

SOME NOTES ON JAMES BURNS AS A PUBLISHER OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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'The time has surely come', wrote Kathleen Tillotson in 1954, 'to break up "the Victorian novel" into manageable segments; not by novelists, or phases, but simply by concentrating upon a decade or so at a time'.¹ The signs are surely clear that the presence of these words at the start of her seminal study, *Novels of the eighteen-forties*, was something of a clarion-call, and for the last forty years the academic cohorts have been sweeping into the territory whose fruitfulness was made so manifest in that book. Decades, novelists, categories, phases, have all been grist to the many mills of 'Victorian studies' and no one can now complain, as Mrs Tillotson did, that 'we have virtually no edited texts of Victorian novelists, and no means . . . of discovering how (and why) the original editions differed from the texts we read'.²

Where Victorian children's books are concerned however, the signs are not so clear. For all the significance that these books may have had in the lives of their youthful readers, very few of them today exercise any compulsive interest (especially for academic entrepreneurs), and anyone investigating the genre will probably agree that a coherent account is hard to come by. 'Manageable segments', whether decade-studies or categoric analyses are in short supply as is, very often, the evidence upon which they may be based.

This is as true now for the eighteen-forties in children's literature as it was when Kathleen Tillotson set about giving a context to the novels of the same period. And yet that decade is one of singular interest to the historian of English children's books, for,

* In an effort to supplement what printed evidence I have been able to find, I have pestered many people with queries about Burns's activities in the 1840s. I am grateful to the following for their patience in trying to help: Michael Bott, Tom Burns, Adrian Dover of the Birmingham Bibliographical Society, Mrs P. Thomson of the William Salt Library, Stafford, and also the library staff of the British Library, the London Library, the St Bride Printing Library, and the Brotherton Library of Leeds University. Most of all though, I must thank Helen Lefroy, Stuart Hannabuss, and my wife Valerie, a persistent fellow-sleuth after bibliographical detail and an uncomplaining emergency typist.

¹ Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the eighteen-forties*, corrected reprint (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 1.

² *Ibid.*, ix.

during its span, there were laid down the foundations upon which much of the subsequent profuse and energetic development took place. Before 1840 there had been surges of creative activity, especially during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, but these produced few original texts and few illustrative ventures that sustained themselves far into the Victorian period, let alone into the twentieth century. With the coming of the 1840s however a whole cluster of works materialized which were to have both lasting success and lasting influence.

The example was set just before the decade began, with Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday house* (Edinburgh, 1839) which broke the mould of the conventional domestic moral tale. A couple of years later, John Ruskin wrote the first English *Kunstmärchen: The king of the golden river* (not published, however, until 1851), and in 1846 there appeared the first English translations of the *Kunstmärchen* of H.C. Andersen – four different editions in one year with others following pell-mell afterwards. Frederick Marryat, in 1841 and 1847, published, respectively, *Masterman Ready* and *The children of the New Forest*, which last has some claim to be the longest-lived English novel for children still found in print; and finally, there appeared two excursions into nineteenth-century surrealism which have both had incalculable repercussions: Mr Derry-Down-Derry's *Book of nonsense* of 1846 and the anonymous translation of Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*, imported from its Leipzig printer in 1848.

A list such as this may help to indicate how far there was a qualitative difference in the attitude towards making books for children during the 1840s, when contrasted with the dullness of the preceding fifteen years, and this difference was accentuated, if not, in part, stimulated by the rapidly changing commercial context of the English book trade as a whole. Population growth, improvements in literacy, railway-mania and its effect on distribution, were some of the factors that led to a huge increase in the market for books, and with this increase there came the need for book-producers to specialize, so that the functions of printers, binders, publishers and booksellers separated out, allowing for more competition and hence more flexibility in meeting market demands. And such refinements in trade structure were matched by the developing technology of book-production itself. Throughout the 1840s innovation was rife in almost every branch from type-founding to decorative binding, and this was nowhere more obvious than in the technology of illustration, where wood-engraving began to take on the proportions of an industrial craft, and where the first experiments in colour-printing were beginning to be used for large-scale print-runs.

Almost all these commercial and industrial developments affected the publishing of children's books whose editing, design, production and marketing during the 1840s became specialized to an extent which (again) brings it much closer to twentieth-century practice than

anything that had occurred before. By far the best-known example of this revolution is found in the publishing activity of Joseph Cundall who, in 1843, was co-opted by Henry Cole, alias 'Felix Summerly', to be the publisher of his 'Home Treasury' series of books for children (mostly based on traditional texts), and who, in association with Charles Whittingham the Younger at the Chiswick Press, and – significantly – with colour-printers Gregory, Collins and Reynolds, began to produce books of an invigorating freshness.³

The attractiveness of Cundall's work, and the extent to which it has been chronicled, have however deflected attention from a near-contemporary, whose brief career as a publisher of children's books deserves a more systematic description than it has so far received. In a business life of nearly forty years, James Burns was regularly involved with children's books for only seven. But they were years in which he developed a policy and a style of his own, and although these hardly matched the panache of the Cundall/Summerly partnership they had a character which gives further warrant for seeing the 1840s as a period of vital transition for English children's literature.

James Burns was born in 1808 'at a small town [presumably Duns] near Montrose, in Forfarshire'⁴ the second son of a Presbyterian minister. The few slender biographical sources suggest that he was intended to follow his father's path and that he was well educated (at his death he was said to have 'knowledge of Latin, Greek, German, French and Italian'⁵). His maternal grandfather, however, was James Chalmers, 'a learned printer' and founder of the *Aberdeen Journal*⁶ and his namesake was drawn to the publishing trade. In 1832, in his twenty-sixth year, he removed to London to join the publishing house of Whittaker, Treacher & Co. at 13 Ave Maria Lane. Whittaker's were a safe, respectable firm – one of their big lines was 'improved editions' of Pinnock's varied, but always dull, *Catechisms* – and their conservative approach to their work was reflected in the sober but decent standards which they maintained in matters of typography and book-production.

³ Cundall has been lauded ever since Thackeray reviewed his whole operation in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1846, and he has been the subject of a full-scale study, with chronological checklist: Ruari McLean, *Joseph Cundall: a Victorian publisher* (Pinner: Private Libraries Assoc., 1976), and of an investigation into his connection with Cole: Geoffrey Summerfield, 'The making of the "Home Treasury"', *Children's Literature*, 8 (1979).

⁴ Joseph Gillow, *A literary and biographical history . . . of the English Catholics*, vol. i (London: Burns and Oates, 1885), 346.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁶ [Michael Trappes-Lomax], *Early chapters in the history of Burns and Oates* (London: private circulation, 1949), ii. There were however two James Chalmers, the father, printing from 1736–64, who founded the *Journal*, and the son, who succeeded him and printed from 1764–1810. Either could have been the father of Elizabeth Chalmers, but both may have been an indirect influence on her son, James Burns. (See G.H. Bushnell in *A dictionary of the printers and booksellers . . . in . . . Scotland* (Oxford: Bibliographical Society, 1932), 291–2.)

Burns clearly used his time of employment at Whittaker's to build up a comprehensive knowledge of the trade, and after only three years he left them to establish his own business on the other side of London, first at 1 Duke Street, Manchester Square and, a year later, in 1836, at nearby 27 Portman Street. (In 1838 he moved a few yards to 17 Portman Street and that remained his chief address for the rest of his working life.)

