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The Formation of Folk Literature as Illustrated in Mother Goose

Milo H. Stuart

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THE FORMATION OF FOLK LITERATURE AS ILLUSTRATED IN MOTHER GOOSE

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of English

Division of Graduate Instruction
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FOREWORD

The following thesis really began some fifteen years ago, when our children were little. Repeating Mother Goose Rhymes to them over and over again, a great curiosity overcame me to know whence these rhymes came and what they mean. It was only natural to read everything available to me on the subject. That investigation has continued at intervals ever since. Nor do we find all that we think regarding these folk rhymes in books. Interpretations, which completely satisfy, often seem to ripen in our minds with no apparent authority. Some common understanding which we share with the race enables us intuitively to know what Mother Goose means. Other times some author reveals to us some wholly new meaning.

Among those to whom the author is especially indebted are: Henry Bett, for his Nursery Rhymes and Tales; Katherine Elwes Thomas, for Real Personages in Mother Goose; Walter Taylor Field, for his Guide to Literature for Children; and Lina Eckenstein for Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes. She wishes to express appreciation also of the kindly inspiration given by Dr. John S. Harrison of Butler University, under whose direction this thesis has been prepared.

If these pages carry out their purpose, they will show:

a) That Mother Goose is not a set of meaningless jingles, but that it is a rarely fine example of folk lore.
b) That such folklore embodies very much of the experience of the race, from the earliest time until now.

c) That much of this experience is shared by diverse other races, thus arguing a common origin, and giving basis for a common understanding.

d) That in the formation of folklore, these experiences are freed from malice, are universalized, are often given changed meanings even. Folklore comes to rank, then, not as history, merely, but as true literature.

e) That this literature is peculiarly a literature for and about children.

It is recognized that these pages are but an introduction to the subject of "Formation of Folk Literature as Illustrated by Mother Goose." The examples are illustrative, not comprehensive. If something of the manner in which Folk Literature is formed from myth, from custom, from history, from games, is made clear, the object is accomplished.
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THE FORMATION OF FOLK LITERATURE AS ILLUSTRATED IN MOTHER GOOSE

CHAPTER I

WHO IS MOTHER GOOSE, and WHAT WRITINGS BELONG TO HER?

It seems somewhat impudent to ask who Mother Goose is. Just as if everybody didn't know her! We might as well ask Santa Claus to produce his family tree for us. Perhaps some American, one of these times, will discover up in Alaska or some other place on our own continent, the verified home of Santa. We have so nearly everything; we ought to make our possessions complete. At any rate, the local habitation of Mother Goose was discovered by one of our fellow countrymen, in the latter part of last century.

The story of the American Mother Goose runs like this. A certain Isaac Vergoose or Goose, a man of some property in Boston, married a well-to-do young woman named Mary Balston. Some twenty three years later, she died, leaving him ten children. Within two years, he married Elizabeth Foster, daughter of William and Ann Foster of Charlestown. That was in July of 1692, Elizabeth being twenty seven years old. She became the mother of at least six children and so was certainly entitled to be called "Mother Goose", or "The Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe". She was not given either title, however, until some years later. Her daughter, Elizabeth,
grew up; married a certain Thomas Fleet, a printer; and in due time became a mother. The grandmother, being by this time a widow, was free to devote herself to the entertainment of the young Fleet heir and of his brothers and sisters as they arrived. She became such a crooner of melodies, such a marvelous teller of children's stories that her thrifty son-in-law, the printer, thought it worth while to utilize her stock in trade. Thomas Fleet, therefore, brought forth a book bearing the following title: "Songs for the Nursery, or Mother Goose's Melodies for children. Printed by Thomas Fleet, at his printing-house, Pudding Lane, 1719. Price two coppers". The exact date of Mother Goose's death is not known, but her grave may be seen in the Old Granary Burying Ground.

The above story was accepted as true, at least in our own country, for a number of years. I suppose we would be thinking it yet, if there had been no busy antiquarians. It is so satisfying to have had a mythical being in our midst. But William H. Whitmore, in his "Genesis of a Boston Myth" definitely exploded the notion that the name "Mother Goose" originated in Boston. That was simply a descendant of Thomas Fleet adding interest to family history! We refer to it

1. Wheeler's Mother Goose's Melodies, p. xiv
2. Bacon's Guide Book to Boston, p. 29
with this much detail, because there are still many references to the story in print, and because a few fine old editions of Mother Goose print it as true.

No, the more we search for her, the more we shall find that Mother Goose is not hampered by the limitations of actual existence. Being purely a creature of the imagination, she is privileged to "ride through the air on a very fine gander." She may even "sweep the cobwebs out of the sky", if she wishes. She has grown more musical through the ages, although her real personality has remained unchanged. When we first saw her, she spoke prose. Now she speaks in rhyme, almost altogether.

The first recognition of Mother Goose in print, so far as has yet been found, occurs in Loret's "Muse Historique" published in France in 1650. Mr. Andrew Lang discovered in the midst of this poem:

"Comme un conte de la Mere Oye,
Se trouvant fabuleux et faux."

Evidently, then, as early as 1650, Mother Goose was known as a teller of marvelous tales of the fancy.

Our first sample of these tales is given us by Charles Perrault, a French writer of distinction. In 1696 he contributed to a magazine known as "Moetjen's Recueil"

printed at The Hague, a set of children's tales. The next year, (1697), he published these tales in book form in Paris. The book was called: Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé avec des Moralités. In the frontispiece, an old woman is pictured telling stories to a family circle seated about a fireplace. In the background are the words: "Contes de ma Mère l'Oye." (Tales of my Mother Goose). These are not rhymes. They are stories, eight in number. Of the eight, seven are still the well nigh universal heritage of children. The eight are: "Little Red Riding Hood," "Two Sisters who dropped from their Mouths Diamonds and Toads", "Bluebeard", "The Sleeping Beauty", "Puss in Boots", "Cinderella", "Tom Thumb", and "Riquet with the Tuft". The last named is the only one slighted by moderns.¹

Perrault seems to have originated neither the tales nor the titles. He merely gathered together a few of the folk tales as they had been told his son, probably by a nurse. The "Moralités", in which he undertakes to point the lessons, are his own, however, and are very quaint. They are written in verse, the only verse in the book. Of "Little Red Riding Hood" he says:

"The Wolf, I say, for Wolves too sure there are
Of every sort and every character,
Some of them mild and gentle humored be,
Of noise and gall and rancour wholly free.

¹ Cambridge History of English Literature, p.415
Bett's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p. 13
... With luring tongues and language wondrous sweet,
Follow young ladies as they walk the street,
E'en to their very houses, nay, beside
artful, though their true designs they hide;
Yet ah! these simpering Wolves, who does not see,
Most dang'rous of all Wolves in fact they be.¹

In these two instances in which Mother Goose is first mentioned, it will be observed that she is taken for granted rather than introduced or explained. As any other myth, she simply has been and is.

We first come across Mother Goose in England in connection with a famous puppet showman, Robert Powell, who set up his show in Bath and in Covent Garden, London, between 1709 and 1711. He had a repertory of his own composing, which included Whittington and his Cat, Children in the Wood, Mother Shipton and Mother Goose.²

There is found in a London paper of 1729 an advertisement of a translation of Perrault's stories, under the title: Tales of Pasted Times, translated by Mr. Samber, published by J. Pote. Her popularity in England has already begun.

Now in the days of Goldsmith, one John Newbury, a noted London publisher, seems to have developed a taste for the selling of patent medicines and the publishing of child literature. When publishing a charming story he would skilfully inject into it

1. Perrault's Histories or Tales of Past Times, p.11
2. Eckerstein's Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes, p.3
an advertisement of his patent medicine. But patent medicine notwithstanding, he was the man who earned the right to be called "the father of children's literature in England". It seems that the idea of collecting folk rhymes for children originated with him. The name "Mother Goose" was already dear to the children on account of her stories. It was shrewd business sense, then, to attach her name to the rhymes newly collected. So the book was printed not later than 1760 with the title: *Mother Goose's Melody*. The full title ran: *Mother Goose's Melody, or Sonnets for the Cradle. In two Parts. Part I contains the most celebrated Songs and Lullabies of the old British Nurses, calculated to amuse Children and to excite them to Sleep. Part II Those of that sweet Songster and Muse of Wit and Humor, Master William Shakespeare. Embellished with Cuts, and illustrated with Notes and Maxims, Historical, Philosophical, and Critical.*

It is not positively known who did the work of this volume for Mr. Newbery. There is a pleasant probability that it was Oliver Goldsmith. It is known that he did hack work for Mr. Newbery at about this time; that he was interested in children's literature; that he wrote *Goody Two Shoes* which Mr. Newbery published in 1765. Also the internal evidence seems to so exactly fit Goldsmith,

1. Field's Guide to Literature, p.159
Rowlinson's Introduction to Literature for Children, p.310
that most of the critics credit him definitely with this work.

If it is true that Goldsmith did the first collecting and editing of Mother Goose Rhymes, they were blessed with an exalted literary start. Certain it is that whoever collected them appreciated their literary value to the extent that he coupled them with the simplest of the fine old rhymes of Shakespeare. "Where the Bee Sucks", "You Spotted Snakes", and "When Daffodils begin to 'Pear", are samples of the latter.

It is the footnotes which point so strongly to Goldsmith as the author. They seem to be poking fun at the over scholarly method of the learned writing of men like Jonson. At the same time, their humor is just such as a child would like. One of the rhymes runs:

Little Betty Winckle, she had a pig,
A little pig, not very big.
When he was alive, he lived in clover,
But now he's dead, and that's all over.

This is the comment which follows:

A Dirge is a Song made for the Dead but whether this was made for Betty Winckle or her pig is uncertain; no Notice being taken of it by Camden, or any of the famous Antiquarians. Wall's System of Sense.

The rhyme of "The old woman who lived under a hill" is followed by this learned comment:

This is a self-evident Proposition which is the very essence of Truth. She lived under a hill, and if she is not gone, she lives there still. Nobody will presume to contradict this.

Croeus.
He quotes the lines of Little Tommy Tucker:

Little Tommy Tucker  
Sings for his supper;  
What shall he eat?  
White bread and butter.  
How shall he cut it  
Without e' er a wife?

His footnote after this reads:

To be married without a wife is a terrible thing;  
and to be married with a bad wife is something worse;  
however a good wife that sings well is one of the best musical instruments in the world. -- Puddendorf

No original copy of Newbery's Mother Goose can now be found, but it was reprinted in 1785, by Isaiah Thomas, Worcester, Massachusetts. The book abounds in illustrations as quaint as those found in the New England Primer. Mother Goose's Melody was exceedingly popular.

Near the same time there appeared in America The Famous Tommy Thumb's Little Story Book: containing his Life and Surprising Adventures. To which are added Tommy Thumb's Fables, with Morals, and at the end, pretty stories that may be sung or told. Adorned with many curious pictures. Printed and sold at the Printing Office in Marlborough St. 1771. It contained besides Tom Thumb, seven fables and nine nursery rhymes. Seven of these rhymes had been printed in the Newbery Mother Goose's Melody. Two were new to print: "Little Boy Blue", and "Who did Kill Cock Robin?"

This edition seems to have been a reprint from an earlier edition in England.  

It ought to be here stated that one eminent authority regards it as probably that this edition of *Tom Thumb* antedated even Newbery's edition, thus being the first collection of children's rhymes. So far, his view does not seem to be shared by other investigators, so far as the author of this was able to find. 2

In 1797 *Infant Institutes* appeared in London, containing a number of nursery rhymes not previously printed.

In 1810, Joseph Ritson, a scholar and antiquarian, printed a collection of rhymes intended as a rival of *Mother Goose*. There had been a popular comedy called "Gammer Gurton's Needle." Ritson, then, chose the name *Gammer Gurton's Garland*. In the collection were included nearly all of *Mother Goose's Melody*, plus a great many more rhymes collected by Ritson. From some cause, this edition was not long lived.

Mother Goose may not have lived in Boston, but it was a Boston firm which helped to establish her as "nursery laureate". Between 1824 and 1827 Munroe and Francis published a book called *Mother Goose's Quarto, or Melodies Complete*. Their successors were C. S. Francis & Co. This firm brought out, in 1833, *Mother Goose's Melodies, The only Pure Edition*. This contained all but three of the original rhymes of Newbery's edition, some from

1. Field's *A Guide to Literature for Children*, p.162
2. Cambridge *History of English Literature*, p.415
Gammer Gurton, with others printed for the first time. To a reprinted edition Edward Everett Hale wrote the introduction.

In 1842, James Orchard Halliwell, a British scholar, especially noted for his works on Shakespeare, published *Nursery Rhymes and Nursery Tales of England*. This is said to be the most complete collection of old nursery rhymes ever published. It is the one most useful to the student of folklore. Now a work can not be at the same time all inclusive and discriminating. There are published in this book some rhymes that are silly, a number that are coarse. It is not a book to be thumbed by children. Unfortunately, a number of the coarse jingles have been reprinted many times and have been the means of bringing Mother Goose into disrepute.

In 1884 Andrew Lang edited a most desirable collection. Within the last twenty-five years, possibly due to the growth of the kindergarten, with emphasis on literature for the very young, the editions of Mother Goose have been many and varied. Rand McNally with their *Real Mother Goose* give the same detailed care to the print and illustrations that they do to their maps. Kate Douglas Wiggin and Nora Archibald Smith have the wisdom of trained kindergartners in their selections. Olive Bouphe Miller in her *Book House*, Charles H. Sylvester in his *Journeys through Bookland* choose with an eye to the highest grade of literature. The artists have tried their skill too. Rackman's illustrations are strong in mystery; Miss Smith's are calm and soothing. Nor have we finished.
Every holiday season sees some new edition of Mother Goose for her friend, Santa, to distribute.

Now all this goes to show that Mother Goose herself is a myth; that stories were her first province; that folk tales and rhymes have abounded in our Mother Country and our own, ready to be collected; that just as no two people searching the woods for flowers ever come back with duplicate selections, so no two authors have collected exactly the same; that the rhymes have vitality enough to survive hundreds of editions. Truly this is folk lore, - not a finished production, but a growing organism, changing, but retaining astonishingly well its own identity.

