

Letters to the Editor: Sophia Hawthorne and Nursery Rhymes

Sophia Hawthorne, Editor

SIR:—When Sophia Hawthorne “edited” her husband’s notebooks, deleting, revising, and refining the originals, she had had previous experience. Not only had she used the scissors freely on her journals in the interest of what she would probably have called good taste, but she had, as early as 1845, “edited” a Mother Goose book for Una.

The book was called “The Nursery Rhymes of England,”* a London publication reprinted in Boston in 1843. Though the book belonged to her husband, Sophia was allowed to delete and annotate it at her own discretion, one more of numerous instances which show that Sophia had her lord’s sanction for revisions in the interest of grammatical correctness and greater elegance and refinement.

The changes which she made in the nursery rhymes fall rather strikingly into three of the headings under which Mr. Randall Stewart arraigned Sophia: grammar, prudishness, and elegance.

In the rhyme book Sophia’s grammatical changes were of the kind made by teachers of English. In the jingle about the fates of the old woman’s three sons, “Jerry and James and John,” Sophia saw to it that Jerry was “hanged,” not “hung.” Robin and Richard who “were two pretty men” “lay” instead of “laid” in bed “till the clock struck ten.” The wonder of it is that they were allowed to be so lazy at all! The English editor made Little Bo Peep’s sheep come back “And bring their tails behind them,” but Sophia changed the verb to the participle “Bringing.” She always crossed out the English past tense “eat” wherever it occurred and substituted the American “ate.”

By far the largest group of changes made in this book was due to what Mr. Stewart has called “prudishness or false delicacy.” The words “devil” and “slut” are invariably crossed out and changed if possible. When not possible, the jingle is omitted. All references to sex are expunged. One can hardly blame Sophia for omitting such a passage as

*I’ll come to your wedding
Without any bidding
And lie with your bride all night.*

Una, Julian, and Rosebud might have asked embarrassing questions at that point. There are others which ought not to have disturbed innocent minds. Taylor’s love song to his lady fair whose “hand squeezed off is satin soft,” is apparently too sensuous, for it is labeled “Not to be read to Una.”

*THE NURSERY RHYMES OF ENGLAND, obtained principally from Oral Tradition, collected and edited by James Orchard Halliwell, esq., London: Boston, reprinted Monroe and Francis, 1843, now owned by Mr. W. T. H. Howe.



“Oh, how cute. Who is it by?”

Sophia was indeed hard on the too-realistic rhymes. Jack Sprat and his wife were marked right out.

*The butcher, the baker,
The candle-stick maker*

must not jump “out of a rotten potato,” nor must “puddings stink” or “fat fry.” A “drunken sot” is changed to “little tot” although he is referred to in the previous stanza as a grenadier!

The last group of revisions which can be paralleled in the “Nursery Rhymes” “consists”—to quote Mr. Stewart—“of changes in diction with a view to securing a greater elegance of expression.”† So “big-bellied Ben” gives way to “great big Ben”; a “bag full of rye” becomes a “pocket full”; and “swore” is invariably weakened to “said.” As to Pussy-in-the-well, “Who pulled her out?” “Great Tom Plout,” says Sophia objecting to “Dog with long snout” as hero. The devil and the deuce are consistently removed, even though “Deuce take the wheelbarrow” seems more virile than “Down fell” the same. And one regrets losing the good old colloquialism in the “Death of Jenny Wren”:

*Says Robin, to all the doctors,
away—
You’re a parcel of quacks,
Or I’ll lay this good whip
On each of your backs.*

Sometimes one has to be more surprised at what Sophia left in than what she took out, as for instance, “a parcel of quacks” and “a pot of beer.” Perhaps Sophia was less addicted to

elegant tastes in 1845 than in 1865 when she had known the refining influence of a sojourn abroad. At any rate, the new parlor which she added to the “Wayside” after her return seems to justify the supposition. Parlor and nursery rhymes both had her lord’s approval; and, knowing his devotion, one may well ask whether the “edited” notebooks would not have had it too.

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Haym Salomon

SIR:—The Patriotic Foundation of Chicago is interested in hitherto unpublished material relating to the life of Haym Salomon, the “forgotten patriot of the American Revolution,” in connection with the preparation of a new document on Salomon for the forthcoming completion of Lorado Taft’s heroic memorial depicting George Washington, Robert Morris, and Haym Salomon, to be erected in the city of Chicago.

If any of your readers are in possession of documents and other material dealing with Haym Salomon, we should appreciate it if they will communicate with the Patriotic Foundation of Chicago, 33 North La Salle Street, Chicago, Illinois. All communications and documents will be treated with the utmost care and consideration and will be returned to their owners intact. We are particularly interested in any letters or memoranda which may have been signed by Haym Salomon himself.

BARNET HODES, Co-Chairman.
Chicago, Ill.

†THE AMERICAN NOTEBOOKS BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE. By Randall Stewart. Yale University Press, 1933.