During these early years the business almost certainly operated chiefly as a bookshop, with Burns building up a specialist stock in works relating to the Established Church. At some time or other during his Scottish or London years he had abandoned his Presbyterianism and he was drawn not merely to Anglicanism, but to the Higher version of it that was finding expression in the series of 'Tracts for the Times', that had begun publication from Oxford in 1833. A sympathy for the 'serious call' which these represented in doctrinal affairs, was probably reinforced by Burns's interest in the formal Anglican liturgy and especially in church music, in whose history and performance he took an abiding pleasure.

Given his participation in Church issues and the increasing urgency of religious debate, Burns must have believed that there was an opportunity for him to utilize the experience gained at Whittaker's and to project a publishing programme which he could develop in conjunction with his activities as a retailer. Among his earliest attempts to follow such a plan was the formidably titled *The mystery of godliness in six lectures* by John Ayre, M.A., Minister of St John's Chapel, Hampstead, which came out at the end of 1837 and coincided with a separate venture that gives a good insight into Burns's publishing methods.

This was the promoting of volume iv of the *Church of England Magazine* (16pp., to be sold weekly at 1½d., monthly at 8d., or in annual volumes, cloth, at 5s.) which Burns was publishing in partnership with W. Edwards – who was a near neighbour of Whittaker in Ave Maria Lane. The joint venture is significant and is to appear again with other collaborating names, while the involvement in serial publication is something that seemed to appeal to Burns's temperament (shades of that grandfatherly *Aberdeen Journal*). Editing magazines and getting them out on time is an onerous – and all too often unprofitable – undertaking, but Burns engaged in it on several occasions in his career and he also adopted magazine pricing techniques in some of the literary series that he published. Single volumes might be bound up with others to make a compendium, or volumes might be individually priced and then discounted if sold in sets.

For several years Burns persevered with his worthy, recondite, and hence rather sluggish, programme. Its benefit, however, was to give him a reputation in the High Church movement which not only helped him to gauge his market for both books and magazines (he

took over *The Christian Remembrancer* in 1840) but also gave him access to churchmen who were eager to get their lucubrations into print. His first big attempt to capitalize upon this came about through an association with two High Churchmen, the Rev. Edward Churton, rector of Crayke in the North Riding, and the Rev. William Gresley, who in 1840 became a prebendary of Lichfield Cathedral. Between them they established in January 1840 'The Englishman's Library' which Burns advertised as 'a series of cheap publications adapted for general reading, uniting a popular style with soundness of principle; particularly adapted for presents, and also suited for class-books, lending libraries & c. .'.⁷

Gresley supplied No.1 in the series: *Clement Walton, or The English citizen* (3s.) and Churton No. 8: *The early English Church* (4s. 6d.), both volumes appearing, along with eleven companions, in 1840, by the end of which *Clement Walton* was being advertised as being in its sixth thousand. The operation has something of the character of a piece of twentieth-century 'saturation publishing', and while the Dean of Lichfield's *Scripture history; the Old Testament*, or William Sewell's *Christian morals* do not look like runaway best-sellers the rapid arrival of title after title as the year progressed must have had a cumulative impact, giving publicity to a relatively unknown firm.

At the same time as 'The Englishman's Library' was being edited, Burns was also making a move towards similar collaborative and multi-title ventures which would (he hoped) appeal to a wider and a younger readership than much of his foundation list. Simultaneously with his advertising of the first year's production of the 'Library' he was also listing 'Burns's Series of Narrations and Tracts for Presents, Prizes &c. Illustrated with Cuts', a cheap series of a dozen booklets, some bound in cloth, some in paper, with one or two titles that included 'for the young' within their rubric. They were a motley assemblage, ranging from the Rev. W. Pridden's *Richard Morton; a village tale* at sixpence to Archdeacon Wilberforce's *The rocky island and other parables*, 'with engravings', at half-a-crown – which lordly sum was conformable to the dignity of 'Soapy Sam', the future Bishop of Oxford, who supplied his young readers with catechetical questions at the end of his parables.

The series – such as it was – was forerunner to an altogether more coherent exercise which Burns undertook a year or two later when he began to issue a group of twopenny tracts, twenty-four to thirty-six pages long, in sugar-paper covers. These were modelled on a style that had been popular with the Religious Tract Society for many years, and which had been followed by other firms, most notably perhaps Houlston of Wellington and Darton & Clark in their editions of Mrs Sherwood's children's tracts.

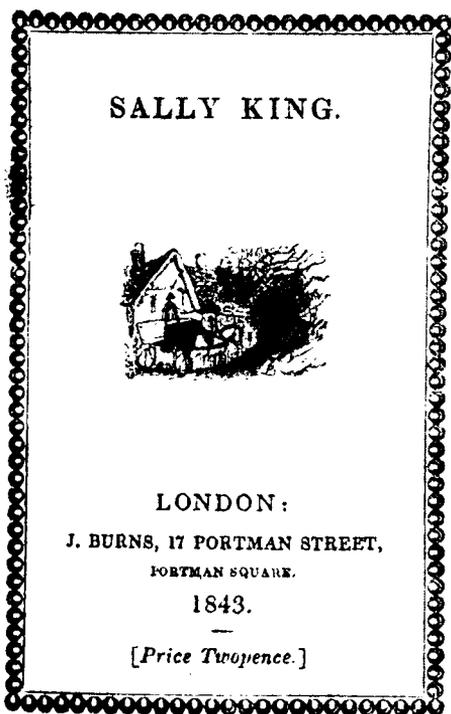
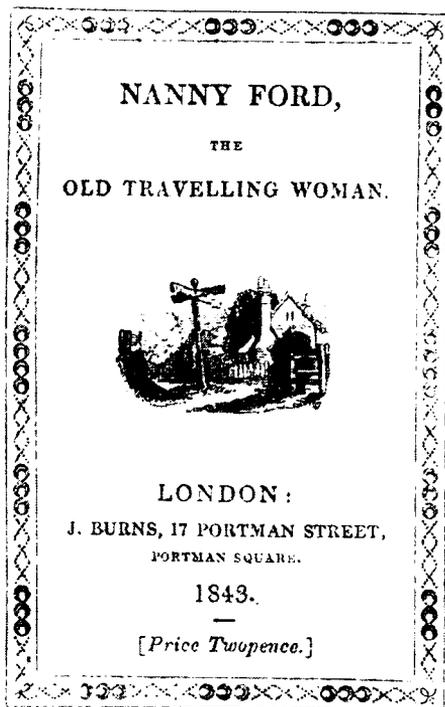
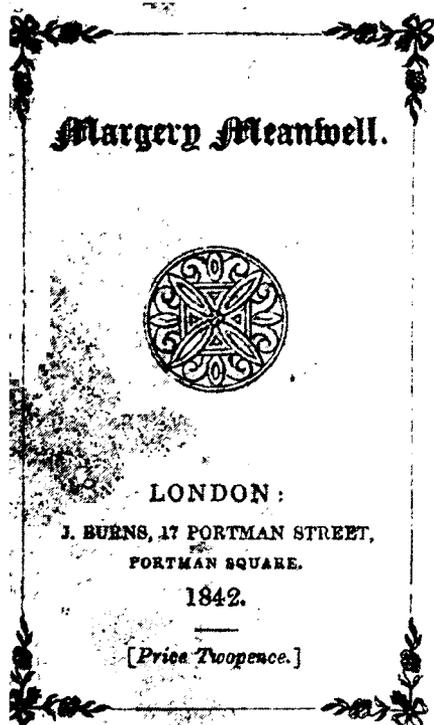
⁷ *Publishers Circular*, 15 Dec. 1840, 318.