When we begin to study it rhyme by rhyme, it lures us back and back, to see when first these jingles charmed mankind, what meaning they then conveyed, how this meaning has been softened and changed, what messages from the twilight of history are still carried to the hearts of children and those who love child lore.

To try to discover these meanings, we shall listen to Mother Goose as she speaks to primitive men in myth; as she sings verses of praise to historic personages, or lashes some tyrant with political lampoon. We shall listen to her count among highland shepherds; see her play games with children, and propound riddles to their elders. We shall go with her unafraid into the presence of royalty. All the magic she can give us will be needed to quicken our understanding.

This chapter has been simply a record of the efforts to confine her to print.
CHAPTER II

NATURE MYTHS AS A SOURCE OF MOTHER GOOSE

Before discussing the Rhymes of Mother Goose, perhaps it is just as well to consider one of the prose selections, especially as it illustrated so well the way that Mother Goose catches a primitive nature myth, and preserves it through the ages. "Little Red Riding Hood" is one of the tales Perrault told in the name of Mother Goose. Who would suppose that in as simple a child story as that, there lies concealed a strong indication of the common origin of the races of man, together with the thoughts that came to that common ancestor when he saw the sunrise and sunset?

It is a story of thrills. As children, we are so happy to see the bright red hood and cape of Little Red Riding Hood. We begin to feel shivery when she meets the wolf in the forest. We wish we could make her hurry so she could get to her grandmother's ahead of the wolf. Our feelings begin to be harrowed when the wolf eats the grandmother. From there on, we either like the story or not according to the way we respond to the gruesome. Many children are so terrorized when the wolf eats up Little Red Riding Hood, that the mothers change the story. They tell the children the hunter came and killed the wolf, thus preventing him from eating the little girl. That version has found its way into our books.
While we are dodging the tragedy one way, the Germans are making the story end right in quite another. In Rothkäppchen the wolf eats up the maiden, and goes to sleep. The hunter comes, rips up the sleeping wolf; the maiden emerges unharmed. This seems grotesque to us. That is because we are entirely unaware of its meaning.

Little Red Riding Hood is the sun of the evening, loitering along in the cloudy sunset. The grandmother is Earth, overcome by the wolf Darkness. After devouring the Earth, Darkness finally overcomes the Sun. The hunters are the powers of nature that rescue the sun from darkness. The dawn then comes in red glory of the morning. Sometimes the same myth is used to refer to the monster Winter, eating up Summer; then Summer is rescued again. ¹

That this tale dates back to a time when there was one common race is indicated by the fact that it has a place in the folk lore of the most widely separated races. The Letts have a myth in which the daughter of the sun hangs a red cloak on an oak tree. The Australians represent the sun as a woman with a red kangaroo skin. There is a Melanesian myth almost exactly the same as ours. Dawn is devoured by Night. The hero, Qat, takes the place of the hunters. He rips Night open with a red obsidian knife (representing the rays of the sun). Dawn comes forth unharmed even as Red Riding Hood does. ¹

¹. Bett's Nursery Rhymes and Tales pp.21 and 22
Once the explanation is given, many expressions attest its truth. The French speak of twilight as entre chien et loup. The dog is the animal for day, the wolf for night. The Norse people say that at the twilight of the gods, the wolf, Fenrir, will devour the sun. It would seem that at some prehistoric time, our common ancestors, conscious of the twilight, the darkness, and the dawn, had personified them so vividly that neither time nor diversity of place and language can erase the picture. We, with our literal minds, have told the story by rote, long after the original meaning has been forgotten.

That savage minds react today in the same way is evident to those who know them. Sekesa, an intelligent Kafir is reported by the traveler Abrousset to have said to him:

"For twelve years I have shepherded my flock. It was dark and I sat down upon a rock, and asked myself such questions as these, sad questions, since I was unable to answer them - Who made the stars? What supports them? Do the waters never grow weary of flowing from morning to evening, from evening to morning, and where do they rest? I can not see the wind, and know not what it is. Who guides and causes it to blow, to rage, and overwhelm us? Nor do I know how the corn grows. Yesterday there was not a blade of grass in my field, and today it is green. Who gave to the earth the wisdom and power to bring forth?"

After questioning, the next step naturally, is to invent an answer. Myths come into being. A race which has ceased the questions, forgets the meaning of the answers.

1. Bett's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, pp. 16 and 17
Jack and Jill went up the Hill
To fetch a pail of water;
Jack fell down and broke his crown!
And Jill came tumbling after.

This is another nature myth. There is no guess work about it at all. It is of Scandinavian origin. Mani is the Scandinavian man in the sky who guides the moon. One time he stole from the earth a boy and girl: Bil and Hjuki. They were returning from a spring, (Byrgir), carrying between them a bucket, (Saegyr) on a pole, (Simul), borne on their shoulders. The boy and girl were placed in the moon, where they ever carry their burden, spilling it at regular intervals. The water represents the tides. The word Hjuki means to increase; Bil, to dissolve, thus referring to the phases of the moon and their effect on tides. The peasants of Sweden, at the present time, point out to their children, not a man in the moon, but this boy and girl with a bucket of water on a pole between them. It is interesting to note that Halliwell, in his Introduction to Nursery Rhymes speaks of them as "popular remnants of the ancient Scandinavian nursery literature". He evidently regards Jack and Jill, a Norse myth, as representative.

The Haidas, an Indian tribe of North America, have a myth somewhat similar. They say Koong, the moon, once drew up a man with a bucket in one hand, in the other a bush pulled

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes, p.97
from the earth when he tried to hold on by it. When this man upsets the bucket, it rains. Will Mother Goose ever gather up this myth as she did the other?

One rhyme mystic enough to date back to the time of oracles is:

Lady bird, lady bird, fly away home;  
Thy house is on fire, thy children all gone,  
All but one and her name is Ann,  
And she crept under the pudding pan.

Halliwell gives the above version, and also the following common in Yorkshire:

Lady cow, lady cow, fly thy way home;  
Thy house is on fire, thy children all gone;  
All but one that lies under a stone,  
Fly thy way home, lady-cow, ere it be gone.

This same insect may be designated by a number of names: lady bird, ladybug, lady clock, lady fly, and lady beetle. Speaking of it as an actual insect, it is of immense benefit to farmers, living as it does, on insect pests. That would be enough to give one a friendly feeling to "lady bird", but not enough to account for the mystic quality of the lines.

When we realize that "lady bird", means the same as "bird of our Lady", our curiosity is aroused as to some religious significance. This is all the more true, since beetles were of importance in the religions of Egypt. Ingraham gives a picture of Egypt at the time of the plagues, which were sent to force Pharaoh to release the Israelites. He.
represents the Pharaoh as offering sacrifices at the temple of the scarabæus, or sacred beetle of Egypt.

This is a marble edifice, adorned with a frieze of scarabæi, having heads of every variety of animal. The god himself is a gigantic beetle of black marble, with a human head. He is supposed to protect the temple from vermin such as lice and fleas; for one of these seen in a temple or upon the garment of a priest, causes ceremonial defilement, and neither priest nor temple may be made holy again but by purification.

Can it be that our lady bird - "bird of our lady" - dates back these ages to the religion of Egypt? Eckenstein reminds us in this connection that these insects have been connected with the movements of the sun, from time immemorial. It is pointed out that in Egypt a certain beetle, the chafer, had the habit of rolling an egg which contained its eggs. This ball was identified with the orb of the sun, and the power which kept it moving, was regarded as most beneficent.

There is a myth in India, or this insect flying too close to the sun, singeing its wings, and falling to earth. This seems a little akin to the Greek myth of Ikarus. In Saxony, they say:

Heaven's little chicken, fly away;
Thy house is on fire, thy children are crying.

To Mannhard we are indebted for the interpretation that the ladybird rhyme is a charm, meant to help the sun over the

1. Ingraham's Pillar of Fire, p.335
danger of sunset. The house on fire is the red glow in the west. There is needed a charm to insure that the sun will come back tomorrow. In support of this view, he cites that the people of the East pray at eventide for the safe return of the sun.

The Germans speak of the Marienkäfer (beetle of Virgin Mary). The Swedes address the lady cow as "Jungfrau Maria's Nickelpiga" (Lady Mary's Keybearer). The story is that the Virgin Mary lost the keys of heaven, and that all the animals helped search for them. The lady bird found them and was rewarded by being made the keeper of the keys. What would the keys of heaven be? Perhaps lightning, for doesn't lightning open the floodgates of the sky? It was the goddesses, rather than the gods, who controlled the weather.

In certain parts of Prussia, they sing:

Insect of Mary, fly away, fly away to Engelland. Engelland is locked; its key is broken.

Engelland is the home of unborn spirits. If Tennyson could know what God and man is, from the flower in the crannied wall, it is not too much to say that we could know much of the feeling of earthborn folk toward the sky, if we could but understand fully, in the different tongues, this beetle rhyme.

As nearly as we can interpret it, it means that danger threatens from the sunset. We are always afraid that life is closing and will not dawn again. We appeal to the lady bird, a vaguely religious symbol, to help; to look at the western sky
and come to the rescue. Anne is always safe. Perhaps she is a female divinity spinning, as female divinities often do. Any way there is a suggestion of comfort in the thought of Anne. We need not then feel so superior to the Egyptians with their every present jewelled scarabs, as long as we say: "Lady bird, lady bird, fly away home." Children are most democratic. Their rhymes unite all races.

Another nature rhyme of seeming great antiquity, is the one beginning:

"Who killed cock robin?"
"I," said the sparrow.
"With my bow and arrow
I laid him low."

It does not take us to the sky, but it does date to the talking of animals. Inside a temple of King Sety in Upper Egypt, in a little chapel is a peculiar scene sculptured, as reported by Miss Eckelstein.¹ There is a dead figure of a bird on a bier. He is surrounded by a solemn and stately group of hawks, evidently mourning. It all has much the appearance of an illustration of Cock Robin's story. That was the fourteenth century B.C.

We can not trace our own rhyme back farther than the middle of the eighteenth century. But the tracing of these rhymes is a comparatively new undertaking. Perhaps one of these times an Egyptian scholar will find a legend which will explain the Egyptian

picture. Then we shall know whether the centuries have carried the tragic tale of Cock Robin through many languages. It would look now as if an Egyptian Hawk had started out the fourteenth century B.C. coming down through the ages, and that somewhere on the road he had metamorphosed into an English robin.

Among the conceptions of nature preserved to us by Mother Goose, the one of Jack and the Beanstalk should perhaps be mentioned. The idea of a plant reaching into the sky so that one can climb up and down on it is a child conception. The writer remembers hearing a small boy say of some big trees: "Those trees can't grow any higher. They're up in the sky now where God is." This child conception is paralleled not so much in European myths as in those of savage lands, so we are told. Bett tells us that the Maoris have a story of Tawhaki's climbing up a creeper into heaven. His walking around makes thunder. The Kasia of Bengal say that the stars were once men who climbed up a great tree, whereupon others cut the trunk and left them up in the branches. A Wyandot tale has it that a dwarf hero, Chakabech, climbed a tree; blew upon it causing it to grow and grow until he, still clinging to it, reached the sky. He explored the land of paradise, went down to earth, brought up his sister, and then broke off the tree so it could not be used. It seems Jack always destroys the beanstalk! ¹

¹. Bett's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, pp. 23 and 24.
Perhaps these are sufficient to show that one office of Mother Goose is to preserve for us the mythical interpretations of nature made by primitive man. "Little Red Riding Hood", "Jack and Jill", "LadyBird, LadyBird", "Cock Robin", "Jack and the Beanstalk", help to restore to us what Lowell is pleased to call "the old days of awe and keen-eyed wonder." ¹

¹ First line in Lowell's "Ode".
CHAPTER III

THE LIFE OF PRIMITIVE MAN IN MOTHER GOOSE

Pee Fi Fo Fum!
I smell the blood of an Englishman
Be he alive, or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread!

I had a little husband
No bigger than my thumb;
I put him in a pint pot,
And there I bid him drum.
I bought a little horse,
That galloped up and down,
I bridled him and saddled him
And sent him out of town.
I gave him some garters,
To garter up his hose
And a little hankerchief
To wipe his pretty nose.

The above Mother Goose jingles have no connection except in this. They each raise the question of abnormal size in man. Back in prehistoric times, were there giants, bearing the relation to common men, that mammoths do to elephants? Were there wee dwarfs, which have given place to larger, stronger men? We are told that every race has its myths of giants. We have all of us read of Goliath, and of other giants of Palestine, in Holy Writ.

J.F. Campbell spent so many years investigating the least known races, that his judgment is perhaps as good an authority as we can find.

1. Wheeler's Mother Goose Melodies, pp. 51 and 52
In *Tales of the Western Highlands*, he says: "It seems to me giants are simply the nearest savage race at war with the race who tell the tales." We are pretty much cowards, after all. Fear exaggerates the size of our enemies.

Besides, the enemy is often an unknown quantity. Mystery leads to fantastic picturing. If we are conquered, we like to think it was by somebody with marvelous strength, or he could not have done it. If we conquer, there is much more glory in it if the enemy is gigantic. In most of the folk tales, the giant is wicked, is overcome by a hero of superior brains. His great riches are taken and used. It is a case of Brer Rabbit outwitting Brer Fox every time. Perhaps it is true that the Gaelic, negro, and other races who have had to undergo servitude, tell the greatest number of tales of hair raising encounters in which they come off victors. They build air castles and express in their tales of adventure what they would like. Undoubtedly the reason children like "Fee Fi Fo Fum", is that it gives them the feeling of partaking in fiercely exciting events.

Campbell stated:

The Gaelic giants are very like those of the Norse tales, but they are much nearer real men than the giants of Germany and Scandinavia, and Greece and Rome, who are almost if not quite equal to gods. Their world is generally, if not always, underground; it has castles and parks and pastures and all that is to be found above the earth.

1. Campbell's *Tales of the West Highlands*, p Xciv
After saying that giants occasionally do some feats quite beyond the power of man, he naively adds: "So the giants may be degraded gods, after all."

