

ing by shouting to him from the garden. Mr. Pickwick 'looked to the right but he saw nobody, his eyes wandered to the left and pierced the prospect; he stared into the sky, but he was n't wanted there; and then he did what a common mind would have done at once — looked into the garden,

and there saw Mr. Wardle. "How are you?" said that good-humored individual, out of breath with his own anticipations of pleasure. "Beautiful morning, ain't it? Make haste down and come out." ' A middle-aged gentleman, breathless with his own anticipations of pleasure!

## THE SCOTTISH CHAUCERIANS

BY LOUIS GOLDING

*[Mr. Golding is a brilliant young English writer of prose and poetry whose literary career began before he was out of Oxford. In company with Robert Graves, Alan Porter, and Edmund Blunden he led the literary renaissance that won for Queen's the reputation earlier attributed by Johnson to Pembroke — 'that nest of singing birds.' The two volumes of the Queen's College Miscellany which he edited are now a desirable acquisition for the bibliophile. While in the University, Mr. Golding was literary editor of several newspapers. He assisted Mr. Thomas Moulton in founding the magazine Voices (since defunct) and by twenty-five was the author of two volumes of verse and a novel which had to be reprinted within six months of its appearance. It is agreeable to find, in this essay, that at least one modern writer does not scorn his predecessors.]*

From the *Saturday Review*, November 25

(LONDON TORY WEEKLY)

UNHAPPY are the poets of dialect. They might be conceived as seated unsteadily upon a three-legged stool, whereof the legs are their master language, the dialect of it they have adopted or that has adopted them, and their one sure support of poetry. How much happier had the fate of the Scottish Chaucerians been had they taken the precaution to be born in China or Peru. Alas for that lovely company, King James and Henryson, Dunbar and Douglas! The obscurest poet of the obscurest Mongolian race is sure of his Judith Gautier or Arthur Waley or Powys Mathers, to detach him from his darkness sooner or later, and to set him burning among some constellation of 'Colored Stars.'

If Dunbar had been a Chinese waiter in a London restaurant, if James had but been a railway porter in Bath, what praise would have been too lavish for so distinguished a music as they devised? I have always felt that they are set dubiously upon a border-line of appreciation, these Scottish post-Chaucerians. They are not read with enthusiasm in Scotland. Is it because the forms they wrote in were imported from a foreign land then so hostile? They are hardly read in England at all, saving in the Universities. Is it because their dialect is too difficult? But it is a tenth as difficult, perhaps, as the Romance poetries that Englishmen read so assiduously. Shall Mr. Scott Moncrieff need to transfer

his attentions from the *Chanson de Roland* to 'The Thrissil and the Rois'? An examination of the forgotten virtues of these poets may not be without interest in an age sickening of those new virtues, so loudly thrust upon it, which are neither virtuous nor novel.

In the weak eyeballs of academicians the virtues of the Scottish Chaucerians are blurred in the glory thrown about them by the sun of Chaucer. But it is possible to overestimate even Shakespeare, as we can impute thirty thousand feet to Everest. So Chaucer is rather lost wholly than loved wholly by the declaration that he was greater in each respect than each member of this community of poets who derive their immortality, alas! more from his name than from their own high merits. Chaucer's greatness lies not in his detail but in his mass, in so much being less than Shakespeare, whose greatness is surpassed in neither mass nor detail. It is the multiplicity of the man, Chaucer, the abundance of his large lungs breathing, this laughing colossus standing wind-towsled over his age, that so cheats the airs from our puny pinnacles.

Obviously enough, none of the Scottish company is a colossus. They are great in their detail rather than their mass. And it is in the beauty of their texture, their delight in the threads they weave into comely silken patterns like Henryson's 'Robene and Makyne,' stout tapestries like the 'Prologues' of Douglas, that they anticipate the marvelous housewifery of Spenser, and, at their highest, in the sweetness and strength of 'The Golden Targe,' that they anticipate John Keats, the last of their line.

Their mediævalism is imputed to them now as a virtue, now a fault. It is no more a virtue than a man's skin. Or the term is applied to them as a statement of their limitations. This

seems a graver consideration. They are not, we learn, original 'makers.' Without Chaucer they fall to the ground; once more these poets seize the antiquated orange of allegory, attempting once more to squeeze thence new drops of invention. James has his allegory, 'The Kingis Quair,' Henryson his Chaucerian Testament; Dunbar and Douglas, poets who should have known better, still embrace their fruits of allegory. These critics state an obvious enough truth. These poets certainly made use of long-familiar forms. Yet apart from the fact that at least three of them were highly original elsewhere in their writings (and who knows but that time has ruthlessly swallowed other work of James than his 'Quair' and 'Good Counsel,' and work no less original than a prologue of Douglas?), yet the criticism is parallel to a condemnation of the Elizabethans for not forging entirely new plots.