Unlike Burns's earlier series, these narrations were all intended for children and they were very much in the genre of tracts for village children. The eighteenth century could still be discerned in their rural setting and their moral stance (indeed, two of them formed a re-working of *Goody Two-shoes*) but they were here and there intruded upon by nineteenth-century religious lessons, either in a didactic aside or in a more direct assertion of scriptural authority. Authorship, as was often the case with tracts, was anonymous – some being simply signed 'L' – but they were mostly the composition of the Lefroy family and thus a product of a literary lineage that had elsewhere resulted in *Pride and prejudice* and *Emma*.

Anna Lefroy (1793–1872) was the prime mover in submitting these little tales to James Burns. She was Jane Austen's favourite niece – the daughter of Jane's elder brother James, and the widow of Benjamin Lefroy, rector of Ashe, who had died young and left her with seven children to bring up. Apart from some amusing fictional *jeux d'esprit* which she had engaged in with her aunt,⁸ she had also had work published in magazines and in 1841 Burns included in his 'amusing and instructive books, suited for children from two to twelve years of age' her story *The winter's tale*, which was followed by *Spring-tide*. This entrée must have encouraged her to involve her older daughters in tract-production and from 1843 onwards the family wrote over twenty moral, godly and sometimes very entertaining tales for children for Burns or for other Church of England publishers (see Appendix).

While this was going on, Burns was also involving himself with another group of people with something of a literary pedigree: the Mozleys. This family is of considerable interest to students of eighteenth-century children's literature on account of their piratical activities as printers at the 'Lilliputian Manufactory' at Gainsborough. As the years had gone by however – especially after their move to Derby in 1815 – they had turned into respectable God-fearing tradesmen whose commercial activities had led to the publishing of tracts and sober religious works (and also the establishment of a London office in Paternoster Row). Higher education and Tractarianism had intruded too, and by the 1840s James Mozley (1813–78) had become a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and was editing Burns's *Christian Remembrancer*, while his elder brother Thomas (1806–93), formerly a fellow of Oriel, had taken over the editorship of *The British Critic* from John Henry Newman and was also busily helping with the publicizing of 'Tracts for the Times'.

⁸ William Austen-Leigh and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, *Jane Austen; a family record*, revised and enlarged by Deirdre Le Faye (London: The British Library, 1989), 170–1; and a variety of amused comments in Jane Austen's *Letters to her sister Cassandra and others*, collected and edited by R.W. Chapman, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).



Four of Burns's Twopenny Tracts Written by Members of the Lefroy Family
see listing on pp. 124-5

Thomas had another, closer, connection to Newman however, for in 1836 he had married his elder sister Harriett Elizabeth Newman, and she brought to James Burns one of the most distinguished books 'for the young' that he ever published. This was her novel *The fairy bower, or The history of a month*, which was jointly published by James Burns and by Henry Mozley and Sons of Derby in 1841. By the racy standards of *Holiday house* (at least in its early chapters), to say nothing of twentieth-century 'books for adolescents', *The fairy bower* is a slow book. Its tiny plot hinges on a moral dilemma whose resolution through 386 pages today seems inexplicably tortuous; should Grace Leslie expose perfidious Mary Anne Duff, who is taking undeserved credit for constructing the decorative 'fairy bower' that was made and illuminated for a Twelfth Night party? The scale of Harriett Mozley's exploration of this issue allows us to perceive the subtle repercussions of thought and action that spread through a whole group of adults and children, and her handling of character goes far to give her apparently trivial story both depth and humour – 'a neglected minor masterpiece' says Kathleen Tillotson in *Novels of the eighteen-forties*.⁹

In association with the Derby Mozleys, James Burns also published Harriett's sequel to *The fairy bower*, an even more expansive 'conversation piece' in two volumes: *The lost brooch* (1841), along with her novel *Louisa* (1842, carrying, significantly, a quotation from Jane Austen as its epigraph). Such a connection, coupled with the editorial energy that Burns was now displaying, probably prompted him towards a further incursion into publishing for children in his favoured medium of a periodical. At the start of 1842 he brought out the first number of *Magazine for the Young*, a single-sheet duodecimo in printed paper wrappers.

By the standards of magazines that were to follow later in the Victorian period, this periodical looks to have presented a fairly severe test to its youthful readers' loyalty. True, there were serial stories, carefully-written for all their improving tendency, but they lacked the forward impetus needed to make children want to read on. True, there were shorter pieces and occasional wood-engraved pictures and other decorations, but these were often of a devotional character, educating the young in 'Church seasons and services' (e.g. a mystifying essay on the circumcision), or 'Emblems', or supplying brief instructive fables. Poetic contributions ranged over such diverse subjects as Spenser's Red Cross Knight, Mrs Howitt's 'Spider and the fly' and some often gloomy reflections like 'The child's request':

⁹ Tillotson, *Novels*, 5. See also Margaret Kennedy, 'Harriett Mozley: a forerunner of Charlotte Yonge' in *A chaplet for Charlotte Yonge*, ed. Georgina Battiscombe and Marghanita Laski (London: The Cresset Press, 1965), 41–55.

My eyes are closing fast in death;
 But ere their light is fled,
 Dear mother, lay thy gentle hand
 In blessing on my head. . .¹⁰

Anna Lefroy can also be identified as a contributor through her initials I.A.E.L., while in October 1846 readers were introduced to Mrs Wright and the pupils of Langley School. These six unadorned, anonymous, descriptive pages mark Charlotte Yonge's first attempt at writing for children, and Langley School would continue to feature in the magazine until its plain tales were brought together in a book, published by the Mozleys in 1850.

Up to this point, little in Burns's activity served to distinguish him from the dowdy, run-of-the-mill, small-time publishers of the 1830s. In 1844 however he took two steps towards giving his house a more individual character.

The first of these was the launching of a companion series to 'The Englishman's Library', intended for younger readers and hence named, without much originality, 'The Juvenile Englishman's Library'. The idea for the project almost certainly came from William Gresley and the group of churchmen at Lichfield who were writing for the adult series. Among them was the Reverend Francis Edward Paget, rector of Elford (a parish a few miles to the east of Lichfield) and 'chaplain to the Lord Bishop of Oxford'. In 1841 he had contributed *Tales of the village* to 'The Englishman's Library' and in 1844 he turned to the children of the same imaginary site – Yateshull, with its pastor, Mr Warlingham – and produced *Tales of the village children*.

There must be some doubt over how far Burns was involved with the initiation of this book, for it was printed in Rugeley, Staffordshire, by John Thomas Walters, who puts himself foremost on the title-page with Burns appearing in secondary capacity, almost like a London agent. But by 1844 Burns was an experienced publisher, where Walters was primarily a printer, and the likelihood is that Walters – as an interested party on the spot – was working with Burns on some kind of profit-sharing basis. (Burns certainly instigated a part-issue scheme with the book, putting out individual stories 'for school rewards', printed from the standing type, with his own name on the 'neatly coloured paper cover' but with a joint imprint on the title-page.)