From his most detailed investigation of the highlands of Scotland, he comes to the conclusion that there was once on the British Isles a race of very small people now remembered as fairies. He considers that at the time of his writing, the Lapps could easily be imagined as a race of dwarfs or fairies. They are little; they live in low, rounded, grasscovered mounds, which one might even walk over without suspecting their use. The little men pop up from openings in these mounds most unexpectedly, then disappear again so quickly that the whole performance might easily be thought magical.

All this seems to point to the notion that these giant and dwarf conceptions date back to the time of savage fear and fancy. Just in line with this view, Wheeler places the jingle: "I had a little husband etc." as probably celebrating the history of Tom Thumb. Now the original Tom Thumb seems to have been a half mythical Scandinavian dwarf-hero. Then later he seems to appear again in King Arthur's Court, where he was quite a brave knight. I suppose it doesn't bother a mythical being to change nationalities and time. At any rate, he was buried in a cathedral in Lincoln. Haven't they pointed out his tomb, just as they have the Round Table of King Arthur? It would give this little rhyme
great dignity to invest its hero with the glory of knighthood at a time when knights were setting the world to rights.

"Fee Fi Fo Fum", aside from referring to a giant, has gruesome associations. Mr. Campbell, the same authority quoted above, says that giants in Cornwall said: "Fee Fi Fo Fum" in Argyll they said: "Fiaw Fiaw, Fooghrich!" These may be corruptions of burly savage talk. They sound like words designed to strike terror to the heart. Mr. Campbell actually associates these words with the days of real cannibalism. Mr. Bett also gives this as "a reminder of the time when primitive men were cannibals." For two authorities, as good as these, to date this back to cannibalism, is enough to make us wonder just what we are commemorating when we teach our children these words. Beasts and savages smell out victims. Civilized men spy them out.

If some of our fore parents had a somewhat indelicate taste for meat, they must have shared this appetite with the most of their savage friends. A formula very similar to this exists in many languages. In German, the giant says:

"Ich reiche Menschenfleisch!"

In India, the Jinn says: "I smell the blood of a man!"

when a Gaelic giant comes from hunting, he says:

"E! Ho! Hoogrich! I feel the smell of a traitor tonight!" An African witch doctor smells out a victim. 1

1. Bett's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p. 115
King Lear, in a gruesome passage gives the lines:

Childe Howland to the dark tower came;
His word was still Fie, Foh, and Fum,
I smell the blood of a Britishman.

Our foreparents may not have been so bad. At every cannibalistic feast, there are two sets of people. One set quite actively partake of the repast; the other set passively furnish it. They may have been in the latter number. Or in intense fear, they may have put these words into the mouths of their enemies, in imagination. Only it seems so well established that some of the early inhabitants of the British Isles did eat too many kinds of meat! Mother Goose seems bent on relieving us of any false pride in ancestry.

London Bridge has fallen down, fallen down, fallen down,
London Bridge has fallen down, My fair Lady!
How shall we build it up again, up again, up again,
How shall we build it up again, up again, up again,
How shall we build it up again? My fair Lady!
Build it up with lime and stone...
Stone and lime would wash away...
Build it up with iron bars...
Iron bars would bend and break...
Get a watch to watch all night...
Suppose the watch should fall asleep?...
Get a dog to bark all night...
Suppose the dog should get a bone?...
Get a cock to crow all night...
Suppose the cock should fly away?
What has this poor prisoner done?
Off to prison she must go.
My fair Lady!

In the above game, what is the connection between What has this poor prisoner done and that which precedes it? Why the sudden

1. King Lear, Act III, Scene 4, Line 187
transition from a broken bridge to a prisoner?

The Germans have a very similar game, which ends with the same abrupt change. It begins: "I want to go over Magdeburg Bridge." After telling that it is broken down, it goes through a similar list of ways to build it up again, and the closes:

Kriecht alle durch. Kriecht alle durch.
Den letzen wollen wir fangen.
(All creep through. All creep through We'll seize the last.)

In each game, the children are catching somebody, following failure to build up a broken bridge. In the English: "What has this poor prisoner done?" there seems to be a certain degree of pity for the one caught. It's well enough that even in play the prisoner caught at such a time should be pitied. This harks back to primitive times. Building a bridge was most difficult. It was so hard to obtain a firm foundation. The river was so apt to wash away the whole structure. That was because the spirits of the water and earth had been offended.

How, then, was one to build a bridge unless the spirits of the elements were appeased? The ghastly practice of sacrificing human victims to pacify these divinities seems to have been very widespread among primitive people. Bett asserts that that custom has been occasionally followed even in historic times. He gives a long list of examples of early races forced into this by superstition. Following are a few of the instances: The gates of Mandalay were set up on human victims; the temple in Polynesia
on the body of a man. Some English sailors actually saw men buried alive with the posts of the house of a Fiji chieftain. In Serbia a fortress was being built by three brothers. Every night a demon destroyed the day's work, until at last they buried alive the wife of the youngest son. She it was who had brought the food to the workmen, and was well beloved. At her request a hole was left that she might suckle a baby until death claimed her. A milky stream from the hole is still pointed out. In Cappadocia, just before a sister is buried, she is represented as saying:

Three sisters only once were we, we were three sisters only
The one did build the Danube's bridge, the second the Euphrates;
And I, I too, the murdered one, the bridge build of Adana.

J.G. Frazer, in his *Folklore of the Old Testament* believes there is a kindred meaning in the words relative to rebuilding Jericho:

In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho; he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram, his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub.

The tragedy of construction has been preserved for us by Mother Goose, in a game played by lighthearted children.

A gracious relief in our prehistoric thinking, is furnished by the lullabies, undated, unproved, but believed to be of great antiquity.

1. Kings XVI: 34
Hush-a-bye baby, on the tree top,
When the wind blows the cradle will rock;
When the bough bends the cradle will fall;
Down will fall baby bough cradle and all.

Bye, baby bunting,
Daddy's gone a-hunting;
To get a little rabbit skin
To wrap his baby bunting in.

Each of these seems to point to pastoral life. Hunting brought clothing, then, as well as food.

Mother Goose conserves enough from the days of primitive man for us to see that life was a medley, even in the time of its simplicity. There were fierce fighting, and eating of enemies; pitiful sacrificing of human beings; with tender lullabies to babies. Great epics preserve only the heroic; but simple folk lore gathers up all threads woven into human life. To this service of Mother Goose the children respond. Through her they experience primitive life, in variety.
CHAPTER IV

CUMULATIVE VERSE AS A SOURCE OF MOTHER GOOSE

1. This is the house that Jack built.
2. This is the malt
   That lay in the house that
   Jack built.
3. This is the rat,
   That ate the malt
   That lay in the house that
   Jack built.
4. This is the cat,
   That kill'd the rat,
   That ate the malt
   That lay in the house that
   Jack built.
5. ...6 This is the cow with the crumpled horn,
   That toss'd the dog,
   That worried the cat
   That kill'd the rat,
   That ate the malt
   That lay in the house that
   Jack built.

11. This is the farmer sowing his corn,
    That kept the cock that crow'd in the morn,
    That waked the priest all shaven and shorn,
    That married the man all tatter'd and torn,
    That kissed the maiden all forlorn,
    That milked the cow with the crumpled horn,
    That toss'd the dog,
    That worried the cat,
    That kill'd the rat,
    That ate the malt
    That lay in the house that
    Jack built.

Down in Somersetshire, within walking distance of Mills Station, which in turn is a short railway journey from Bath,

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, pp.111 and 112
there lies the pleasant Manor of the Horner family. These wide fields with their hawthorne hedges have descended from the estate of Little Jack Horner, who in the reign of Henry VIII, "Sat in a corner, Eating his Christmas pie." But that is another story to be considered later. That part, which concerns us here, is not the plum which Jack extracted, but the "House that Jack Built."

Consider that Jack was a man of enough importance to be forever after celebrated in "Little Jack Horner"; that he had as a new possession a great estate, with acres and acres of pasturage, encircled by woods and low hills; that he had plenty of money to build as he chose; that there was a lovely wife for whom to build. Then you may imagine how Jack built a great house, in the form of a letter H. It was the glory of the countryside. In one wing was a vast low-ceilinged kitchen, which served also as a malt house.

That one wing still remains, and serves as the residence of the Misses Horner. Nor could women of their quiet dignity wish a home more fitting. It is near a road, but its gray lichen covered stone walls are centuries removed from traffic. At its rear is an old English garden with a riot of bloom. The sisters will relate to one fortunate enough to be their guest, how that is the very place where the "malt lay"; that the "men all tattered and torn," and "the priest all shaven and shorn" were one and the same
person. He was a certain Bishop Still, a man of too much dignity to have been "tattered and torn" except figuratively. Perhaps he had some of a lover's distress before beautiful Joan Horner, a maiden who was certainly not "forlorn," became his wife.¹

It is a beautiful romance and seems as much in place in its setting as does the lichen or ivy or any of the bright blossoms in the old garden. But still we wonder if the House that Jack Built isn't even more ancient than the walls of gray from the sixteenth century quarry. We would not question any claims made by the dignified residents in the centuries old manor house. But it is hard, at this distance, for them or any one else to distinguish between an original rhyme and an old folk rhyme given new and definite application. If these words were new at that time, they were written after the manner of very much older rhymes. Walter Taylor Field regards that this rhyme has the same origin as the old one beginning "A kid, a kid .." ² If so, we are doubly interested in that bit of old verse.

We are no longer in the wood encircled fields of Somersetshire. We are in a Jewish synagogue. The place matters not. The service is the same everywhere. It is at the send of the Seder service in the Passover Liturgy. They are singing to a rude chant a peculiar, fascinating tale in verse. The translation follows in full:

1. Katherine Elwes Thomas' Real Personages of Mother Goose, pp.62 & 63
2. Field's Guide Book to Literature for Children, p.185
A kid, a kid, my father bought
For two pieces of money:
    A kid, a kid.

2. Then came the cat, and ate the kid,
    That my father bought
For two pieces of money:
    A kid, a kid.

3. Then came the dog, and bit the cat,
    That ate the kid,
That my father bought for two pieces of money:
    A kid, a kid.

4. Then came the staff, and beat the dog,
    That bit the cat,
    That ate the kid,
    That my father bought
For two pieces of money:
    A kid, a kid.

5. Then came the fire, and burned the staff,
    That beat the dog,
    That bit the cat,
    That ate the kid,
    That my father bought
For two pieces of money:
    A kid, a kid.

6. Then came the water, and quenched the fire,
    That burned the staff,
    That beat the dog,
    That bit the cat,
    That ate the kid,
    That my father bought for
For two pieces of money:
    A kid, a kid.

7. Then came the ox, and drank the water,
    That quenched the fire,
    That burned the staff,
    That beat the dog,
    That bit the cat,
    That ate the kid,
    That my father bought
For two pieces of money:
    A kid, a kid.

8. Then came the butcher, and slew the ox,
    That drank the water,
    That quenched the fire,
    That burned the staff,
    That beat the dog,
That bit the cat,
That ate the kid,
That my father bought
For two pieces of money:
A kid, a kid.

9. Then came the angel of death, and killed the butcher,
That slew the ox,
That drank the water,
That quenched the fire,
That burned the staff,
That beat the dog,
That bit the cat,
That ate the kid,
That my father bought
For two pieces of money:
A kid, a kid.

10. Then came the Holy One, blessed be He!
And killed the angel of death,
That killed the butcher,
That slew the ox,
That drank the water,
That quenched the fire,
That burned the staff,
That beat the dog,
That bit the cat,
That ate the kid,
That my father bought
For two pieces of money:
A kid, a kid.

This was called the Haggadah, and the interpretation follows:
The kid, a pure animal, denotes the Hebrews. The father is
Jehovah. Moses and Aaron are the two pieces of silver, by means
of which Jehovah purchased the kid. The cat denotes Assyria by
whose king the "ten tribes" were carried into captivity, and so
completely mixed with other nations that they were "lost". The
dog symbolizes the Babylonians, by whom the remnant of Israel

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.113
was taken captive for a season. The staff meant the Persians, who overcame the Babylonians, allowing the Hebrews to return home. The fire indicated the all conquering Grecian empire under Alexander the Great. The water, which quenched the fire refers to the Romans who conquered the Greeks, including the province of Palestine. It will be noticed that the two great nations, the Greeks and Romans, are represented by the two great elements, fire and water. The ox represents the Saracens; the butcher, the Crusaders, by whom Palestine was rescued for a little while. Then came the angel of death, or Turks. The last represents the Messiah to come who is to take vengeance on the Turks, and restore the Holy Land to the Jews. 1

It would be rather difficult for us to interpret this without help, for as Christians, our interest in the Jews culminates in the coming of Christ, whereas this passes over His coming, proceeds with the history of the Jews after that, and seeks a climax in the Messiah yet to come.

This Haggadah seems to have been first printed in 1590. But it is from the Aramaic, or Chaldaean. So the date of its beginning is entirely unknown. It may have been composed in its entirety after the Crusades, or it may have been started centuries before, and had stanzas added, as was the case with some of the Psalms.

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.114
   Field's Guide Book to Literature for Children, p.167
   Bett's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.86
At any rate, it seems to be the first of the cumulative verse to find its way into print. The fact that it is Jewish means that it has been disseminated widely in many different languages. It, therefore, is the basis of much of this kind of verse. It might seem strange, at first, to think of rhymes so heavily loaded with serious thought, in the nursery. But this is typical folklore: a rhyme easily said, enough repetition to be a challenge to the ability to keep it straight, an apparent absence of meaning of the deeper sort; something underneath for the student.

Henry Bett has collected a list of cumulative verse in various languages, which reveals an amazing similarity. There is a Hotten toto version in which a cat bites a mouse, a dog worries the cat, a stick beats the dog, fire burns the stick, water quenches the fire, an elephant drinks the water, and an ant bites the elephant.

From Algeria comes a delightful variation:

"Come, little one, eat thy dinner." The child refuses, and we encounter the usual series of refusals from the fire, the water, the ox, the knife, the blacksmith, the rope, the rat. Then, "Come, cat, and eat the rat," "Bring the rat", says the cat, "and I will eat him." "Why should I be eaten?" says the rat. "Bring the rope, and I will gnaw it." "Why should I be gnawed," says the rope. "Bring the blacksmith and I will hang him." Why should I be hanged?" says the blacksmith. "Bring the knife and I will break it." "Why should I be broken?" says the knife. "Bring the ox and I will kill him." Why should I be killed?" says the ox. "Bring the water and I will drink it up." "Why should I be drunk up?" says the water. "Bring the fire and I will quench it." "Why should I be quenched?" says the fire. "Bring the stick and I will burn it." "Why should I be quenched?"