Whether the form of the Scottish Chaucerians was native or derivative, or their language a blend of northern and southern modes, their achievement was poetry, of which there is so little in the world, of which there cannot be too much. One feels that if Gower had lived to-day, he would not have attempted Parnassus' slope. He would have found the cinema a more effective instrument of moral suasion and have written scenarios for films of religious propaganda. Lydgate would have been a Civil Servant writing letters to the reviews mildly repudiating Mr. Bayfield on Shakespearian versification. The Scottish Chaucerians, who were poets of the fifteenth century, would have been poets to-day.

It is the fashion to sneer at the Chaucerians, when any attention is paid them at all, for their 'aurification' of the English tongue — their deliber-

ate introduction of Latinisms. No critic who finds this a fault can have a keen insight into the making of poetry. These poets were conscious of an abounding sensuous delight in the world. It was perhaps a courtly, almost a sophisticated delight; yet it was sincere and urgent; they sought for a vocabulary to express their emotion in the language as left by Chaucer; but the language of Chaucer was not meticulous enough, not adequately jeweled. Hence we find in them that deliciously inquisitive search for musical Latin trisyllables, for fine melodies — a process which, though essentially smaller in nature, anticipates the majestic Latinizings of Milton and the later trilingual symphonies of Francis Thompson.

Of these poets the simplest and most naïve was James; simplest, that is, in spirit. For the stanzas of the 'Kingis Quair' are constructed with so clear a music and the architecture of the poem is so gracefully poised that James displays himself a craftsman of high rank. The poem manifests a charming and precocious sympathy for living things outside his royal self: —

The bird, the beste, the fisch eke in the see,  
They lyve in fredome, everich in his kind:  
And I a man, and lakkith libertee!

So is his 'lytill swete nightingale' heard by him to chant its feat love-ditty; so can no strain be sadder than his attempt at self-delusion: —

It is nothing, trowe I, but feynit chere,  
And that men list to counterfeten chere.

Or when fortune finally favors his suit, he utters thanksgiving in a passage among the most exquisite of early love-poetry — thanks to the nightingale, it may be, and to the gilly-flower, and thanks to the fair castell wall.

Henryson is as delicate as James, but he has more variety and skill. 'Robene and Makyne' holds an im-

portant place as the first of English pastorals, but it is intrinsically a worthy sire to *The Shepheard's Calendar* and *Comus*. It is full of modulations effected with fine artistry. Nothing could be chaster than its concluding silhouette: —

And so left him boyth wo and wreuch  
In dolour and in cair,  
Kepand his bird under a huche  
Amang the holtis hair.

We have to travel far before we discover the precedent established by Henryson adopted; such a continuation of another man's work as 'The Testament of Cresseid' is the continuation of Chaucer's 'Troilus.' We must go further than Chapman, who did no more than conclude the fragment left by his brother poet. One cannot help wondering whether Sir Harry Johnstone remembered the dim poet who first came that way, when he set to work upon the novels of Dickens and the drama of Shaw. At all events Henryson was not to have the last word for all his

Of fair Cresseid, as I have said befor  
Sen scho is deid I speik of hir no moir.

A greater than he, but in sour mood, was to tell her fortunes again.

It would be idle to refuse to Dunbar's forehead the laurel of Scottish Chaucerian poetry. He has neither James's simplicity nor Henryson's grace, but he has a range and power and originality which elect him high among the second ranks of poets, beside a Marvell, a Clare, a John Davidson. Never was poetry more 'thick inlaid with patines of bright gold' than his 'Golden Targe.' It is like the canvases of the Italian goldsmith-painters, like the gem-encrusted bosom of a Sforza lady: —

The cristall air, the sapher firmament,  
The ruby skies of the Orient,  
Kest beriall bemes on emerant bewis grene;  
The rosy garth, depaynt and redolent  
With purpur, azure, gold and goulis gent. . . .

That this same poet should have written also his 'Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo,' with its more than Rabelaisian candor, its immense zest, its clever parody of and improvement upon the antique alliterative measure, is a problem in literary psychology. Nor does the tale end here. There follows the grotesque and powerful 'Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis,' with its massive thrust in the jaw for Highlanders in general and the miserable Macfadyans in particular. Or, at the opposite pole in the bewildering spirit of this man, his dolorous litany of dead poets, '*Timor mortis conturbat me.*' *Timor mortis* no longer disturbeth him. Not many are they who love this poet, but these love him well.