Publishing responsibility for *Tales of the village children* is of some consequence because the book's progress through the press must have encouraged the plan for 'The Juvenile Englishman's Library', which was set up simultaneously 'under the Editorial

¹⁰ *Magazine for the Young*, 5 (April 1846), 95.

superintendence of the Rev. F.E. Paget'.¹¹ The advertisement from which that announcement is taken specifically relates the library to its predecessor: 'adapted to a *younger* class of readers' than that 'popular collection' and continuing:

Some of these volumes will be more especially suited to the perusal of young persons of the middle and higher ranks, while others will be appropriate for Rewards in National Schools &c.

Of the works in preparation some will be of a more serious character, – didactic, or biographical; others will be of a lighter description, but such as, without being *directly* religious, shall nevertheless inculcate sound principles, and tend to develop [sic] the youthful churchman's character.

Right at the start *Tales of the village children* did not figure as part of the library, and the first volume in the series was that modestly momentous work *The hope of the Katzekopfs: a fairy tale* by William Churne of Staffordshire, with, once again, John Thomas Walters of Rugeley featured first on the title-page. (Pretty soon *Tales of the village children* was brought into the series, and the second edition of *Katzekopfs* was designated No. II. The third book was *Henri de Clermont, or The royalists of La Vendée: a tale of the French Revolution*, by the indefatigable William Gresley, also published by Walters and Burns in 1844.)

As is now well known, 'William Churne of Staffordshire' was, in fact, Francis Edward Paget himself, taking on the character of the old storyteller who was the hero of Richard Corbet's seventeenth-century 'Fairies' farewell' with its resonating opening line 'Fare-well, rewards and fairies . . .' Despite the implied reverence for old tales though, Paget's attempt at a new 'fairy tale' is undermined by didactic intention. *The hope of the Katzekopfs* sets off at a cracking pace which, justly, has been seen as a possible influence on Thackeray in his telling of *The rose and the ring* in 1855, but Paget cannot sustain it as Thackeray does. In his introduction, impersonating William Churne, he asks whether the youth of the rising generation

have yet patience to glean the lessons of wisdom, which lurk beneath the surface of legendary tales, and the chronicles of the wild and supernatural; whether their hearts can be moved to noble and chivalrous feelings, and to shake off the hard, cold, calculating, worldly, selfish temper of the times, by being brought into more intimate contact with the ideal, the imaginary, and the romantic. . .¹²

but there is, alas, all too close to the surface of the wild tale that he has invented a calculating morality: a fantasy designed to teach the perils of self-will.

¹¹ Advert on the final leaf of *Popular tales* (1844).

¹² F.E. Paget, *The hope of the Katzekopfs* (1844), xiii–xiv.

Nonetheless, by beginning 'The Juvenile Englishman's Library' with a story that acknowledged the value of the imagination, F.E. Paget and his publishers were seeking to make a formal case for the revival of traditional fancy in literature intended for the young. In doing so they were setting out a philosophy for children's reading that parallels liberal opinions that were being expressed elsewhere. 'William Churne' is caused to agree in a belief that:

a race that has been glutted with Peter Parley, and Penny Magazines, and such like stories of (so called) useful knowledge, will condescend to read a Fable, and its moral [and] interest themselves with the grotesque nonsense . . . of a Tale of Enchantment¹³

and in so doing he is endorsing the view of Edgar Taylor, the first translator of tales by the Brothers Grimm, who in 1823 deplored the neglect of 'the popular tales of England' in favour of works of the age of reason.¹⁴ He is also duplicating Henry Cole's forceful defence of his 'Home Treasury', which Joseph Cundall, a fairly near neighbour of James Burns, began to publish in 1843. In his editorial manifesto Cole too invoked the name of Peter Parley and the 'narrow fashion' of his factual books for children in order to cry up 'the many tales sung or said from time immemorial' which appealed to the child's fancy, imagination, sympathies and affections.¹⁵

If Paget was consciously echoing Henry Cole's sentiments in his introduction to *The hope of the Katzekopfs*, the repetition should be taken as an act of support rather than of plagiarism, and in the next year or two Paget's London publisher was to demonstrate the same support with a remarkable expansion of his hospitality to fables, tales of enchantment, and a modicum of nonsense.

Not much of this found its way into 'The Juvenile Englishman's Library', which (as its early advertisement truly said) remained didactic in character. One of its few concessions to fancy was its fourth volume: *Popular tales* (Rugeley and London, 1844) which contained translations of three German forest-stories by Karl Spindler, Wilhelm Hauff and the Baron De La Motte Fouqué. If Paget, as editor, selected these, then it might be because their spirit had been an influence on his own *Kunstmärchen*. They all occupy a similar space between uninhibited folktale and the Sunday stories of the Bishop of Oxford: Spindler's 'St Sylvester's Night' being the most flat-footed and obvious, Hauff's 'Cold heart' being more mysterious (but enfeebled by its anonymous translator), and Fouqué's 'Red mantle' pre-figuring very distantly the ghost stories that M.R. James created.

¹³ Ibid., xiv.

¹⁴ *German popular stories . . . collected by M.M. Grimm from oral tradition* (London: C. Baldwin, 1823), iv.

¹⁵ Quoted from McLean, *Joseph Cundall*, 4.

Popular tales were, however, followed by a quantity of books, published by James Burns on his own, which more truly reflect that winning title. The most substantial example is a group of twenty stories published in 1845 which were sold either as separate books, bound in colour-printed paper-boards, or as a three-volume 'Book of nursery tales' sub-titled 'A keepsake for the young'. The unnamed editor (Burns himself?) supplied a preface to this compendium, commending it as 'a tolerably complete and uniform series of the more popular and pleasing of our ancient nursery fictions' and adding that various different versions of some stories had been collated and a new composite version placed before the reader. This was most obvious in stories like 'Cinderella' and 'Little Red Riding-hood' where portions of both the French and German tellings were incorporated; many of the other tales, which included stories from the Grimms, from Perrault, from Madame d'Aulnoy and from English tradition were merely shortened and, where necessary, sanitized – no red-hot shoes for the wicked queen in the Grimms' 'Snow-drop'. Perhaps the oddest inclusion was a recension of 'Goody Two-shoes' which looks as though it has been edited from Anna Lefroy's double tract edition of 1842: *The two orphans* and *Margery Meanwell*.

The inspiration behind the publishing of these nursery tales may well have been Joseph Cundall's revolutionary series that began to appear in 1843, which actually receives a puff in a footnote to the *Keepsake* Preface:

Those who may be desirous of procuring these tales in a more illustrated and expensive form are recommended to Mr F. Summerly's *Home Library*, in which [various stories] appear in a large and handsome type, and with the addition of tinted or coloured plates. . .

But Burns probably felt that he could be generous in seeking to buoy up the market for a fairy-tale revival and he was probably conscious that his own approach to 'popular tales' was by no means a carbon copy of his colleague down in Old Bond Street.