1. Bett's *Nursery Rhymes and Tales*, p.86
burned?" says the stick. "Bring me the child and I will beat him." "Why should I be beaten?" says the little one. "Bring my dinner, and I will eat it!"

It is not so certain that this Kabyle version does not excel many of our own. The hesitancy seems to have some reason behind it. Scotland has a story of an old woman and her kid. It varies a little from our usual Mother Goose in this: there is a distinct moral note introduced. The old woman in a wee wee house found two pennies and bought a kid. On the way home with it, she saw a bush from which she wished to pick berries. She could not. She went to seek help of dog, stick, fire, water, ox, axe, smith, rope, mouse, cat, milk. Each object or animal refused to do the next one harm saying it never did any harm itself. Finally the can not resist lapping milk and the spell is broken.

We might give the version from Zanzibar, one from Germany, one from France, one from Sweden, one from the Punjab, in India, one from Modern Greek. But perhaps enough examples have been given to show certain fundamental truths:

First, Nations differing widely in location and civilization, are closely akin in some of their thinking.

Second, The folk rhymes, common to so much of mankind contain a suggestion of charms, or witchcraft. A spell which must be broken is repeatedly set forth.

Third, There is a universal fascination about a rhyme which tests memory and concentration. Even children like to think.

1. Bett's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, pp. 90 and 91
2. Eckenstein's Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes, p.129
Fourth, This folklore contains distinct reasoning from cause to effect. This cumulative verse is one of our most primitive expressions of reasoning.

If, as Bett suggests, we look up Herbert Spencer and compare the two, we do find a similarity. Note the following from Spencer:

If we ask, Whence comes the power of the river current, bearing sediment down to the sea? the reply is, - The gravitation of water throughout the tract which the river drains. If we ask, - How came the water to be dispersed over the tract? the reply is, - It fell in the shape of rain. If we ask, - How came the rain to be in that position whence it fell, - The vapour from which it was condensed was drifted there by the winds. If we ask, - How came this vapour to be at that height? the reply is, - It was raised by evaporation. And if we ask, - What force thus raised it? the reply is, - The sun's heat.

Mother Goose then, seems at one time to conserve a bit of Jewish religion, of witchcraft, or primitive man's exercise in memory, and in reasoning. When she adds to all this the smell of the English landscape, we have "This is the House that Jack Built."

1. Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy  First Principles, p.189
CHAPTER V
COUNTING AND GAMES AS A SOURCE OF MOTHER GOOSE

One, two, three,
I love coffee,
And Billy loves tea.
How good you be,
One two three,
I love coffee
And Billy loves tea. 1

Evidently this is to teach a person to count, who does not even know how to count three. It has a very English flavor. Where else could coffee and tea be so incessantly used, that one who can not count even three, would be familiar with both of them? We immediately picture some English teacher, or mother originating this rhyme for the first education in numbers of her child. It may have been so. Delving into the origin of folklore has, for the most part, the lure of uncertainty. But this much is known.

The premise on which we are basing our conclusion that this was written for a small child is entirely false. We are supposing that any grown person anywhere, normal in intelligence, would know how to count three. How untrue this is will be shown presently. It should be added here that the notion that it may have an "English flavor" may also be untrue. Tea has been used by the Chinese so many centuries, that it is supposed by them to be indigenous in China. It was the sixteenth century before it was introduced into

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.7
into England. Coffee is a native of Arabia. Many a camel has carried coffee through the desert. Our figures came through Arabia from India. Our sense of number seems much of it to have come from Chaldaea and Arabia. So this simple little folk lore stanza makes us wonder whether it has associated with pagodas, camels, and the spices of Araby.

It opens up the whole question of how soon primitive man learned to count. To find that out, it has been necessary to investigate the sense of number in tribe after tribe of savages.

Many savage tribes have scarcely any sense of number. The numerals of thirty Australian languages have been carefully tabulated, and in no instance do they go beyond four. The Guaranis of Paraguay had the most copious language of all the tribes in that country, but they could only count up to four. The Bushmen could not count beyond two. The Botocudos had a word for "one", but everything beyond was "many". The Dammaras used no term beyond three. The Andamanese islanders have names only for one and two, although able to count on the fingers up to ten, and otherwise exhibiting a considerable degree of intelligence. The Tapiro Pygmies apparently have numbers up to ten, but "the plainsmen from the foothills to the sea have words to denote the first and second numerals only, any addition to that number being shown by the fingers of the hand, and, if these are insufficient, by including the toes."

It would seem, then, that it takes a long time for primitive man to reach the point of numbering his own fingers. The Greeks evidently thought they had arrived at a new milestone when they learned to count on their fingers, for the Greek word "count" originally meant "count on five fingers". It is very evident

1. Bett's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, pp.45,46
that the Romans used their fingers, in counting, for their numerals preserve a record of it:

I is simply a finger, afterwards conventionalized to I
II, two fingers;
III, Three fingers;
III, Four fingers;
\(\sqrt[3]{\text{the hand, represented by the thumb and little finger. This had been conventionalised to } V}\)
VI, is one hand plus a finger.
VII, VIII are a hand plus two, three fingers
X, it will be observed, is simply two hands, put together at the wrist.

Five and ten are the natural places for primitive man to pause in counting. Every child repeats this process. We wonder if we had had six fingers on each hand, if we would not have had a decimal system going by twelves! Our Nursery rhymes show this pause in counting. Observe the following:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5!
I caught a hare alive;
6, 7, 8, 9, 10!
I let her go again.

A rhyme very similar to the above expanded:

One, two, three, four, five,
I caught a fish alive;
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten,
I let him go again.
Why did you let him go?
Because he bit my finger so;
Which finger did he bite?
The little finger on the right.

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes And Tales, p. 7
2. Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes edited by L. Edna Walter
The following rhyme pauses on the five, but considers it in relation to the larger numbers:

One's none;
Two's some;
Three's a many;
Four's a penny;
Five is a little hundred. 1

The following is simply a drill on the numbers. It stops at the first multiple of ten. It is the number of fingers and toes. But this rhyme evidently does not date back past the time of buckled shoes. There must have been fine gentlemen then. They used plates in eating.

ONE, two,
Buckle my shoe;
Three, four,
Shut the door;
Five, six,
Pick up sticks;
Seven, eight,
Lay them straight;
Nine, ten,
A good fat hen;
Eleven, twelve,
Who will delve?
Thirteen, fourteen,
Maids a-courting;
Fifteen, sixteen,
Maids a-kissing;
Seventeen, eighteen,
Maids a-waiting;
Nineteen, twenty,
My plate's empty. 2

On account of the crudity of the rhymes one would expect this to have originated before the time of Elizabeth. There was a time

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.7
2. Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, edited by L. Edna Walter, p.52
when there was little distinction between the closing sounds of such words as "twenty" and "empty".

Another rhyme is simply a drill in counting. It, too, counts just twenty, the number of fingers and toes:

Twenty, nineteen, eighteen,
Seventeen, sixteen, fifteen,
Fourteen, thirteen, twelve,
Eleven, ten, nine
Eight, seven, six,
Five, four, three,
Two, one.
The tenor of the tune plays merrily.

Naturally, if one is counting just ten, the last two numbers need a little drill. So we have this one, evidently intended for children, as it presupposes a hoop:

Number number nine, this hoop's mine;
Number number ten, take it back again.

The following, while talking of Laziness and Wickedness, has a thought in it of odd numbers, too.

Nature requires five,
Custom gives seven;
Laziness takes nine,
And Wickedness eleven.

The Roman numerals have made themselves enough at home in the English nursery to have a rhyme of their own:

1. Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, edited by L. Edna Walter, p.185
2. Ibid., p.185
3. Ibid., p.107
When V and I together meet,
They make the number VI complete.
When I and V dothe meet once more,
Then 'tis they two can make but four.
And when that V from I is gone,
Alas! poor I can make but one.

There is another set of Mother Goose number rhymes which we may never recognize as such. They are most interesting in that they have their roots in the soil of long ago. Their numbers date back to the time when neither Romans nor Angles nor Saxons had come to the shores of Britain. While the Greeks were learning to "count on five fingers", certainly while the Romans were perfecting their finger-numerals, there lived in Scotland, and in certain parts of England especially the north and east, shepherds with many sheep. If a shepherd keeps count of his sheep, he is obliged to use numbers. Out of the necessity of the case, these shepherds began counting in their rude language. They did not have enough communication with each other to adopt the same names for the numbers, so that we have a great variety of these "shepherd scores", as they are called. Here are a few of these, as nearly as we can find:

1. *Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes* edited by L. Edna Walter, p.116
Lincolnshire   Essex   Yorkshire   Durham   Scotland
1 yan          in       yain       yan       ains
2 tan          tin      tain       tyan      peina
3 tether       tether   eddero     tether    para
4 pethera      fethera  peddero    mether    peppera
5 pimpl        fimp     pits       pip       pen
6 settethra    lethera  tater      teezar    haze
7 lethera      methera  later      hewzer    mase
8 hovers       co       overo     corner     nuase
9 covera       debem    covero     casher    nottical
10 dik         dic      disc       dik       hen
11 yan-a-dik   dic
12 tan-a-dik   dic
13 tether-a-dik dic
14 pethera-a-dik dic
15 bunsit      dic
16 yan-a-bumfit dic
17 tan-a-bumfit dic
18 tether-a-bumfit dic
19 pether-a-bumfit dic
20 figgit

The first five numerals in Welsh are: Un, dau, tri, pedwar, pump.
The shepherd's score near Yarmouth was: Ina, mina, tethera, methera, pethere, dithera, lithra, sothra, bothra, dic.

Down in the south of England, the Cornish fishermen counted their mackerel as carefully as any shepherd could his sheep.

Now when the Romans, and later the Angles, Jutes and Saxons came, these shepherds and fishermen were conquered to be sure. But they did not vanish from the earth. They kept their sheep as before. They counted them, moreover, as before. They were the very last people to feel the effects of the new languages. They taught their children the old counting. In Wales, the people never were entirely conquered. The old counting became a part of their

1. Compiled from Bett's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, pp. 60, 61
language. As far down as in the last century, the Cornish fishermen have been heard to count in the old Cornish way. Children do not change the wording of their games, at least not intentionally. In the games of children, this old counting came to be very much corrupted by not being in print and being clearly understood. But it is still recognizable. The counting out rhymes, especially, preserve this old language. "Beanie, meenie, mino, mo" sounds so much more interesting than "One, two, three, four." Mother Goose, after her fashion of gathering up what the children and common folk like, has taken up these counting out rhymes and has given them immortality.

Intery, minery, cutery, corn,
Apple seed and apple thorn;
Wire, brier, limberlock,
Five geese in a flock,
Sit and sing by a spring,
O-U-T and in again.

The custom of adding ery or tery must be accorded to children and home folk, just as ie is added to dear, or to Will, or just as we change any other word to fit a child jingle. The following counting-out rhyme shows just how this is done because the same liberty is taken with our own numerals:

Onery, twoery,
Zicery zan,
Hollow bone, crack-a-bone,
Minery ten,
Spit, Spot,
It must be done,
Twiddlum, Twaddlum,
Twenty-one.

1. The Real Mother Goose, Rand McNally. (not paged)
Hinx, minx, the witch winks,
The fat begins to fry,
Nobody at home but jumping Joan,
Father, mother, and I.

Stick, stock, a stone dead,
Blind man can't see,
Every knave will have a slave,
You or I must be he. 1

I suppose if we were as familiar with the counting scores of the shepherds as we are with our own numbers, we would have no more trouble in recognizing them than we do in seeing one and two in onery, twoery. There have, however, been many centuries of unprinted counting in which to corrupt the words. A rhyme similar to the above is found in Swedish, so let no one think it is a chance jumble of words. Following is a similar counting out rhyme which mixes our numbers with the old "hickary":

One-ery, two-ery, hickary, hum,
Follison, follison, Nicholas, John,
Quiver, quaver, Irish Mary, 2
Stenkarum, stankerum, buck!

We have been concerned in these pages about the antecedents of these rhymes. Sometimes we wonder if college yells are not the descendants. If so, these poor rhymes have a great responsibility.

Among these counting rhymes is our old friend:

Hickory, dickory, dock
The mouse ran up the clock,
The clock struck one
Then down he run
Hickory, dickory, dock.

1. Walter's Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, p.23
2. Wheeler's Mother Goose Melodies, p.94
The three words with which this begins and ends are eight, nine and ten in the old shepherd score. The same numerals occur in the following:

Hickory, dickory, 6 and 7,
Alabone, Crackabone, 10 and 11;
Spin, span, muskidan;
Twiddle'um, twaddle'um, 21. 1

Some of the counting-out rhymes, have only more more modern figure:

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven,
All good children go to heaven.
Penny on the water,
Twopence on the sea,
Threepence on the railway,
Out goes she. 2

Two, four, six, eight,
Mary at the cottage gate,
Eating cherries off a plate,
Two, four, six, eight:
Q-U-T- spells out goes she.

Here is the rhyme which is perhaps used more than any other. It is the starters' rhyme:

One to make ready,
And two to prepare;
Good luck to the rider,
And away goes the mare.

One for the money,
And Two for the show,
Three to make ready and
Four to go.

If we could only see the number of people who have started their races with the last four lines of the above, we would have some idea of the size of Mother Goose's family. She has many

1. Wheeler's Mother Goose's Melodies, p.44
2. Walther's Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, p.187
games for her children to play. We have mentioned only the rhymes she uses for counting out to tell which one is "it", and the starting rhyme.