Douglas in some senses marks the decadence of this burst of poetry briefly examined here. He is more of a litterateur, an Alexandrian, than the rest. We feel that the tremendous versatility of Dunbar — his feverish experimentation with many techniques — is implicit in the man, native to him. In Douglas we feel a sense of deliberation, form a greater stimulus than matter. Take, for instance, the amazing virtuosity of the 'Ballade in Commendation of Honor'; how the rhymes dance and sparkle like ascending and descending watery arrows in a sunlit fountain!

Haill, rois maist chois til clois thy fois greit  
nicht!

Haill, stone quhilk schone upon the throne of  
licht!

Vertew, quhais trew sweit dew ouirthrew al vice.

Not that even here poetry is lacking.  
But the tone here is of cunning silver  
rather than of plain fine gold.

So too we find a new formalism invading, not unpleasantly, the prologues to his translation of the *Æneid*. The prologues describing the winter landscapes and the May morning are adjectival poetry *in excelsis*. Never was there such a plethora of adjectives. Whilst, in sooth, adjectives are not lacking from 'The Golden Targe,' they are subordinate to the scheme. In Douglas the scheme is subordinate to the adjectives. Passing away, saith simplicity, passing away. And yet never was the adaptation of sound to meaning carried to a more masterly degree. The poem on winter, in its each syllable, is a translation of winter's essential music, hard, dry, jagged, craggy. The sea spumes bitterly, howls along livid coasts. Marrow freezes. A man reading in summer crouches for warmth over his empty fire-grate.

. . . Until the reader recalls the May morning of this same poet, this May morning of English poetry: —

The twinkling stremowris of the orient  
Sched purpou sprangis with gold and asure  
ment. . . .

And al smal foulis singis on the spray  
Welcome the lord of licht and lampe of day!

The freshness of Chaucer, the lyric of Henryson, the skill of Dunbar, are fused in this *aubade*. Spring poets since that day seem curiously belated. When Shakespeare came, he sang the summer of his race. There are moments when it seems that to Shelley, wild, dying bird, was left only the threnody of autumn: —

Sad storm whose tears are vain,  
Bare woods whose branches stain,  
Deep caves and dreary main,  
Wail for the world's wrong!

# CHILDREN'S GAMES AND SONGS IN ANCIENT GREECE

BY W. R. HALLIDAY

[Professor Halliday occupies the chair of Ancient History in the University of Liverpool, and frequently contributes to *Discovery* essays on the intimate yet unfamiliar aspects of life in the ancient world.]

From *Discovery*, December  
(BRITISH SCIENTIFIC MONTHLY)

Most of us at one time or another have played the uncomfortable rôle of the Complaisant Man who, Theophrastus tells us, 'when asked to dinner will request the host to send for the children, and will say of them when they come in, that they are as like their father as figs; and will draw them toward him and kiss them and establish them at his side — playing with some of them, and himself saying: "Wineskin, Hatchet," and permitting them to go to sleep upon him to his anguish.' How Wine-skin and Hatchet was played I do not think is known. With some games we are more fortunate. A kind of Prisoner's Base, which was called Night and Day from the names given to the two sides, is alluded to by Plato. In this a piece of pottery, black upon the one side and white upon the other, was tossed up. If white came down uppermost, Day were the catchers and Night had to get 'home' before being caught. Plato, again, compares the earth to a kind of ball, the cover of which was made of twelve different-colored pieces of leather, and a variety of ball games are described by Pollux, who gives us also the ancient Greek varieties of Tug-of-War, Hide and Seek, and Blind Man's Buff. Why the latter got the name of Brazen Fly I do not know. A child was blindfolded and turned round. He then recited, 'I'm going to hunt a brazen fly,' while the others beat the blindfolded 'it' with strips of leather, shout-

ing, 'You will hunt but you will not catch.'

The boys of Tarentum played I Bring out the Lame Goat, but we know only the first line of the song. The girls' game *Cheli Chelone* we may perhaps call Torty Tortoise; the first word seems to be a mere nonsense reduplication of the sound of the first syllable of *chelone*. Liddell and Scott rather strangely describe it as a kind of Hunt the Slipper. One girl sits down and is called the Tortoise, while the others dance round her singing: —

'Torty Tortoise, what are you doing in the middle?'

'I am weaving wool and Milesian cloth.'

'But what was your child doing, when he was lost?'

'He jumped from his white horses into the sea.'

I imagine that the last line was the prelude to some action by which a child was caught, and that Torty Tortoise belongs to the same genus as Mother Mother the Pot Boils Over, Gipsy, and Old Cranny Crow.

The Pot was a boys' game. One boy in the centre held a pot on his head with his left hand, the others ran round him shouting, 'Who holds the pot?' the answer to which was 'I, Midas.' The player 'Midas' succeeded in touching with his foot took his place in the centre.

Milesian woolen cloth was the best in Greece, and upon its export the material prosperity of Miletus largely