This is seen especially in his penchant for Continental – and especially German – models that were much in vogue at this time. Queen Victoria's marriage to Albert of Saxe-Coburg in 1840 had stimulated a national curiosity about Germanic traditions, which was paralleled at a literary level by a growing fascination with the quasi-medievalism of German Romanticism. Edgar Taylor's translations of the *German popular stories* of the Brothers Grimm, published in 1823 and 1826, were an early manifestation of this interest and Burns seems anxious to exploit the work of various German authors who were themselves influenced by the Grimms' work on Teutonic lore. He was particularly keen on the fantastic sagas of Baron De La Motte Fouqué, publishing at least eight volumes of them, with the famous *Undine* illustrated by John Tenniel

(1845) and *Sintram* by H.C. Selous (1847?); and he also issued volumes of 'select popular tales' by Wilhelm Hauff, J.K.A. Musaeus, and Ludwig Tieck, an edition of whose work he planned in 'two or three volumes . . . comprising some of the best and most popular fictions of this great author'.¹⁶

Several of these works came out in further series which Burns organized as an early mass-marketing ploy. Books in 'The Fireside Library' (21 volumes) and 'The Cabinet Library for Youth' (perhaps 5 volumes) did not follow a uniform editorial strategy, or even have uniform prices, but they bear witness to a tumultuous urge to fashion a publishing 'list' with great speed and through the use of edited or translated material that already existed rather than through commissioning original work. In one instance – following an example already set by Joseph Cundall – Burns published a volume of *Tales for the young* by Hans Christian Andersen (1847; volume II in 'The Cabinet Library for Youth') which ranks among the earliest attempts to get to grips with that near-untranslatable author. Although three publishers and three translators had made attempts in the year before *Tales for the young* appeared, none was in any way satisfactory. Caroline Peachey and Charles Boner appear to have been working at one remove, using inferior German texts, and Mary Howitt, whose knowledge of Danish was shaky, could not inject any of Andersen's unique tone into her version. So against such competition Burns's anonymous translator could hardly help but measure up. Several of his solutions to tricky colloquial phrases are better than equivalent earlier efforts and suggest an appreciation of Andersen's Danish style. How much the more extraordinary therefore is it to find him making one of the most incomprehensible howlers in the history of translation by misreading 'Den grimme Ælling' and producing a complete story about 'The little green duck'.

Burns's cosmopolitan innovations, however wayward, did not stop at texts. In an advertisement for his Andersen volume he notes that the stories have 'engravings after the German' (i.e. three full-page plates, with an additional English one designed by William Bell Scott) and this prompts notice of a German graphic style that pervades much of his children's book publishing during the mid-1840s.

That is not an unexpected phenomenon. Interest in German art was another of the characteristics of the period, whether found in belated news of the pieties of the Nazarene school of artists who had attracted British attention during the 1830s, or in the competitions held for the decoration of the rebuilt Palace of Westminster, or in the more pervasive influence of illustrative styles

¹⁶ Advert in the second edition of *Nursery rhymes, tales and jingles* (1847).

as popularized by artists who were familiar with the work of such draughtsmen as Friedrich Retzsch or Alfred Rethel.¹⁷ Germany might crop up anywhere, from *Punch* cartoons to the debates of the Cyclographic Society before they turned themselves into the Pre-Raphaelites.

So far as Burns is concerned, the eye-opener may well have been the appearance in 1842 of *The book of British ballads*, edited by Samuel Carter Hall (1800–89) and published by the little-known firm of Jeremiah How. Hall was at this time a leading enthusiast for German art, which he features in the *Art Union Journal* owned and edited by himself. He had been impressed by an illustrated version of *Das Nibelungenlied* that had come out in Leipzig in 1840 with elaborate wood engravings after Alfred Rethel – powerfully-drawn, pseudo-medieval scenes, encased, along with some ornamental typography, within a sequence of decorated frames. Hall's ambition with *The book of British ballads* was to naturalize the mode:

So to apply the great and admitted capabilities of British Art, as to prove that the embellished volumes of Germany and France are not of unapproachable excellence. . . [and to] submit examples of the genius of a large proportion of the more accomplished artists of Great Britain – as exhibited in drawing upon wood. The supremacy of our English engravers, in this class of Art, has long been established.¹⁸

Unlike *Das Nibelungenlied* with its one predominant artist, Hall's anthology thus became a show-case for a variety of talents. He followed his German model in giving a medieval flavour to the book with many fancy initials and with decorative frames around text and pictures (most of the latter running vertically alongside the letterpress ballad stanzas). The 'accomplished artists' who participated however, produced drawings that ranged from the stagey medievalism of John Franklin to the pastoralism of Samuel Williams. There was also the surprise of four faery drawings by Richard Dadd, while Hall's 'second series' of ballads, which How published in 1844, contained John Tenniel's first – and rather thinly conceived – book-illustrations. Nineteen English wood-engravers were also involved in the 1842 series, all turning in a smooth technical performance which justifies either of the two critical assessments of the book as a climax of 'the school of Bewick' or an harbinger of the picture-book glut of the 1860s.

For Burns, with his penchant for things Germanic, *The book of British ballads* may have shown how the German illustrative

¹⁷ For a close consideration of the many factors involved, see William Vaughan, *German Romanticism and English art* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979).

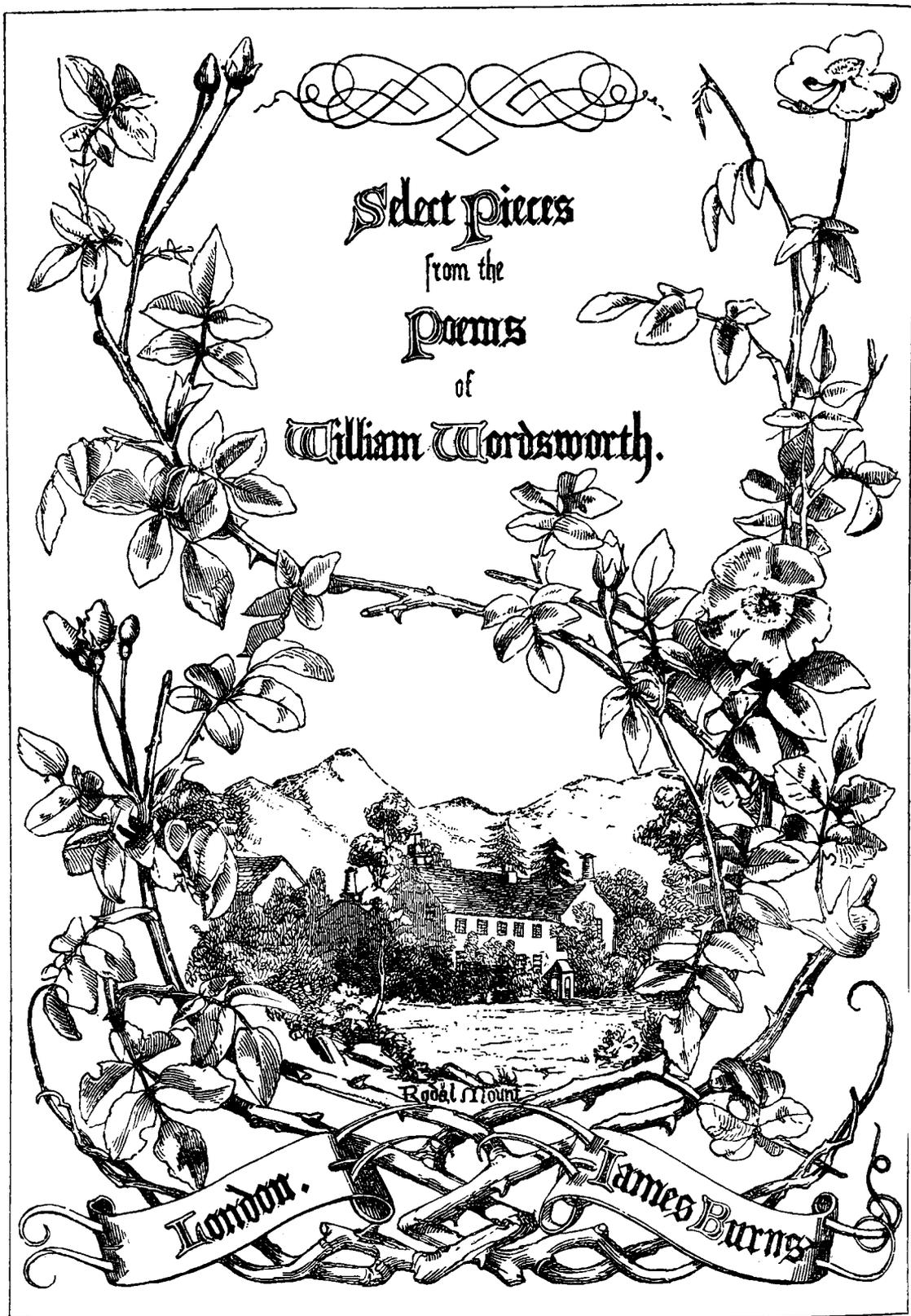
¹⁸ *The book of British ballads*, iii. 'The supremacy of English engravers' had, in fact, reached Germany. John Allanson and William Nicholls had set up a studio in Leipzig in the 1830s and Nicholls had engraved some of Rethel's designs for *Das Nibelungenlied*.