Not the least service which Mother Goose renders mankind is to preserve the most loved games, so that the joy of one generation passes to the next. Folk lore is the most intimate of all writings. Mother Goose records the very first little games that mothers play with the little fingers or the chubby toes of the babies. Those will be considered in another chapter. Then come a whole host of children's games. "Poor Soldier" is a forfeit game. "The Bramble Bush", every child knows. There is the game of "Dump", the game of "Dancing Looby", the "Drop Glove", "Nettles Grow in an Angry Bush", "Gypsy", "The Old Dame", "Fox", "The Poor Woman of Babylon", "Cat", "London Bridge", "Barley Bridge", "Mary Brown", "The Diamond Ring", "Queen Anne", and a number of others. There are enough game rhymes in Mother Goose to form a study in themselves. Suffice it to say here that the origin of these games dates back as far as that of the other rhymes. They embody so much of the history of the race that every child should be taught them, and be told as much as is known of their meaning. Perhaps this explanation of original meaning should come later in the case of games which preserve customs of cruelty, as does "London Bridge".
We have gone far afield with Mother Goose, learning to count with the shepherds, highland and lowland. We have gone down to the wharves where the mackerel was being counted. We have listened to her counting our rhymes, but we could only peep in at the games. There is a lure about the folk games that makes us hope to return to them. We are beginning to marvel that one child book can contain so much of the experience of mankind.
So far, we have been mostly concerned with those sources of Mother Goose which go back to primitive man. But the growth of folklore does not cease with the beginning of history. Quietly, through the centuries, every nation gathers to itself its own peculiar stock of proverbs, rhymes, stories. The English people is political. Down to the last generation of the descendants on this side the water in this and every other state, we are interested in politics. If our country needs changing, we think some law ought to do it. Through all this time the English people have been fighting for their liberty. They may have had a king, but they were figuring on how to govern him. If a nation has so great an interest from generation to generation, it is natural that there should be a great quantity of written material accumulate. Much of it is in the form of lampoons, irreverently directed against people in power. Many of these are rhymes, which use a nickname. They are current among common folk. Some of them are very clever. Often they live long after the occasion giving rise to them is forgotten. Many of our Mother Goose rhymes have originated in this way.

It is the purpose in this chapter and the next, to present the sources of a number of these rhymes. This is not done with
the thought that the source of a bit of folklore determines its meaning. But it is interesting in a study of the formation of folklore, to study the occasion giving rise to a rhyme, then to see how much the original meaning is modified as time goes on.

There were a few stray verses dating at the time of King Edward III, (1327 - 1377); of King Henry V, (1413-1422); of King Richard III; and of King Henry VII, (1485-1509). But by far the greatest number of the rhymes were produced, while one of the following was ruling:

- Henry VIII (1509 - 1547)
- Edward VI (1547 - 1553)
- Mary (1553 - 1558)
- Elizabeth (1558 - 1603)
- James I of England, James VI of Scotland (1603 - 1625)
- Charles I (1625 - 1649)
- Protectorate (1649 - 1660)
- Charles II (1660 - 1688)
- James II (1685 - 1688)
- William and Mary (1689 - 1702)
- Anne (1702 - 1714)
- George I (1714 - 1727)

It is interesting to speculate as to why these rhymes should have multiplied so rapidly at just this time. This included, as will be observed, the age of Queen Elizabeth, the high point of English letters, for some centuries, if not for all time. It was in 1549, that Wyatt published the translation of Petrarch, which introduced the Sonnet into England.

After a while sonnet writing became a fad. If a young nobleman wished to court his lady love, he must write to her in sonnets.
Of all the forms of poetry which are exacting as to rhythm, as to wording, the sonnet leads. If writing a sonnet were as great an accomplishment as being on a basket ball team is now, people would naturally study versification with ardor. It was just as necessary for Sir Philip Sydney to be able to write sonnets to Stella, as for him to be a brave soldier. Imagine us expecting Grant or Sherman to be able to write beautiful poetry! We suppose there is no other time in the history of our race when as great a number of people could skilfully versify. If, then, the people wished to say something, they could say it in rhyme.

Now the Tudors believed in the divine right of kings. It was dangerous to incur the ill will of the ruler or favorites. But the English people are not easily muzzled. If afraid to speak outright in one's proper person, one can write anonymous verses which the populace will take up. Without mentioning the name of the king or the name of the favorite, the identity can be so unmistakeable as to be clear to the commonest peasant. Nothing is so sure to find an audience as a child rhyme. Literature for children was new. Once a lampoon concealed in a nursery rhyme became effective, the next person tried it. An impetus was given to the making of political folk rhymes. Old nursery rhymes were given new meanings. Often it is difficult for the investigator to tell whether the rhyme was new or merely
given new application. Remember this was before the day of the daily paper, with its ever present cartoon. The nursery rhyme, then, became the cartoon in words.

Perhaps one of the rhymes which suggest making political use of folk writing was the very old rhyme:

Old King Cole
Was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe,
And he called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three.
Every fiddler, he had a fiddle,
And a very fine fiddle had he;
Twee tweedle dee, tweedle dee, went the fiddlers.
Oh, there's none so rare,
As can compare
With King Cole and his fiddlers three!

An older form of the same rhyme went:

Good King Cole,
He called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three:
And there was fiddle fiddle,
And twice fiddle fiddle,
For 'twas my lady's birthday;
Therefore we keep holiday,
And come to be merry.

King Cole, according to the legends, reigned in England in the third century A.D. From what we know of England of that time, he was probably a chief of some tribe. Whether he was a king or not, while alive, he certainly has been since. All the

1. Halliwell's Rhymes and Tales, p.1
music which, according to legend, belonged to his daughter, has been associated with his name. But more important, this jingle led the way in showing the English people that Kings are a fit subject for nursery rhymes.

Then a second rhyme about royalty had come down through the ages, and had become the heritage of children:

When good king Arthur ruled this land,
He was a goodly king;
He stole three pecks of barley meal,
To make a bag pudding.
A bag pudding the king did make,
And stuff'd it well with plums
And in it put great lumps of fat,
As big as my two thumbs.
The king and queen did eat thereof,
And noblemen beside;
And what they could not eat that night,
The queen next morning fried.

King Arthur is not so ideal as he later seems to be in Tennyson, but certainly Queen Guinevere appears in a more dutiful role. But the important point from a literary standpoint is that a king and queen appear in Nursery rhyme, and that rhyme lives for centuries.

Then in the fourteenth century, when King Edward III, and his son, the Black Prince, were fighting against the King of France, there originated some lines making fun of the King of France. Of course that was a very safe rhyme to compose, for all England would agree to the ridicule of an enemy.

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, pp. 1 and 2
The King of France
With twenty thousand men,
Marched up the hill,
And then marched down again. 1

We do not know just when children began singing these words, while they played "Follow the Leader", but we can imagine they did it almost from the start, for surely all England was full of imitators of the popular Prince, so they must have been ready to march to the slightest tune. If indeed these lines had their birth under Edward III, the rhyme grew in the reign of Henry IV. At that time the King of France mustered forty thousand men, but was assassinated. Thence came the rhyme:

The king of France went up the hill,
With forty thousand men;
The king of France came down the hill,
And ne'er went up again.

Then later, though we have not been able to ascertain the exact date when Spain was unfriendly - a state existing for some time, - the following came to be said:

The king of France with twenty thousand men,
Went up the hill, and then came down again;
The king of Spain, with twenty thousand more,
Climbed the same hill the French had climbed before. 2

But a rhymester in the time of Richard III attempted something very bold. A close friend of the king was Francis Lord Lovell. It is true that Richard was so hated by his subjects

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales
   Thomas' Real Personages in Mother Goose, p.36
2. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.3
that any rhyme against him would find immediate popularity.

So this bitter rhyme came from a certain Mr. Collingbourne:

"The cat, the rat, and Lovell the Dog
Rule all England under the Hog."

Mr. Collingbourne was hanged for the writing of this couplet. Free speech was a long way off yet. But there is too much hatred in this couplet for Mother Goose ever to have it as a favorite. It is left out of most editions.

And now in the reign of Richard an old rhyme is given new interpretation. From time immemorial there had come down the riddle:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
Three score men and threescore more
Can not place Humpty Dumpty as he was before.

or the other version:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the king's soldiers end the king's men,
Can not set Humpty Dumpty up again.

This enigma of an egg even seems to date away back to the time of Aristophanes. He knew of a great bird that laid the world egg. According to a Finnish epic, the egg fell and broke; upper part became vault of heaven, lower part earth. Yolk formed the sun, the white the moon, fragments of shell the stars.

1. Real Personages of Mother Goose, p.38
2. Eckenstein's Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes, p.104
Whether these great mythic interpretations of this little riddle were known to the English, we do not know. But they were not as fond of myths as of their own political affairs. It was such a relief when King Richard III was killed in battle. There was no danger then in talking against him. So they applied this rhyme to King Richard. He became the English Humpty Dumpty. Many people must have learned the rhyme then who had never heard it before. But after all, great pieces of folklore settle into beautiful meanings. Glorifying over the death of Richard III is not beautiful. It is only by research that we find there was a time when the English gave this interpretation. Some time maybe we'll come back to the nature myths, in their larger meaning.

It is too bad that kings all have their failings. Henry the Seventh, who succeeded the cruel Richard III was most miserly. He induced parliament to raise money for a war. Much of it was not used and went into his coffers. He just worked for his own wealth. So this song was sung all over England as a thrust at him. But please observe that his name is not used. They were beginning to learn. If the writer were questioned, all he had done was to write an innocent, rather clever nursery rhyme.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I love sixpence, pretty little sixpence,} \\
\text{I love sixpence better than my life;} \\
\text{I spent a penny of it, I lent another;} \\
\text{And I took fourpence home to my wife.}
\end{align*}
\]
Oh, my little fourpence, pretty little fourpence,  
I love fourpence better than my life;  
I spent a penny of it, I lent another,  
And I took twopence home to my wife.

Oh, my little twopence, my pretty little twopence,  
I love twopence better than my life;  
I spent a penny of it, I lent another,  
And I took nothing home to my wife.

Oh, my little nothing, my pretty little nothing,  
What will nothing buy for my wife?  
I have nothing, I spend nothing;  
I love nothing better than my wife.  

And now we come to the reign of Henry the Eighth. He had inherited from his father much lands, also a liking for the same. Young, brilliant, popular, he needed plenty of money for the kind of life he wished to lead. Down in Somersetshire, the Bishop of Glastonbury was possessed of so much wealth of the church, that, knowing Henry's disposition, he thought it best to make friends. He hastened to send to the king, the deeds to twelve manors, formerly owned by the church. His steward, whom he sent with these was Mr. John or Jack Horner. It was a custom in those times to do up deeds and the like in the form of a pie. We suppose the bishop spared no pains fixing up a fantastic present in the form of a pie. The story goes that on the way to the king, Jack made a hole in the pie and

1. Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes edited by Wheeler, p.54
drew forth the deed to Mells Manor, still in the possession of the Horner family. The story has it that Horner informed the Bishop that the King had given him Mells Manor. His descendants claim that he delivered the pie intact; that he bought the property from the king, paid for it, and that the deed is still in existence. Even if they are right, it is fairly certain the public will never accept the statement. We have known Jack Horner too long to change.

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb, and he took out a plum,
And said, "What a good boy am I!"

It seems that the king knighted John Horner. But the pie maker, the Bishop of Glastonbury, did not satisfy the king. It seems he retained some gold vessels, which the church had used for a long long time. He was executed for this. But the Christmas pie has no sad association for all that, the reason being that the details of the story do not follow the rhyme.

We remember, too, that this is the Jack Horner of fame in "This is the House that Jack Built."

Sing a song of sixpence,
A pocket full of rye,
Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie;
Baked in a pie;
When the pie was opened, the birds began to sing;
The birds began to sing
Wasn't that a dainty dish
To set before a king?

1. *Journeys Through Bookland*, Elyvester, p.16
The King was in the counting-house,
Counting out his money,
The Queen was in the pantry,
Eating bread and honey;
The maid was in the garden,
Hanging out the clothes,
When down flew a blackbird
And snipped off her nose. 1

We have seen in connection with Jack Horner's Christmas pie, that it was a custom to fill pies with strange surprises. The above lines seem to refer to that custom carried to extreme. In introducing these lines, Hallowell says in part:

In Epulario, or the Italian Banquet, 1580, is a receipt "To make pies so that the birds may be alive in them and fly out when it is cut up", a mere device, live birds being introduced after the pie is made.2

For whom was so marvelous a pie made? For the same one who received the pie of Jack Horner, - Henry VIII. It is well enough to speak of his seizure of the church property, as a "song of sixpence". He was so concerned in his money that he was in "the counting-house" a large part of his time. The different pieces of church property had so many broad fields of grain that even his capacious pockets came to be "full of rye". We suppose that the four and twenty blackbirds referred to deeds to these estates. The Queen, "eating bread and honey", was Katherine of Aragon, she who had every right to expect that

1. Hallowell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.36
2. Ibid.
the sweets of queenly position would continue to be hers. But while she was there "the maid was in the garden hanging out the clothes". This refers to the unfortunate Anne Boleyn, whose nose was snipped off by the blackest of birds. "The garden" was that of Whitehall Palace near the 'tiltyard of Cardinal Wolsey. It was here the king first met "the maid". The first "snipping off" of her nose was when, by Henry's command, her engagement to Lord Percy was broken; Lord Percy was married to another. But that was but the beginning of her trouble. The final "snipping" was while the king was not in his counting house, but while he was preparing for the wedding to Jane Seymour. The headsmen was the gloomy "blackbird". 1

"Needles and pins, needles and pins,
When a man marries, his trouble begins. 2

It seems too ridiculous to be credited, but Miss Thomas claims that this couplet originated in the reign of this same Henry VIII. It was certainly the women whose troubles began when they were married to the royal husband. But Katherine Howard introduced from France, pins. They proved an expensive luxury. But they were so handy that every woman wanted them. Men began to have to give money "pin money". So there is a real relation between needles and pins and the troubles of men.

1. Thomas' The Real Personages of Mother Goose, Chapter IV
2. Walter's Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, p.97

Kerr's Popular English Phrases and Nursery Rhymes, p.130
Now we have noted that it was a dangerous thing to make a stinging couplet against royalty while men still believed in the divine right of kings. But it was not possible for Henry VIII to lead the life he did without stirring up animosity too deep to go unexpressed. Somebody dared risk a rhyme both bitter and effective in provoking disgust against "Ben". We have no record that the author was found out. We do not know even whether Henry VIII ever heard this beautiful word picture of himself. But if he did not some thousands of English speaking people have:

Robbin the bobbin, the big-bellied Ben,
He ate more meat than three score men,
He ate the Church, he ate the steeple,
He ate the priests and all the people,
And yet he complained his belly wasn't full.