CINDERELLA CITY

Atlanta Sees "Gone with the Wind"

BY FRANK DANIEL

UNTIL "Gone with the Wind" was published, Atlanta's chief pride was Bobby Jones. But Bobby Jones had retired from competitive golf. It was an auspicious moment for the appearance of another local idol of world-renown, but neither Atlanta nor Margaret Mitchell guessed she was on the verge of eminence when her novel appeared.

Miss Mitchell then remarked apologetically that she was afraid she had inflicted another "high school classic" on Southern children—parallel reading for the history classes. The book-market in Atlanta was slow, and the Cyclorama in Grant Park, which houses a huge painting of the Battle of Atlanta, was almost as neglected as if it were Republican Headquarters. Today, about 250,000 persons are computed to visit it annually.

Last week Margaret Mitchell's name was on the lips of every articulate Atlantan. Last Friday, the newsboys shouted: "Gone with the Wind!" On Peachtree, Loew's modernization of Atlanta's historic Grand Theater was being restored to antiquity, acquiring a façade inspired by Tara and Twelve Oaks.

All this was in anticipation of the World Premiere of the film version of "Gone with the Wind." For the occasion, most of the principal players and innumerable film officials had flown the continent. The opening jammed the streets for blocks around the theater. The public came to look at the movie stars; the stars appeared about as eager to look at Margaret Mitchell. Miss Mitchell seemed to be about the only calm citizen in town.

Scarlett O'Hara—if you remember—found the muddy, bustling Atlanta of 1862 more to her liking than the older cities nearby. Charleston, Savannah, and Augusta had attained urbanity and grave traditions, while Atlanta "was humming like a beehive, proudly conscious of its importance to the Confederacy, and work was going forward night and day toward turning an agricultural section into an industrial one."

To Charlestonians and the dwellers along the Savannah, Atlantans must have seemed as odd as their hilly ter-

rain. Few ties of kinship joined them. Clifford Dowdley's "Gamble's Hundred" has told how, in Virginia, when the large plantation owners crowded their less entrenched neighbors off the rich tobacco lands around Williamsburg, the dispossessed moved westward within the Dominion, perhaps to William Byrd's City of Richmond. But Georgia had fewer landlords, and migration across the state was more reluctant. A century after the settlement of Savannah, Scarlett's father found a generous acreage for cultivation when he brought his high-born wife from the seaboard to Clayton County, in the Piedmont, twenty miles south of Atlanta's site.

Many of Atlanta's settlers came from northwards, on long journeys for the transportation of aristocratic ideals. Their practical eyes spotted likely store corners as readily as they found plantations. They built their new homes around a stake called Terminus, driven in the ground to mark the end of a projected railway, and later (until the year of Scarlett's birth) called Marthasville. By 1862 Atlanta was too busy to regard either its fancy neighbors or its own rough image in the Chattahoochee. This river was no looking-glass—it was a potential water supply, water power, water way. Only a Sidney Lanier might hear its song.

When the city finally saw itself, the reflection was in others' eyes, and they were not always friendly. Sometimes the eyes revealed, besides the reflection, an expression of amazement or dismay. This was after the war which had enriched Atlanta had burned it; after Atlantans had rebuilt their city in a time of tribulation; after Atlanta had redirected its eyes to the future, at a time when much of the South was still stunned with loss and bemused with memories.

Atlanta's had been an eventful youth, and as the city became mature it continued to enjoy an abundance of adolescent energy. Its exertion rendered the grown-up city self-conscious under the scrutiny of neighbors who,



Appointment in Atlanta: Clark Gable, Margaret Mitchell, and Vivien Leigh.

as their earthly treasures were corrupted; valued their traditions more highly, and deemed Atlanta unrestrained. Other cities were looking at Atlanta, whether Atlanta was looking at them or not. And occasionally they associated her with a Federal penitentiary and a chain-gang system, a Leo Frank case or the night-riders.

If Atlanta's bad press influenced other sections, the agricultural sections within Georgia were sure that its capital city was Babylonian. They bred Tom Watsons and Willie Upshaws and Gene Talmadges to curb its arrogance, and passed Blue Laws, by an antiquated county-unit system of voting, for the city-folks' harassment. So, with scant sympathy abroad, Atlanta had small patience with carping at home, especially in anything so ostentatious as a novel.

Seventy-seven years after Scarlett O'Hara's visit, Atlanta is paved and proper. The stimulating air of the Blue Ridge renews its energy. Generation after generation of new citizens wash down from the surrounding towns and country districts, to man its factories, operate its business, marry its less distracting debutantes, and adopt Atlanta's own peculiar pride. That quality is self-propagating. Atlanta is still proud of the place, with a catholicity which encompasses its very civic pride, but the city did not embrace any local authors until "Gone with the Wind" scaled the best-seller lists. Here at last was a novel which, literary and historical merit apart, spoke Atlanta's language.

Which is not only the language of the counting house. While the novel is admired as an investment, it is also genuinely liked. Atlanta likes its