tradition could be incorporated into English books. From 1843 onwards his publishing style begins to loosen, with fewer works resembling hymn-books and with a burgeoning interest in collections and anthologies. In 1844 (hastily associating himself with Edward Moxon for copyright purposes) he published *Select pieces from the poems of William Wordsworth*, whose purpose he stated, in a fulsome dedication to Queen Victoria, was 'to familiarise the youth of the realm with such images of purity and beauty, and such lessons of truth and loyalty, as are herein contained'. This aim is not only reflected in a selection 'calculated for either childhood or youth' but also in a substantially-produced book with floral borders to its pages and pictorial headpieces to individual poems, some obviously owing their design to Germanic models.

Work on the production here, and on Anne Mozley's anthology of *Church poetry; or Christian thoughts in old and modern verse* (1843), provided experience for Burns's most august illustrated book: the *Poems and pictures* of 1846. With its sub-title 'a collection of ballads, songs and other poems. With one hundred illustrations on wood' this square quarto plainly recognizes its paternity in Hall's ballad book. It is not so sumptuously illustrated; many page-openings merely have floral decorations running up the margin (something of a Burns trade-mark), and the publisher draws upon a different, and perhaps less 'accomplished', team of draughtsmen – but much of the engraving was done by W.J. Linton, who had figured prominently in *Ballads* – backed up by Charles Gray, who figured there not at all. The artists Franklin and Corbould carry some of the weight that they did in *Ballads* and the appearance of H.C. Selous is encouraging, but the chief contributor, F.R. Pickersgill, and several others, including Tenniel, employ an 'outline style' (popular in Germany) which deprives the pages of energy.¹⁹

Burns clearly had a relish for decorated pages and many of his books, both for adults and children, have a 'house-style' of rustic frames and floral swags. (In one that I have examined, the *Short stories and poems* of 1846, the framed contents may have been chosen to accompany a collection of disparate wood-engravings, many of which are clearly of German origin, being copied from

¹⁹ Another minor contributor to *Poems and pictures* was William Dyce (1806–64), painter and High Churchman, much involved at this time in working on frescoes for the House of Lords. He hailed from Aberdeen and may even have known James Burns in his youth, and he drew six illustrations for the book. Stuart Hannabuss has kindly looked through the Dyce papers at Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museum for me, and he has turned up two letters from Burns to Dyce. They are mostly about church music, but there is mention of Dyce's participation in *Nursery rhymes, tales and jingles* which was published in 1844. Mr Hannabuss also found three letters from Dyce to Henry Cole, in one of which he reveals that 'the ornamental part' (presumably the floral and other borders) in Burns's books was 'mostly' done by an engraver who had been Dyce's pupil, O. Hudson. 'His fault is a crotchety temper', says Dyce and this may have affected his career. He does not appear in Rodney Engen's *Dictionary of Victorian wood engravers* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1985).



Title-page for William Wordsworth's *Select pieces*, 1844

(The wood-engraved design has been cut to allow typographical slugs to be incorporated for the titling etc.)

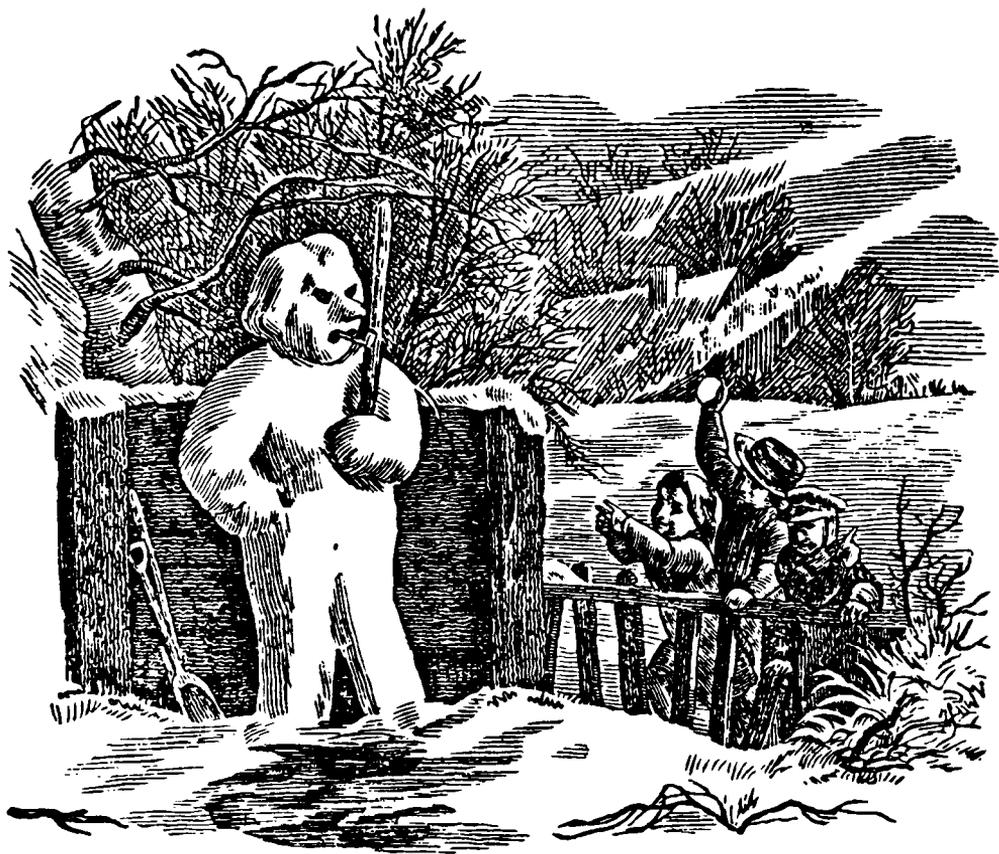
Speckter's pictures for Hey's *Fables*, which became popular in England as well as Germany.) Perhaps the most successful of all the children's books combines the elegance of well-designed pages with the spirit of some rollicking traditional texts. This is the *Nursery rhymes, tales and jingles*, first published in 1844 with a title-page printed in gold and a dedication to the Prince of Wales, the Princess Royal and the Princess Alice. (A second edition of 1847 added some supererogatory 'sacred songs'.)