This rhyme has some of the coarseness which accords with Henry's life. Probably some church man wrote this. In getting his divorce, breaking with the Roman church, the king began a real enmity. It was pleasant to have an excuse to confiscate property. He surely did eat "the church", "steeple and all; he "ate the priest and all the people" but we think surely this rhyme must have been kept under cover pretty well. Kerr states that "Robbin the bobbin, the big-bellied Ben" was a popular name for priests by those who felt their oppression. But Henry outdid them all.

One nursery rhyme after another is credited to this reign.

1. Thomas Neal Personages of Mother Goose, p.76
Since it is not the attempt of this paper to present an exhaustive study of these rhymes, but to consider only enough of them to show how folk literature came into existence, perhaps one more illustration is enough from this period. Before giving this, I wish to enlarge a statement made in the Foreword with reference to our indebtedness to Kathryn Elwes Thomas. It is to her that we owe a large part of our information as to the historic origin of these rhymes, inasmuch as she spent some twenty-five years in the most exhaustive research, visiting the places in question, examining old documents, looking into rare books, interviewing people versed in the lore of the region. Her special quest was to find the relation between persons of English History and English Nursery Rhymes. Since we can in no way duplicate her investigation, we can do no better than to accept her conclusions. They become, then, our authority very largely in this chapter and the next. Without some such authority we would hardly dare think of Cardinal Wolsey as the original Little Boy Blue.

Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn,
The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn,
Where is the little boy that looks after the sheep?
He's under the haycock fast asleep!

Or, as is given in The Tragedy of Cardinal by Thomas Churchyard:
Where is the boy that minds the sheep?
He's under the haycock fast asleep!
O, fie on wolves that march in masking clothes
For to devour the lambs, when the shepherd sleeps,
And woe to you that promise never keeps. 1

Cardinal Wolsey went "fast asleep" while he was living at Hampton Court in a luxury which would tax the resources of kings. He would entertain a hundred at a time serving them in golden vessels. If he had been awake, he surely would have known that a man as vain as Henry VIII would not long endure such display in a subordinate. He had neither the approval of king nor people in such living. It would be easy for the King to overthrow him when the people felt that he was a burden to support. He had been made a Batchelour of Arts at fifteen, and had been called the Boy Batchelour. So it was easy to think of him as a little boy. The following lines were written by a Protestant, named Rob Roy. It certainly contains no hint of the identity of anybody in public life.

There was an old woman, as I've heard tell,
She went to market her eggs for to sell;
She went to market all on a holiday,
And she fell asleep on the King's highway.

By came a peddler whose name it was Stout,
And he cut off her petticoats just round about;
He cut off her petticoats just above her knees,
Which caused the little woman to shiver and to freeze.

Now when the old woman first did awake,
She began to shiver and she began to shake;
She began to wonder and she began to cry,
"Lauk-a-mercy on me, this can't be I!"

1. Thomas' Real Personages of Mother Goose, p. 87
"But if it be I, as I suppose it be,  
I have a little dog at home, and he'll know me;  
If it be I, he'll wag his little tail,  
But if it be not I, he'll loudly bark and wail."

So home went the little woman all in the dark,  
Up jumped the little dog, and he began to bark;  
He began to bark, and she began to cry,  
"Lauk-a-mercy on me, this is none of Til"!

The old woman was Wolsey. Henry VIII took the part of Stout. You will notice that this resembles "Little Boy Blue", in that in each Wolsey goes to sleep. It is probable that the extreme surprise he felt when Henry demanded certain sums of him, is expressed in the last line.

Wolsey made reply, "And for this money that ye demand of me I assure you it is none of mine, for I borrowed of divers of my friends to bury me, and to bestow among my servants."

Now Cardinal Wolsey's given name was Thomas. Here comes another rhyme full of scorn:

Little Tom Tucker  
Sang for his supper.  
What shall we give him?  
Brown bread and butter.  
How shall he cut it  
Without e'er a knife?  
How shall he marry  
Without e'er a wife? 2

The insult contained in this last couplet becomes apparent when it is remembered that Cardinal Wolsey belong to that priesthood.

1. Thomas' Real Personages of Mother Goose, pp. 101, 102
2. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.121
which is pledged to celibacy. The reason that he was so insulted probably is to be found in the statements in George Howard's Wolsey the Cardinal, to the effect that Wolsey was father both of a son and of a daughter.

It seems that Little Boy Blue went very fast asleep under the haycock. Even his conscience must have slumbered. When he awoke, it was too late.
Flour of England, fruit of Spain,  
Met together in a shower of rain;  
Put in a bag tied round with a string,  
If you'll tell me this riddle, I'll give you a ring.  

Perhaps you think of the answer to this riddle being,  
Plum pudding, and so it is. But it has meaning, besides. Mary,  
daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, had come to  
the throne. Much against the wishes of her subjects, she became  
engaged to Philip II King of Spain. The ring he gave her had  
been a matter of concern. Mary had said she wished it to be  
a band of gold, just as any other maid would have. Philip had  
sent an envoy specially to bear to Mary the ring. When it came  
time for the wedding, there was such a rain as even England seldom  
sees. The hated Prince advanced to Winchester, in the downpour.  
The Queen had sent as escort with two hundred fifty cavaliers,  
dressed in black velvet, and wearing heavy gold chains. There  
were a hundred archers on horseback, attired in yellow cloth  
striped with red velvet. There were of course thousands of spec-  
tators beside. It is no wonder that some one, perhaps a spectator  

wrote:  
Flour of England, fruit of Spain,  
Met together in a shower of rain.  

If he had said flood it would still have been true.  

1. Wheeler's Mother Goose's Melodies, p.38
Now this king, a strong Roman Catholic, apparently had only the prejudice and cruelty of his religion. Appropriately enough, he was the one who introduced firearms into England. He was the one who caused Mary to carry on persecutions so terrible that we always see her stained with blood. The following rhyme is said to refer to the two of them. At that time "little man" was an epithet of contempt.

There was a little man
And he had a little gun,
And his bullets were made of lead, lead, lead.
He went to the brook,
And he shot it right through the head, head, head.

He carried it home
To his old wife Joan,
And bid her a good fire to make, make, make,
To roast the little duck
He had shot in the brook,
While he went to fetch her the Drake, Drake, Drake.

The "good fire" she was to make is taken to refer to the Smithfield fires in which she burned martyrs. If the little ducks to be roasted were the martyrs, there were two hundred eighty of them. The gruesomeness of this reference is lightened by the triumph in the last line. Remember this was the man against whose Armada Sir Francis Drake was sent, later. Already there was talk of the Spanish boasting that they would overcome Drake, who had come back from his round-the-world voyage, and was quite a hero in England. It was a pity for "the little man"

1. Thomas' Real Personages in Mother Goose, p.106
be ever met "the Drake, Drake, Drake!"

The last of the crop of rhymes in Mary's reign seems to have been in the nature of farewell to the departing Philip:

Rain, rain, go to Spain,
And never come back again.

Miss Thomas ushers in the reign of Queen Elizabeth with a riotous stanza:

Hey diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed to see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

Of course Hey diddle diddle is an old refrain, coming down through the ages. But just as Shakespeare gave new meaning to old stories, so that seems to have given new life to old words. The "cat" is Queen Elizabeth. This was jest and not insult. It was customary in that lively court to nickname everybody, usually with the name of an animal. Sometimes one was called by the name of some inanimate object. Priests were "mice". Queen Elizabeth was very fond of a fiddle, which she played herself. Queen Elizabeth also takes the part of the "cow". The "moon" was her nickname for Walsingham. The Earl of Leicester is the "dog". The "Spoon" was the title given a beautiful young woman, not

Miss Thomas' Real Personages in Mother Goose, p.125
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1. Thomas' Real Personages in Mother Goose, p.125
always the same one, -- who acted as taster of the royal meals. "The Dish" was the title of the young gentleman of the court detailed to carry certain golden dishes into the courtroom. Ordinarily, when names are assigned to people the utter abandon is gone from any jingle. But that was not so in Elizabeth's court. The "Cat" would take her fiddle, even when she had arrived at the age of forty-eight! She would play and dance with the greatest spirit. A flirtation between the Dish and Spoon would be to be expected. Due to the popularity of this rhyme in Queen Elizabeth's time, there sprang up in England a whole flock of "Cat and Fiddle" inns. It is said that squirrels are the only animals that like to play as well in old age as in youth. It seems the Court of Queen Elizabeth was like them.

Elizabeth, Elspeth, Betsy and Bess,
They all went together to seek a bird's nest.
They found the bird's nest with two eggs in it;
They each took one, and left one in it.

Since these are all names of Elizabeth, the riddle is easy. But it meant tragedy to Amy Hobsart, the lovely little wife of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. He it was who, as an eligible suitor, won much attention, if not affection. Very soon after the queen discovered that he had a wife, that same wife was found murdered in her home. Whether the queen or the husband

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.53
or some other was guilty, will probably never be known.

But the gruesome incident is recalled by this, as Elizabeth
"found" this nest that had two eggs in it. Certainly it came
to have but one.

The north wind doth blow,
And we shall have snow,
And what will poor Robin do then?
Poor thing!

He will sit in a barn,
And to keep himself warm,
Will hide his head under his wing,
Poor thing!

The Earl of Leicester was "Robin". Sometimes he was out of
favor with the Queen. The mock sympathy seems to be expressed
in these lines. Hiding seems to mean going into retirement for
a while.

I like little Pyssy, her coat is so warm,
And if I don't hurt her, she'll do me no harm;
So I'll not pull her tail nor drive her away,
But Pyssy and I very gently will play.

If indeed this was composed by one of Elizabeth's Court,
as it seems to have been, it offers pretty fair proof that that
queen could take a jest at her own expense. Another rhyme,
even more daring than this is thought to refer to Elizabeth
after the execution of Essex, for whom she felt genuine friendship
if not more:

1. Walter's Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, p.102
Little Betty Blue
Has lost her holiday shoe
What can little Betty do?

Give her another
To match the other
And then she can walk in two.

It would seem to be rather bold, to jest about the attachment of Elizabeth to one beheaded by her own decree. Also to suggest that she finds another seems a bit impertinent.

Here is a rhyme not morbid. A child would like to know the meaning of this:

I saw a ship a-sailing
A-sailing on the sea;
And oh! it was all laden
With pretty things for thee!

There were comfits in the cabin,
And apples in the hold;
The sails were made of silk,
And the masts were made of gold:

The four and twenty sailors
That stood between the decks,
Were four and twenty white mice,
With chains about their necks.

The captain was a duck,
With a packet on his back;
And when the ship began to move,
The captain said, "quack! quack!"

Sir Francis Drake fits the description of a Captain that is a duck, saying "quack, quack". The "comfits", "apples in the hold"

1. Walter's Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, p. 79
2. Holliwells Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p. 80
refer to those things which he brought from America. There was introduced into England: potatoes; hops, gooseberries, grapes, apricots, cherries and plums. The "four and twenty sailors" refer to slaves. The explorers brought back so much that was marvelous. Their "sails were made of silk" their "masts were made of gold."

In those old lines the Old World marvels at the gifts of the New.

Hide a cock horse to Hanbury Cross
To see a fine lady on a white horse,
Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,
She shall have music where'er she goes. 1

The original of this was Queen Elizabeth. This fact has been handed down orally from generation to generation, until it is almost a part of the history of her royal procession.

There was a little man,
And he wooed a little maid,
And he said, "Little Maid, will you wed, wed, wed?
I have little more to say,
Than will you, yea or nay,
For least said is soonest mended, ded, ded, ded." 2

The little maid replied,
Some say a little signed;
But what shall we have for to eat, eat, eat?
Will the love you are so rich in
Make a fire in the kitchen,
Or the little God of Love turn the spit, spit spit?" 2

Philip the Second was again the "little man". In the answer that is given his proposal, his poverty is made apparent.

1. The Real Mother Goose, Rand McNally. (not paged.)
2. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.90
Elizabeth was, of course, a monarch with much wealth. Whether she ever said anything of the kind or not we do not know. She would if she had wished to. In this instance the English people gloried in her independence, for they were not wishing another round with a King of Spain.

While the courtiers of Queen Elizabeth, and the Queen too, were making so many jingles that Mother Goose would have been burdened to try to carry more than a mere fraction of them, jinglers were busy in Scotland, too. Mary, Queen of Scots is just the character to inspire poets. The English people were interested, too. The rival of Queen Elizabeth, brought up in the frivolity of France, called to reign over the more serious Scotch, she possessed every element of fascination. Rhymes about her and her doings seemed to spring up everywhere. Some were friendly; some had enough animosity in them to spring from Queen Elizabeth, herself, and by some writers are credited to her. ¹ One which is gay and friendly is fully adopted by Mother Goose:

Mistress Mary,
Quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
Silver bells,
And cockle shells,
And pretty maids all in a row. ²

I suppose every child with any imagination, has puzzled

¹ Thomas' *The Real Personages of Mother Goose*, p.173
² Halliwell's *Nursery Rhymes and Tales*, p.32
a bit over the meaning of this. The first part is very simple. A wilful, attractive little girl has a garden. She is usually pictured with a rake. The "cockle shells" are decorations, and are placed along the edge, much as many a little girl in these parts used to use muscle shells. The puzzle begins with the "silver bells". Our gardens have blue bells. We figure perhaps our lilies of the valley would do for silver bells. For my own part, I felt that hollyhocks came the nearest being "pretty maids all in a row.". But when we had a lovely garden all figured out, there was still a feeling that there was something else in the poem. I love gardens, but that never seemed to pertain wholly to them. It was a joy, then, to find that this was a rhyme about the beautiful young Queen of Scots. "Pretty maids all in a row" were her gay young maids in waiting. Silver bells, - there was no lack of them nor of any other jewels nor gay attire. The cockle shells tell of her French taste in food. The French ate cockles; the Scotch did not. She we have the beautiful, little queen with her French fancies, beginning all gay and light hearted.

