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NOTE: In this document the informant recites a fairy tale in a  
Scottish dialect.

Ernest Merwick in Kirkville(?), Orkney, doing a test before replying to your letter, Mrs. Stobie. And this is the end of the test.

Well, my dear Mrs. Stobie, this is in reply to your letter of December 4 which I have been rereading. And I see that one thing you would like me to do is to tell you something about how I myself came to hear of Bungi. I hope that is how you pronounce it in Canada for I haven't actually heard it pronounced.

Well, it was way back in December 1937, it must have been, that somebody sent me a cutting from the Winnipeg Tribune. The paper had a little article entitled 'Early Red River Days Had Unique Native Dialect.' And it told about how the descendants of the Orkney Islanders and the Indians of the plains in the early days of Red River settlement spoke a distinctive Red River dialect which it said, 'captured the lilting Scottish cadence of the Orkneymen and betrayed the Cree Indians inability to express certain English sounds.' That little article contained a story which I've told many times since when speaking of dialect and dialect difficulties. It said that in the early days it was the duty of the Reverend S.P. Matheson, who later became Archbishop Matheson, to train young men for holy orders. One young native aspirant had to be drilled again and again and again to say "sure, should, and shall" instead of "soor, sud, and sall". Well, the Reverend Mr. Matheson, thinking he had him perfectly trained, sent him to the Reverend J.J. Anderson, the native rector of St. Peter's who was later bishop of Moosonee. And when Mr. Matheson next saw Anderson he asked him about his assistant and told him of the drilling he had given him. Anderson's reply was, "Well, I think you're what did it. When reading the morning prayers, my assistant said, 'God shave the Queen.'" I thought that very funny.

Well, it was in 1951 that Bungi came up again because in December of that year, Mr. William Douglas, past president of Manitoba Historical Society, wrote to our local Orkney paper, The Arcadian. He was working, he said, on a bit of historic research, and he wanted to know if the word Bungi had any association with Orkney and Shetland. He said that there were various spellings of it -- Bangie, Bungie, and Bangee -- all found in manuscript documents. But the reason, he said, why he was writing was that about 1790 to 1810, a group of Indians were called Bungis and that there was no tribe of that name. He had thought it possible that perhaps the word had come out with Orkney settlers and that it might be known in Orkney. The editor, who knew my interest in local history and in Canadian history, asked me to write to Mr. Douglas and we communicated.

I am afraid I had to tell him that we don't know the word in Orkney, that it isn't an Orkney word, and I could suggest no derivation at all. In the same month, December 1951, The Beaver had an article on the Red River dialect by S. Osborne Scott and D.A. Mulligan, and I got that article and made a copy of it. A very good article it was which gave an excellent idea of how the dialect went and some of its pronunciations. Now,

in one of the stories which illustrated it, I could easily hear, as it were, some of our Orkney phrases and some of our Orkney syntax, but a lot of it was quite foreign to us. For instance, there were a number of nice words which we didn't know at all, like "the canoe went apiche qua nee(?)." And I think that one of the phrases would have gone like this, "The water was shallow(?) whatever but Willie George kept bobbing up and down and calling, 'Oh, Lord save me.'" Now, that isn't Orkadian. There are hints even of the western isles in it. But in the story which followed, a Red Riding Hood tale, there were many things that really made me think of Orkney. And what I'm going to do just in a minute or two, to give you an idea of Orkadian as it used to be spoken, I'm going to read you another nursery tale, an Orkney one from the island of Rousay called Peeryfool and the Princess. And I'm going to read it in the dialect that I spoke as a boy. I was brought up in Ewie, which is just across the sound from Rousay, and the two dialects are very similar. This story is, I think, possibly the only fairy tale that survives in Orkney. Peeryfool and the Princess, so here it goes. And I'm not going to make any concessions to you for I want you to hear the dialect in it's original state.

(The tale follows. Refer to Tape IH-MS.001B for the account.)

Now I am going to read you that in English for as far as the tape lasts, to give you a crib, as it were, to the story:

#### Peeryfool and the Princess

'A long time ago, a Queen lived on Rousay with her three daughters. The King had died so they had to stay in a little house with little that was their own but a cow and a kaleyard. What made things worse, someone began to take their kale in the night. The oldest princess, a bonny brave girl, said that she would put a blanket around her and watch for the thief. Well, she hadn't watched long in the dark night before a great giant came into the kaleyard and began to fill up a great basket with the kale (kale, you know, is cabbage). The princess said to him, what right had he to take her mother's kale. But he said that is she wasn't quiet he would take her too. Well, what woman could ever be quiet so he slung her on the top of the kale in his casee(?) (big basket) and took her to his own

house. She said... He said she must do all the work, milk the cow and send her to the hill, and she must tease, comb, card, and spin the wool and weave it into cloth. As soon as the giant went away, she milked the cow and sent her to the hill and she made some porridge. While she was sitting supping the porridge, it's all around her a host of little yellow-headed people, tried to persuade her to give them some porridge. But she said to them, "There is very little for one and less for two and I'm not going to give any away at all." Then a funny thing happened for she found she could do nothing with the wool. The giant was so angry when he came home that he started at her head and flayed off all her skin right down to her feet and flung her over a beam in the roof beside the hens.

Now, exactly the same thing happened to the second princess who was watching the kaleyard the next night. The giant flayed off her skin too and flung her over the beam beside her sister. But the third night, the last princess, a bonny little thing, was carried off by the giant. But there was this difference. When the little folk came and asked her for porridge, she said to come and bring something with them to sup it with. And they all came with bits of stalks of heather and broken china and supped as hard as they could. When the porridge was done, the little people disappeared except for a little yellow-headed boy who asked if he could help with the wool. She said she had nothing to pay him with but he said that all he wanted was for her to guess his name. She thought that was surely easy enough. So she gave him the wool and he took it away.

Well, the day wore on and in the twilight an old woman came and asked for a place to sleep. The princess said she had no place for her but she asked the old woman for the news of the island. The old woman could think of no news at all so she went to sleep under a big mound outside near the house. It was warm there and do as she would, the old woman found herself climbing to the top. When she got to the top, she heard someone crying, "tease teaser's tease, card carder's cards, spin spinner's spin, for Peeryfool, Peeryfool is my name." (Peery in Orkney means little, little fool). There was a crack in the knoll and the old woman saw an whole host of peery people working inside and a small yellow-headed boy urging them on.

The old woman thought that this news was surely worth a bed for the night so she went back with it to the princess. The princess repeated it over and over again till the little yellow-headed boy came back with the cloth. When he asked her what his name was she gave a lot of wrong answers but at last she said, "Peeryfool." The boy was so angry that he could hardly speak but he threw the webs of cloth at her and ran away.

As the giant came home, he saw a lot of little people. They were so tired that some had their eyes hanging down their cheeks and some had their tongues hanging down their breasts. They said they had been working hard making fine wool into cloth. This scared the giant and he said that if his good wife was all right, he would never ask her to work at the wool again. He was tremendously pleased when he found the princess was just fine and all the webs of cloth ready and he was very good to her.

Now there is a little more than that and that will show you how this story goes and it's the end of this side of our tape. I hope to hear from you, Mrs. Stobie, quite soon again and it won't be too long before I am able to make the hurry(?) recordings. Good bye for now.

(End of Letter)