A review in the *Examiner* called this 'a very tasteful, German-looking book', which is true enough, since several of the wood-engravings are either copies of, or are strongly influenced by, the poses, costuming, and decorative *mise en page* of German 'rustic' illustration. There is also a Germanic feel to the gilt blocking on the binding, which is a further element in book design to which Burns devoted increasingly close attention. While not always escaping an 'ecclesiastical' style, he showed a natural sense of elegance in his choice of book cloths and binder's brasses, and for a number of his more expensive children's books, like *Nursery rhymes, tales and jingles*, he went in for scarlet cloth with plenty of gilt all round. For individual booklets, like *Valentine* and *Orson*, excerpted from his 'Keepsake for the young' he employed the services of Gregory, Collins & Reynolds to print a sequence of very pretty floral designs on the paper-bound covers. The same wood-blocks were used for each title, but the colours were varied, and the work features among the earliest examples of colour-printing on a commercial scale.²⁰

Ruari McLean, in his broad surveys of Victorian book design, is the only commentator to mention Burns's distinctive contribution as a publisher, and no attempt elsewhere has been made to assess his activity in relation to the children's books of the 1840s. He was certainly not the only *afficionado* of Germanic models; with the illustrations of Wilhelm von Kaulbach, Ludwig Richter and Otto Speckter being much admired and copied,²¹ and with a continuously burgeoning exploitation of German folktales and fantasy stories. Such influences – to say nothing of the dramatic impact of *Struwwelpeter* in 1848 – were to feed in to ever more varied developments in the 1850s and 1860s and a better understanding of publishing in the 1840s is essential to 'reading' the texts and pictures of later times.

²⁰ See Ruari McLean, *Victorian book design and colour printing*, 2nd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 57–73. McLean also gives colour reproductions of 'keepsake' covers in *Victorian book-bindings in paper* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1983), 44.

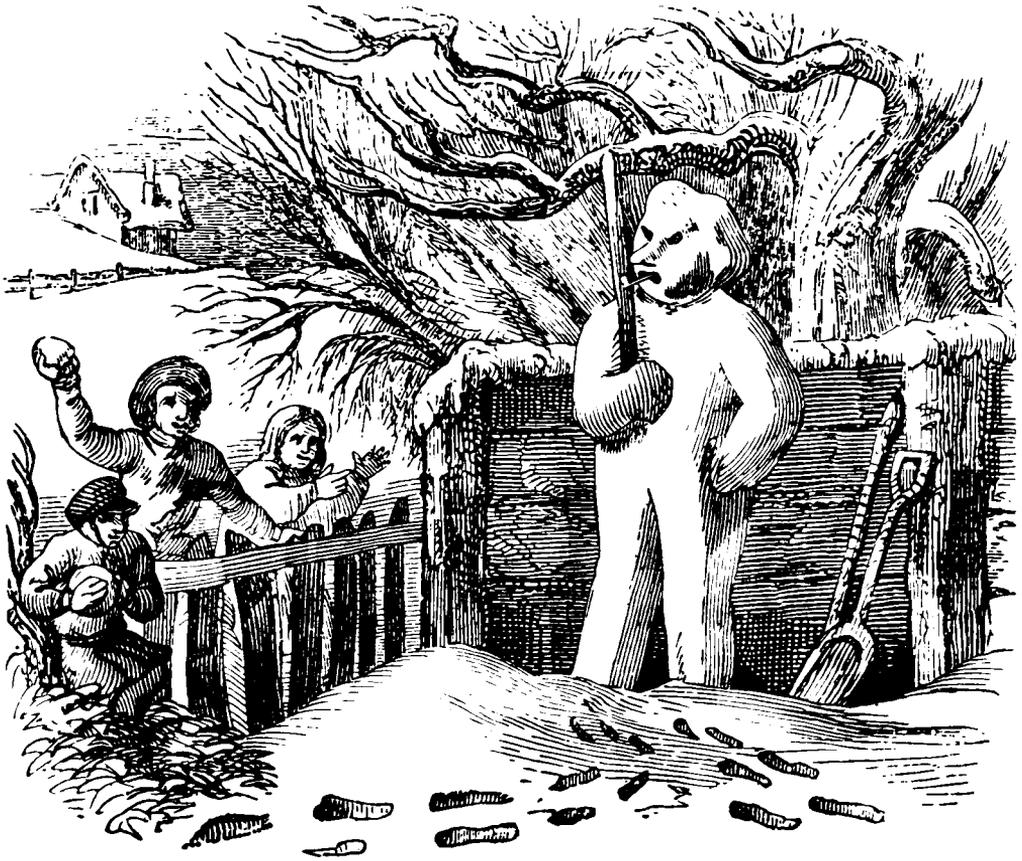
²¹ See Percy Muir, *Victorian illustrated books* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1971), 227–34. Otto Speckter was probably the best-known German artist whose work is found in English children's books at this time. As well as his head-pieces for Hey's *Fables*, first published in England under Speckter's name alone (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1844) he worked directly for Joseph Cundall and John Murray, for whom he did picture-book versions of *Puss-in-boots* and *The charmed roe*, from Grimm (1844 and 1847).



Schneemann.

Seht den Mann, o große Noth!
 Wie er mit dem Stocke droht
 Gestern schon und heute noch!
 Aber niemals schlägt er doch.
 Schneemann, bist ein armer Wicht,
 Hast den Stock und wehrst dich nicht.

Freilich ist's ein gar armer Mann,
 Der nicht schlagen noch laufen kann;
 Schleierweiß ist sein Gesicht.
 Liebe Sonne, scheine nur nicht,
 Sonst wird er gar wie Butter weich,
 Und zerfließt zu Wasser gleich.



The Snowman.

Look at him, O what a Guy!
 Who would not before him fly,
 Standing thus, with stick so stout,
 Threat'ning all his foes to rout,
 Did we not, from day to day,
 See him stand the self-same way?

Otto Speckter's 'Schneemann' woodcut (here taken from an edition of Hey's *Fabeln*, published in Hamburg in c. 1845) was the model for 'The Snowman' in Burns's *Short Stories and poems*, 1846, with the engraver reversing the original on the block.

There is no telling where James Burns's enterprise would have led him during the coming decades as the publishing of children's books in England gathered momentum. By 1847 he shared with the (financially shaky) Joseph Cundall a feeling for new directions and a commitment to style that might have been increasingly influential. But in that year his religious scruples dictated to him that he should give up his adherence to the Anglican rite and 'follow Newman to Rome'.

This decision was a drastic one for an entrepreneur in his position to make: a man winning prominence in the publishing industry with a shop full of books by prominent Puseyites. Much of his business, built up with such energy over so short a period, had to be abandoned and he necessarily turned his talents to the service of his new Church. A little anecdote has often been repeated of John Henry Newman, residing in Rome in 1847 and smiling over his novel *Loss and gain*, saying that 'poor Burns' had joined the faith and that he should be given the book to publish. (He was; and he went on to publish other works of Newman, including the early editions of *The dream of Gerontius*, and through such activity he became the founder of the leading Roman Catholic publishing house in Britain, still celebrated under the compound titles of Burns and Oates, or Burns, Oates and Washbourne.)