One that is accredited to this time, seems rather surprising:

Little Miss Muffet,
She sat on a tuffet,
Eating of curds and whey;
There came a big spider,
And sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away. 1

1. Walter's Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, p.78
Mary, the Queen, is supposed to be Miss Muffett; John Knox, the spider. She could no more charm that old Covenant than she could have tamed a spider. Certain it is that he was the one person, who had the power to bring tears to her eyes; to really terrify her. If this originated in Scotland, it should have a Scotch version, and here it is:

Little Miss Mopsie
Sat in the shopsey,
Eating of curds and whey;
There came a little spider,
Who sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Mopsie away! 1

"Mopsey" is a term of endearment. "Shopsey" refers to a dairy.

The Rhyme following is supposed to refer to the Covenanters, going everywhere to rid the place of followers of the pope. "The old man who wouldn't say his prayers" was Cardinal Beaton stabbed to death at the foot of the stairs.

Goosey, Goosey Gander,
Whither shall I wander?
Upstairs and downstairs,
And in my lady's chamber.
There I met an old man
Who wouldn't say his prayers,
I took him by the right leg,
And threw him down the stairs. 2

In the midst of most tumultuous troubles, Mary became mother of that James who was to unite England and Scotland. This lullaby

1. Thomas' Real Personages in Mother Goose, p.179
2. Ibid., p.180
was made for him, by some rhymester who evidently was thinking both of England and Scotland. James' father was Lord Darnley:

Rocka-Bye, Baby, thy cradle is green;
Father's a nobleman, Mother's a Queen;
And Betty's a lady, and wears a gold ring,
And Johnny's a drummer, and drums for the king.

Betty was Queen Elizabeth, who was more than fond of rings. Johnny is John Knox who took stock in the next generation, seeing he was powerless to change the Queen.

Mary, as everybody knows, came to hate her husband, who was none too lovable. She became violently infatuated with James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. It seems he was a man of few virtues and many vices. His virtues, consisting mainly of good manners, and elegant appearance, were such as to win the foolish queen. She had been accustomed to the flattering French, and the composed, undemonstrative Scotch people did not sufficiently warm her heart. She did not seem to quite fully appreciate the fact that those same Scotchmen would willingly have laid down their lives for her. If Bothwell's virtues were such as to win the Queen, his vices were equally suited to estrange the Scotch. The noblemen were beginning to look askance at their young Queen. She seemed entirely unashamed of her attachment to Bothwell. One time he was injured in some kind of a fight. Word to this effect was brought to Mary while she was presiding over a great tournament. Instantly she left

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.82
the place. She mounted a horse, set out on a wild ride through an almost inaccessible part of the country, went through bog sinking so dangerously, that it was ever after called "The Queen's Moss". She found the wound of her lover to be only trivial, rode the twenty miles back. The rhyme which grew out of this adventure follows:

I had a little pony,
His name was Dapple-Gray;
I lent him to a lady
To ride a mile away.
She whipped him, she lashed him,
She rode him through the mire;
I would not lend my pony more,
For all the lady's hire.

The name Dapple Gray was oftentimes taken as an emblem of Scotland. That fact gives these lines a deeper significance.

But the rhyme we love most is the next one. Considering how we love this little rhyme, it seems a pity to find that "Bo-peep" was an epithet used to designate a woman who did not walk in the straight and narrow path. We do not know who first applied that damaging name to Mary. Elizabeth would not have grieved to start it herself. Now when a name like that is applied to a woman, she is no longer queenly in the eyes of her subjects. Beauty can not win against slander.

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.109
Little Bo-peep has lost her sheep,
And can't tell where to find them;
Leave them alone, and they'll come home,
And bring their tales behind them.

Little Bo-peep fell fast asleep,
And dreamt she heard them bleating;
But when she awoke, she found it a joke,
For still they all were fleeting.

Then up she took her little crook,
Determined for to find them;
She found them indeed, but it made her heart bleed,
For they'd left all their tales behind 'em.

The sheep were the Scotch people She thought she had lost them.
Then she thought she had won them again, but it was all a mistake.
The great broad mountains of Scotland were hearing talk of insurrection.

Darnley had been foully murdered. He was not so great a man.
But he was the father of the king to be. His murderer had left Prince James fatherless. Bothwell was tried. Mary was taken prisoner.
They were acquitted. Bothwell procured a divorce. He and Mary became king and queen together, but only for part of a honeymoon.
Either the world will not allow a queen to do what a man may do, or Scotland was not the England of Henry VIII. The castle where the children were staying on their honeymoon was bombarded. Her new husband had to flee. She joined him dressed as a man. It was an exciting contest. The whole world is still stirred by

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p. 37
the tale. All that is in So-peep.

James I became the target for many rhymes. Perhaps the most prominent one is the Simple Simon, one where the king is the pie-man.

Simple Simon met a pie-man
Going to the fair;
Says Simple Simon to the pie-man,
"Let me taste your ware."
Says the pie-man to Simple Simon,
"Show me first your penny."
Says Simple Simon to the pie-man,
"Indeed I have not any."
Simple Simon went a fishing
For to catch a whale:
All the water he had got
Was in his mother's pail. 1

He needed money. He could grant titles. He could give offices, if first he saw the "penny". We mention one other because it is, so far as we can find, the first mention of England's relation to India in folklore.

There was a fat man of Bombay
Who was smoking one sunshiny day,
When a bird, called a snipe,
Flew away with his pipe
Which vexed the fat man of Bombay. 2

The canny Scotchman, seeing that continental Europe "the fat man" was profiting by trade in India, established the first English factory there. James, then, was the "snipe" in this.

It is a temptation to enter into the history of every rhyme we can find. We have given enough, surely, to illustrate the

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.14
2. Ibid., p.2 15
way in which England and Scotland wrote the news of the day in rhyme. It will be observed that the author is never known.

One other rhyme is too apt to omit. After Cromwell had ruled, after his son had failed to rule, England was eager for Charles II. He was over in Holland. His wig of long curly hair, had given him the name of "Curly locks". He had had to do all kinds of menial work at certain stages of his hunted existence. But now England invites him home:

"Curly Locks, Curly Locks! wilt thou be mine? Thou shalt not wash dishes, nor yet feed the swine;
But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam, And feed upon strawberries, sugar, and cream;  
Of course luxury loving Charles came. Then what a gala time they had! They were all bidding him welcome. Certainly no one was responsible for his father's death!

High diddle diddle,  
Did you hear the bells ring?  
The Parliament soldiers are gone to the King;  
Some they did laugh, some they did cry, To see the Parliament soldiers pass by.

High ding-a-ding, and ho ding-a-ding,  
The Parliament soldiers are gone to the King;  
Some with new beavers, some with new bands,  
The Parliament soldiers are gone to the King!  

All too soon they will make rhymes about a "pig", for Charles II was not all they could have wished in a king, but we leave these historic sources while they are singing this gala song of welcome.

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.98  
2. Thomas' Real Personages of Mother Goose, p.229
CHAPTER VIII

THE PART PLAYED BY THE CHARACTER OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE IN THE FORMATION OF MOTHER GOOSE

We have been considering the sources from which folk literature is taken. We have seen that it may come from nature myths, from primitive customs and beliefs, from attempts at numbers or other learning, from historic characters. But we do not necessarily know a folk literature, by knowing its first meaning. Folk rhymes differ from other poems in this: if we know what the author originally meant, we know the ordinary poem. But a folk rhyme grows in meaning. It may entirely change, coming to mean something altogether different from its first intent. The second meaning is not a mistaken meaning. It is the full grown one. Of a great number of rhymes composed, which will live as folk lore? And how will they be changed? Of course it would be presumptuous to try to give any hard and fast answers to these questions. But there are certain definite tendencies in the formation of folk literature which the least observant of us may discern.

First, the rhymes chosen, the meanings given to these rhymes, accord with the character and beliefs of the people choosing. That is to say, the folk literature of a nation is a definite index of the nation's character and beliefs. If that is true, Mother Goose would tell us about the English people, their predominant traits and ideals. It is our purpose in this chapter to see how these
rhymes, either in the first choosing, or by change through the centuries, have come to express much that the English speaking people believe.

Second, we wish to see how individual cases have been universalized. We are concerned in the formation of literature from the sources just considered.

Georgy, Porgy, pudding and pie,
Kissed the girls and made them cry;
When the boys came out to play,
Georgy Porgy ran away. 1

Very few who read this know that it was made as a lampoon against George I of England. But the English people do not preserve it on that account. They keep it to ridicule the kind of character they detest. They (I suppose I might say "we", since most of us are of English descent, wholly or in part.) detest a coward; we detest a man who imposes on women. We like fair sport. All the athletic craze of the present time fosters still more the feeling that a boy who does not play with his fellows, is lacking in manhood. This has become true folk literature for it expresses the almost universal feeling.

Now to take a rhyme whose meaning has had to be changed. Bo-peep is no longer a slanderous epithet. When we hear the name "Little Bo-peep" our minds conjure a vision of a lovely little girl in peasant shepherdess costume, playing that she is caring for sheep.

1. Walter's Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, p.78
It means innocent girlhood to us. It means anxious girlhood. For

don't we have to tell every little girl not to worry, not to take

things too seriously, that the sheep will come home after while?

This rhyme had to be freed from its malice, from its slander. Now

perhaps the story is not yet done. The old rhyme closed:

"It made her heart bleed

For they'd left all their tales behind 'em."

That is poor consolation to a little girl. If we take "tails"
to mean loyalty, then it closed true to fact, then. But it is not

quite in accord with our present meaning. We find that lack remedied

in at least two of our most popular editions of Mother Goose.

Here are the consoling stanzas's in one of them:

It happened one day, as Bo-peep did stray

Unto a meadow hard by-

There she espied their tails, side by side,

All hung on a tree to dry.

She heaved a sigh, and wiped her eye,

And over the hillocks she raced;

And tried what she could, as each shepherdess should,

That each tail should be properly placed.¹

The other has this variation in the last stanza:

She heaved a sigh, and wiped her eye,

Then went over hill and dale, O!

And tried what she could, as each shepherdess should,

To tack to each sheep its tail, O! ²

These are interesting as illustrating the fact that so long

as a nation lives, its folk literature is subject to change. This

ending would be ridiculous as long as the poem referred to Mary

1. Rand McNally's The Real Mother Goose, p.1
2. Walter's Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, p.25
Queen of Scots, but when that reference has been discarded, forgotten, and dainty little girls substituted, why not have it all end just right? It is much more difficult to change a poem after it has been printed, but Mother Goose still changes.

Another rhyme which has been altogether changed through the centuries is "Little Boy Blue". No one would ever think of Cardinal Wolsey as a nursery personage. This rhyme has come to represent the English conception of boyhood. He is asleep; he is careless; irresponsible. Somebody has to call him and get him to do his duty. We have to comfort the little girl to keep her from worrying, and rouse the little boy to a sense of his duty. This I believe to be the English notion of the two natures. In the few pictures of children in the Bible, it is not the Hebrew notion of a boy. So far as the writer has observed, it is not the German conception. Life is much more serious for him. Mother Goose gives us the same notion of the irresponsibility of boyhood in another rhyme.

I had a little boy,  
And called him Blue Bell;  
Gave him a little work, -  
He did it very well.  

I bade him go upstairs  
To bring me a gold pin;  
In coal scuttle fell he,  
Up to his little chin.  

He went to the garden  
To pick a little sage;  
He tumbled on his nose;  
And fell into a rage.
He went to the cellar
To draw a little beer;
And quickly did return
To say there was none there.

Again we have the rhyme:

Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John
Went to bed with his breeches on,
One stocking off, and onestocking on;
Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John.

The boys older grown have some of the same traits:

Robin and Richard were two pretty men,
They lay in bed till the clock struck ten;
Then up starts Robin and looks at the sky,
"Oh, brother Richard, the sun's very high!"
You go before with the bottle and bag,
And I will come after on little Jack Nag."

The last rhyme adds the element of humor to the conception,
for we can not think Robin meant it other than a joke for his
brother to carry the things and go on ahead while he stays and rests
and then rides.

Another picture of a little girl, gives much the same idea of
worrying that Bo-peep did:

Lucy Locket lost her pocket,
Kitty Fisher found it;
Nothing in it, nothing in it
But the binding round it.

Worrying over little things— that's the character we give the
little girls.

Now to see how by taking up the street cries, Mother Goose

1. Rand McNally's Real Mother Goose, (not paged)
has caught her reason for work:

If I'd as much money as I could spend,
I never would cry old chairs to mend;
Old chairs, to mend, old chairs to mend;
I never would cry old chairs to mend.

Again the street cry:

If I'd as much money as I could tell
I never would cry old clothes to sell;
Old clothes to sell, old clothes to sell;
I never would cry old clothes to sell.

That's a long way from Adam Bede's working after hours because he loves it! But who will deny that it is a fair representation of the motives which a great many of us have for working? That is one reason for our present unhappiness. That side of our natures is expressed again as follows:

Lend me thy mare to ride a mile?
She is lame, leaping over a style.
Alek! and I must keep the fair!
I'll give thee money for thy mare.
Oh, oh! say you so?
Money will make the mare to go.

Folk literature arises out of the belief of the common people. Many of us have much higher ideals than these, but we are obliged to own that Mother Goose sensed the belief of many. There is one of the old street cries which seems much better to me. This man is not complaining nor talking about the money. He would sometimes come to our door to convince us, not that he needs help, but that

1. Wheeler's Mother Goose's Melodies, p.50
2. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.36
he is selling something worth while:

Buttons, a farthing a pair,
Come, who will buy them of me?
They're round and sound and pretty,
And fit for girls of the city.
Come, who will buy them of me,
Buttons, a farthing a pair?

He's the man of whom we would like to buy. Following is another street cry which has not the doleful complaint about money, but the good humored, crude salesmanship of the outdoor peddler:

Hot cross buns! Hot cross buns!
One a penny, two a penny,
Hot-cross buns!
If you have no daughters,
Give them to your sons;
One a penny, two a penny,
Hot-cross buns!
But if you have none of these little elves,
Then you may eat them all yourselves.

