

Longest version - 20 cases 9 cases

Instances of probable I 8
omission of words, lines,
or stanzas

It will be seen from the foregoing tables that Buchan was unusually fortunate in securing the longest and completest versions in almost all cases. He even surpasses some of the broadsides and confessedly "made" or compounded copies. When he has ample room for narrative expansion, as in the stretch from 47 to 72, no one else is within hailing distance.

But when we come to consider the manner in which this length is secured, we see that it is due to one of three causes in most instances: (a) conventional ballad padding; (b) padding peculiar to Buchan versions; (c) retention of the central action where it should be dispensed with. Professor Child (ibid., Vol. II, p. 18) says of James Ranvin, the blind collector who served Buchan:

A large part of Buchan's ballads have the mint-mark of this minstrel beggar and beggarly minstrel, who collected for pay. No confidence can be placed in any of his readings: his personal inspiration was too decided to make him a safe reporter.

Professor Kittredge points to this beggar's efforts as proof that minstrels could not have written the ballads. But were all minstrels mere crafty beggars?

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