There was no return to children's books however. With a partner, Lambert – a man deeply interested, like himself, in church music and plainchant – he published a series of tracts for children: 'New books of instruction and entertainment'. These put across a Roman orthodoxy, where previously he had used tracts to foster the teachings of the Established Church, but from 1847 until his death on 11 April 1871 he made no consistent effort to revert to secular publishing. His old stock found its way to other publishers: Joseph Masters, for instance, took on 'The Juvenile Englishman's Library' and continued to publish tracts by the Lefroy family. John and Charles Mozley took over *Magazine for the Young* and continued to publish it alongside *The Monthly Packet*,²² which was edited by Charlotte Yonge and ran from 1851 to 1894. Other books were reissued on the remainder market (Edward Lumley, for instance, a noted dealer in second-hand books and remainder stock, published all the La Motte Fouqué titles, sometimes with Burns title-pages still bound in to sections where new stories began.) And sometimes

²² The British Library's run of *Magazine for the Young* shows the transition taking place. The 1847 parts are printed by Robson, Levey and Franklyn and published by Burns, but the bound-up annual comes from John and Charles Mozley. In 1848 they take over the printing and begin to publish the monthly numbers with Joseph Masters. The January 1848 cover states: 'This Magazine will continue to be published under the present editorship by Messrs John and Charles Mozley of Derby; and may be had by country booksellers through the usual channels'.

books materialized from other publishers which looked like ‘James Burns books’) but without his imprint. Intuitions about these can gain some support in books printed by the firm of Robson, Levey and Franklyn, whom Burns employed with great regularity.

Thus, the appearance in Cundall’s list in 1848 of ‘The Favourite Library’ printed by this firm and with something of the look of a Burns series raises the question of whether Cundall was here taking on a job which Burns had half-completed before defecting to his new calling. And the arrival on the market in 1860 of a book of *Select popular tales* by Hans Andersen makes one wonder whether Burns was not here making a covert attempt to resume publishing for children. The book is bound in red cloth gilt, is printed by Robson, Levey and Franklyn and is given the mysterious imprint ‘London: Cheap Popular Library Series’. It bears no relation to the *Tales for the young* of 1847, but still gives rise to the satisfying thought that James Burns liked children’s book publishing so much that he wanted to find some way to keep up the old connection.

Appendix: The Lefroy Family and their Writings

Evidence for the authorship of the tracts and little stories by the Lefroy family is given in a manuscript in the hand of George-Benjamin Lefroy (1818–1912), Anna’s only son. He heads it ‘List of Penny Books written by my sisters’ and goes on to list short-titles under their respective names, including ‘Mama’. His attributions are shown in the list below, only the initial titles of which are his (before the slash). The further corrections, expansions, and annotations have been made, where possible, by reference to the books themselves.

This augmentation is necessary in view of some unexplained contradictions in George-Benjamin’s list (i.e. texts signed ‘L’ attributed to different family members, and a similar confusion in books with ‘By the author of “The Conceited Pig”’ on the title-page). The first of these discrepancies may have arisen through the family simply applying ‘L’ to all their literary submissions; the second may have been a ploy of the publisher to cash in on the (comparative) success of the pig story. On internal evidence, I would certainly be inclined to ascribe *The ravens* to the same hand that wrote *The conceited pig* and its sequel, all of which show a respect for storytelling and an inclination to avoid moralizing. By the same token, the two stories in *The bird by the stream*, with their marked religious emphasis, may belong elsewhere. *Dick Field* and *Will Woodhouse*, although moral tales, have something of the same storytelling style as the secular tales.

I must acknowledge a great debt of gratitude to Helen Lefroy, a direct descendant of the family, and a former secretary of the Jane

Austen Society, for allowing me to copy George-Benjamin's list and for making copies of some of the tracts available to me.

'List of Penny Books written by my sisters'

Mama [i.e. Anna Lefroy]

Britons and Saxons

Not traced. An educational book *The Britons and the Saxons* was published by the Religious Tract Society in 1837.

East of Derby

Not traced.

Nanny Ford, /the old travelling woman. London, J. Burns, 1843

Signed 'L'.

Sally King/London, J. Burns, 1843

Sir Ronald Fanshaw

Not traced.

The two orphans

Not traced, but it forms the first part of the Lefroy adaptation of *The history of Little Goody Two-shoes* and is thus noted at the start of *Margery Meanwell*. London, J. Burns, 1842 (not listed by GBL).

Julia Cassandra [1816–84, later Lady Richards]

Birds of the stream/presumably *The bird by the stream &c.* London, J. Burns, 1843. This runs from pp. 1–12 and is followed by 'Fable of the discontented trees'. Signed 'L' (see under Fanny Caroline below)

The conceited pig/London, John & Charles Mozley, 1851 [earliest copy seen; it must have been published before 1848.]

Signed 'L'. The most successful of all the Lefroy stories, this 24mo was later published by the Mozleys in a larger 12mo format, with twelve wood-engraved illustrations after Harrison Weir. The idea for the tale of how Wilful Pig sets off to tell the Queen that the stars are falling comes from the nursery tale 'Henny-Penny'. The ending marks it as a distant forerunner of *Jemima Puddle-duck*. A sequel is noted under *Miss Peck* below.

Dirty Dick/presumably *Dick Field* London, J. Burns, 1843

Signed 'L'.

The little lace girl/By the author of *The conceited pig*, London, Joseph Masters, 1848.

Miss Peck/presumably *Miss Peck's adventures: the second part of 'The conceited pig'*. London, Joseph Masters, 1854

Not signed 'L', but clearly by the same hand as the first part – a charming, and even closer, re-rendering of 'Henny-Penny' almost entirely lacking in any sententiousness.

Will Woodhouse/London, J. Burns, 1846

Signed 'L'.

Fanny Caroline [1826–85]

The cat and her kittens

Not seen. The BL copy is catalogued as 'By the author of . . .' and given as Masters, 1848.

'The discontented trees'

Forming pp. 13–22 of *The bird by the stream*, above

The Ravens/By the author of . . . London, Joseph Masters, 1848

A version of the Grimm story of 'The seven ravens' but incorporating (quite nicely) elements from other Grimm tales

Susan Brown/London, J. Burns, 1846

Signed 'O', the only copy seen thus; but BMC lists two other 24mo booklets by 'O': *Bessy's first place* and *The new lodger*, both 1843 (not seen).

The two sheep/Not seen. BLC states London, 1848

Louisa Langlois [1824–1910, later Bellas]

Margaret Hunt/By the author of . . . London, Joseph Masters, 1848

The sprained ankle/By the author of . . . London, Joseph Masters, 1848

Elizabeth-Lucy [1827–96; later Laredos]

Dishonesty/By the author of . . . London, Joseph Masters, 1848

All the Burns tracts are printed by Robson, Levey and Franklyn and have wood-engraved vignettes on front and back covers and on the title-page with a wood engraving at the head and sometimes at the tail of the text. The Mozley items are printed by the Mozleys themselves at Derby, with the 1851 *Conceited pig* following Burns's design. The Masters tracts are, again, printed by the publisher, but are uniformly got up in starred pink paper wrappers, with frontispieces (mostly sc. M.U. Sears) and a floral vignette on the title-page. *Miss Peck's adventures* follows the same design in 12mo.