This represents a distinct type of English people. For that reason it has lived from the ancient time when the cross was placed on the buns and sold by church folk.

We have just seen that "Curly Locks" was written to Charles II. It does not live because we are so interested in that king. Before it became a true folk rhyme, it had to drop the individual Charles II, and enter the minds of folk in connection with maidens being courted by gallant young lovers. We are all interested in love

1. Walter's Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, p.151
2. Ibid., p.54
stories. This is the poetic form of the rather ugly line: "Money will make the mare to go". The ideal is not to have to "wash dishes", not to have to "feed swine", but to do a little dainty fancy work, and feed on "strawberries, sugar and cream". This is our ideal. Nor should we blame the lover. He sees his lady love in the light of one altogether too fine for common tasks. We do not know whether the worm has actually entered into the wood or not, unless he know her opinion. If she agrees with him that she is not to do menial labor but is to be waited on, fed daintily, their home is already toppling. If she accepts this notion, she is the exact opposite of Ruskin's "lady" who is a "bread giver". In the making of folk rhyme from the political stanza, this has been made to express a well nigh universal desire. This notion is not peculiarly English; possibly more typically French. But surely the English share it.

My maid Mary,
She minds her dairy
While I go a-hoeing and mowing each morn;
Merrily run the wheel
And the little spinning wheel,
Whilst I am singing and mowing my corn. 1

This is later, the ideal of common life lived happily. We are especially fond of child life. The following, we are very sure, has been selected by grown folk. It is not a child favorite. They

1. Walter's Mother Goose's Rhymes, p.112
are not interested in such as this until they are well past the nursery stage. One can fairly hear the adult on-looker say;

"Aren't they cute!" when this happens;

There was a little boy and a little girl
Lived in an alley;
Says the little boy to the little girl,
"Shall I, oh! shall I?"

Says the little girl to the little boy,
"What shall we do?"
Says the little boy to the little girl,
"I will kiss you." 1

The following is very much better written. It is accepted by children. A very little imagination conjures up the embarrassed boy, the self-conscious girl, the tone so full of meaning in which the most inane remark is made:

As Tommy Snooks and Bessie Brooks
Were walking out one Sunday,
Says Tommy Snooks to Bessy Brooks,
"Tomorrow will be Monday." 2

The humor and reserve with which that is written are typically English. Exactly the same type of understanding of human nature is contained in the rhyme:

Old Grimes is dead, that good old man,
You'll never see him more;
He used to wear a long brown coat
That buttoned down before. 3

Each of these two rhymes is universal.

Our saucy boy, Dick,
Had a nice little stick,
Cut from a hawthorn tree;
And with this pretty stick,
He thought he could beat
A boy much bigger than he.

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.90
2. Ibid., p.91
3. Walter's Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, p.103
But the boy turned round,
And hit him a rebound,
Which did so frighten poor Dick;
That without more delay,
He ran quite away,
And over a hedge he jumped quick. 1

The above would do for a companion piece to "Georgy Porgy".
An active dislike for that kind of a boy is inherent in the English folk.

Some rhymes have been selected and retained on account of
their philosophy of life.

There was a man in our town
And he was wondrous wise.
He jumped into a bramble bush,
And scratched out both his eyes.

And when he found his eyes were out,
With all his might and main,
He jumped into another bush, 2
And scratched them in again.

This was aimed at one Reverend Dr. Henry Sacheverell of St. Saviour's Church, Southwark. He "scratched out his eyes" by preaching a sermon which incurred the wrath of parliament. He was forbidden to preach for three years. So effectively did he "scratch them in again", that the ban was soon removed, and he was restored to favor. He became then, a type. We forget all about him. The rhyme becomes folk lore only when we think of

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.182
2. Thomas' Real Personages of Mother Goose, p.101
him as a hot-headed man who makes a mistake and has enough sense to rectify it.

Here is one which satisfies us at once, without our realizing at first how profound a little piece of wisdom it is:

Pussycat, pussycat, where have you been?
I've been up to London to look at the queen.
Pussycat, pussycat, what did you there?
I frightened a little mouse under a chair.  

We all like to go places, and see noted people. But notice this. Pussycat may have had a chance to be in the presence of the queen, but being limited by the mentality of a pussy, all she could do was to "frighten a little mouse under a chair". All the talk of affairs of state had been beyond her. It doesn't do any good to be among great people unless we are great ourselves. It would be inadmissible to tack any such moral as this to such a child rhyme. But the rhyme has a true ring without our being conscious why.

Hark, hark,
The dogs do bark,
The beggars are coming to town;
Some in jags,
Some in rags,
And some in velvet gown.  

When we teach this to children, we are thinking how some of those whom we have to help support, are destitute beggars; some

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.101
2. Ibid., p.120
are the grafters in "velvet gown". There is more than one kind of beggar.

"Simple Simon met a pieman"

We have already seen how this rhyme referred to James I as the Pieman. That intricate bit of history would never have immortalized that rhyme. It has become a permanent bit of folklore because there are Simple Simons pretty uniformly distributed over the world. There is always a pieman to ask him for his money. Since we have left the primitive way of doing things, brains are even more necessary. Perhaps he is a philosopher, perhaps he is a minister or teacher, artist, perhaps he is just plain nobody. He is always a man with no financial judgment. He is both amusing and tragic.

The dove says coo, coo, what shall I do?  
I can scarce maintain two. 
Pooh, pooh, says the wren, I have got ten,  
And keep them all like gentlemen!

A bit of interesting natural history to the child, divergent views of the proper size of a family to the grown-up. That is very typical folk lore.

Clap hands, clap hands!  
Till father comes home; 
For father's got money,  
But mother's got none.

1. Halliwell's *Nursery Rhymes and Tales*, p.105  
2. Ibid., p.70  
3. Ibid., p.122
A1 together too many mothers of the olden days knew the meaning of this rhyme. Indeed in many places this seemed the natural way of running a household.

My little old man and I fell out,
I'll tell you what 'twas all about:
I had money, and he had none,
And that's the way the row begun. 1

The people who believed the first of these ways the natural, considered that domestic tragedy was apt to result from the opposite.

Perhaps these are enough to illustrate the fact that the folklore chosen embodies the wisdom of the common people.

When it comes to such nature myths as Jack and Jill, much of the poetry has been lost in the formation into English folk rhymes. We have noticed that we have forgotten the nature part, and have made them purely personal. In the case of Jack and Jill we have even tacked on a moral. The following version is copied from the scrapbook of a kindergartin teacher.

Jack and Jill
Went up the hill
To get a pail of water
Jack fell down
And broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after
Then up Jack got and said to Jill
"Now you're not hurt
Brush off the dirt
This time we'll get the water"

1. Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes and Tales., p.122
Then Jack and Jill
Went up the hill
And got a pail of water
And brought it down
To mother dear
Who thanked her son and daughter.

Wm. Hughes Mearns closes a cleverly written article interpreting Mother Goose with the expression of his conviction that Solomon Grundy was a school teacher. The things that convinced him of this are that Solomon took a lease on life on Monday; after engaging in life on Tuesday and Wednesday, he took ill on Thursday. He was worse on Friday, by Saturday he died, and on Sunday he was actually buried. Every occupation, no matter what it is, can find its counterpart, in fun or in earnest in Mother Goose. Every person can find a mirror in which to see himself.
CHAPTER IX

THE PART CHILDREN HAVE PLAYED IN THE FORMATION OF MOTHER GOOSE

It would be to be expected that children would play an important part in forming nursery rhymes. They have not so much made the rhymes as they have furnished the audience, - an audience which has effectively rejected some rhymes and adopted others.

The first effect children have had on the folk literature is to purify it. In the old collections of Mother Goose there were many coarse rhymes. When these were taken for nursery rhymes the obscene had to be weeded out. Many people who descend to vulgarities themselves do not wish children taught them. Americans have helped in this, too. The early New Englanders who adopted Mother Goose were most uncompromising in this regard.

Second, they have caused them to be in the most perfect of rhythm. If one tries to sway a baby up and down, one naturally adopts a most rhythmic accompaniment. James Russell Lowell says of the versification:

Perhaps the best quantitative verses in our language (better even than Coleridge's) are to be found in Mother Goose, composed by nurses wholly by ear, and beating time as they danced the baby on their knee.

Third, if written for children, they had to be in short sentences. As a matter of fact, these sentences are complete.

1. Hankin's Mother Goose and her English Grammar
and exceptionally well formed. Jean Sherwood points out the pithiness of the rhymes, giving the following as an example. Note nine complete and perfectly formed sentences in three couplets. See also the completeness of the biography:

There was an old woman and nothing she had,  
And so this old woman was said to be mad;  
She'd nothing to eat and nothing to wear;  
She'd nothing to lose and nothing to fear;  
She'd nothing to ask and nothing to give:  
And when she did die, she'd nothing to live.

Fourth, since many of the children are very small, Mother Goose has gathered up the lullabies of the ages, and preserved them.

Sleep, baby, sleep,  
Our cottage vale is deep;  
The little lamb is on the green,  
With woolly fleece so soft and clean.  
Sleep, baby, sleep.

Sleep, baby, sleep,  
Down where the woodbines creep;  
Be always like the lamb so mild,  
A kind, and sweet, and gentle child.  
Sleep, baby, sleep.

The quiet and comport of the ages is gathered into the lullabies. Here is one when the mother is gone working, bringing home the flour.

Hush thee, my babby,  
Lie still with thy daddy,  
They mammy has gone to the mill,  
To grind thee some wheat,  
And so, my dear babby, lie still.

1. Rankin’s Mother Goose and her English Grammar  
2. The Real Mother Goose, Rand McNally  
3. Halliwell’s Nursery Rhymes and Tales, p.87
The lullaby written for James the First has become quite universal. Isn't every father a nobleman, every mother a queen? Tennyson's "Sweet and Low" ranks right with the folk songs, and is often given in the collections which are mostly Mother Goose. The babies themselves accept it.

Dolly has to have a lullaby too:

Hush, baby, my dolly, I pray you don't cry,
And I'll give you some bread and some milk by-and-bye;
Or perhaps you like custard, or, maybe, a tart,
Then to either you're welcome, with all my heart.

Fifth, since these are for children, there are many rhymes which are written to acquaint baby with himself. From time very very far back come these:

This little pig went to market;
This little pig stayed at home;
This little pig had roast beef;
This little pig had none;
This little pig said, "Wee, wee! I can't find my way home."

Here sits the Lord Mayor,
Here sit his two men,
Here sits the cock,
Here sits the hen,
Here sit the chickens,
Here they run in.
Chin-chopper, chin-chopper, chin-chopper, chin!

On the father's knee the little child is riding:

Here goes my lord
A trot, a trot, a trot, a trot,
Here goes my lady
A canter, a canter, a canter, canter!

1. The Real Mother Goose, Rand McNally (not paged)
2. Ibid.
Here goes my young master
Jockey-hitch, jockey-hitch, jockey-hitch! Here goes my young miss
An amble, an amble, an amble!

The footman lags behind to tipple ale and wine,
And goes gallop, a gallop, a gallop, to make up his time.

These are but samples of a whole host of charming little
games to play with those to whom the whole of life is new.

Then we imagine with them, such wild, wild things:

If all the seas were one sea,
What a great sea that would be!
And if all the trees were one tree
What a great tree that would be!
And if all the axes were one axe,
What a great axe that would be!
And if all the men were one man,
What a great man he would be!
And if the great man took the great axe
And cut down the great tree
And let it fall into the great sea,
What a splish splash that would be!

Here is an adventure, the little scare of a boy who wishes
to be so brave:

A little boy went into a barn,
And lay down on some hay,
And owl came out and flew about,
And the little boy ran away.

Here comes a little quarrel:

Molly, my sister and I fell out,
And what do you think it was all about?
She loved coffee, and I loved tea
And that was the reason we couldn't agree.

1. The Real Mother Goose, Rand McNally (not paged)
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
Mother Goose does what we would like to do. Men have wanted to fly for so many generations. See Mother Goose doing this:

Old Mother Goose when
She wanted to wander
Would ride through the air
On a very fine gander.

This gander is quite as wonder giving as was Aladdin's Lamp.
CONCLUSION

We have tried to show how folk literature is formed from ancient myths, from primitive customs, from old ways of counting and games, from religious chants, from historic sources, from the nursery itself. We have seen how in selecting these folk rhymes a nation chooses those which embody its own character and ideals. We have observed that folk tales change after they are written. Every child gives new meaning to the rhymes that he adopts. These rhymes are chameleon. They take on the color of their association. It does not matter if there was once bitterness in many of these rhymes. The children have laughed it all out.

Are there folk tales being formed now? Are there folk rhymes that are new? Printing is in some ways a hindrance to folk rhyming. They (the rhymes) do not have a chance to grow, to mellow into a beautiful meaning. Our verses are printed while they are yet hard and green. They are copyrighted, and can't be changed.

The New World has two new sets of folk tales to offer the world. The Indians are new; the negroes are a bit different from those of Africa. Hiawatha deserves to become a folk rhyme hero. Joel Chandler Harris has some characters Mother Goose would adopt if she were younger.

We have come across just one rhyme from America that is being added to Mother Goose. It is not yet often printed. But
it is universally known.

Eena, meena, mina, mo,
Ketch a nigger by his toe,
If he hollers, let him go,
Eena, meena, mina mo.

Now where did this come from, with its old Gaelic counting, at the beginning and the end, and its negro middle? Surely it did not come from the mothers. They are always telling their children: "Do not say 'nigger'. It is disrespectful." This does not come from the teachers. "Children, always say Catch not Ketch; never say holler. There isn't any such word." Isn't there? Here it is. Just a wilful little folk rhyme, a mongrel, a mixture of the old world and the new. It isn't so often printed. But you had heard it, hadn't you? It would seem to be on the Mother Goose waiting list. It is as yet very young, though we do not know just when it came to be.

Folklore reaches back, and makes all time that has been, the present. It reaches out and makes every people our people. In the Nursery we are all children. Just as the youngest child represents a continuous line from the first man, so the present Mother Goose is a descendant of the first primitive thinking. The formation of folklore is as continuous as life itself.
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II. Articles
