Review

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An Introduction to the Study of Prehistoric Art. By ERNEST A. PARKYN, M.A. 8vo. Pp. 349. 16 Plates (2 coloured) and 318 Illustrations in the Text. Longmans, Green and Co., 1915.

Three years ago Mr. Spearing traced the development of art from its beginning in palaeolithic times to its climax in Greece. Much the same ground is here gone over again by Mr. Parkyn, whose work is a compilation rather than an addition to knowledge. Many will be glad to have in one volume a collection of illustrations of prehistoric remains, even though the bulk of them already figure in accessible publications; but the title leads one to expect more than this. The author has borrowed right and left, but has not aimed at paying a high rate of interest. With such a wealth of material it should have been possible to propound some theory of development, to emphasize points of contact, to point out ways of communication and account for the ups and downs of art in prehistoric times. Archaeological excerpts undoubtedly have their uses even apart from original investigation, but their artistic interest is for the most part secondary; and even an *introduction* to the study of prehistoric art should invert the process and look at early remains from the artistic standpoint. However daring, a treatment on those lines would at least be suggestive; but the guiding principle of the present work is caution. Neutrality in such a sphere is anything but heroic, and there are many opportunities for original treatment in a review of art (or even industry) from the Drift to Late Keltic times. For instance, the hint on p. 9 might have been elaborated with a view to finding the origin of carving in the round, acknowledged to be the earliest form of art in the Cave period; or again, the evolution of Late Keltic art from that of La Tène, and ultimately from Greek sources, might have been insisted on, without reviving antiquated notions. As a picture-gallery the book will no doubt appeal to a large circle, but readers of the text will note that the proof-reading has been inadequate, especially in regard to foreign words; infinitives are split in twain, and *l'art gauloise* will give our Allies pause.

The Golden Bough. Third Edition. By SIR JAMES FRAZER. London: Macmillan and Co. 1911-15.

The *Golden Bough* now lies before us in its final form: the two volumes of 1890 can scarcely be recognized in the twelve which make up the third edition in its seven parts: The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings; Taboo and the Perils of the Soul; The Dying God; Adonis, Attis, Osiris; Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild; The Scapegoat; and Balder the Beautiful, with a final volume of index and bibliography. With the alteration of size the work has changed in large measure its character: the original was essentially a brilliant essay on the nature of early conceptions of deity and on the theory of sacrifice: in its present shape it has become an encyclopædic treatise on folk-lore. This, indeed, is probably the characteristic which appears to the author of the greatest importance, for there are many traces that he has ceased to hold his former theories with the vigour which he showed in the first edition, and that he cares more for the incidental matter introduced than for the main theory which it is proposed to establish. Nor in this estimate of his work is Sir James Frazer at fault; though in erudition and scholarship he cannot vie with J. Grimm, though his indebtedness to Mannhardt and others lessens his claims to originality, and though at times he tends to become prolix, nevertheless he has great stores of knowledge derived from wide reading, and—what is far more important—he possesses in a really high degree the power of setting forth in an interesting and sometimes even fascinating form both the materials on which he bases his speculations and the speculations themselves. Hence it is certain that to English-speaking scholars his works will for many years afford a rich storehouse from which can be selected facts to support theories very different

from those held by the author. Moreover, on many points of detail will be found expressions of view which are both novel and valuable.

But of the main theories of Sir James Frazer, the priority of magic to religion and the annual slaying of a divine representative in order to promote the life of the herds, the crops and men, and the use of these theories to explain Aryan religion, it is impossible to deny the appropriateness of the judgment of the learned and eminently judicious Wissowa in *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (ed. 2, p. 248, n. 5) when he writes with reference to the *rex Nemorensis*, "An die Überlieferungen den aricinischen Kultes knüpfen die weitausgreifenden Untersuchungen von J. G. Frazer an, aus denen es mir aber bei aller Bewunderung für das eminente Wissen und die aussergewöhnliche Kombinationsgabe des Verfassers nicht möglich gewesen ist etwas wesentliches für das Verständnis der römischen Religion zu gewinnen." The cause of this failure to contribute anything substantial to the solution of the problem of religion is to be found in the power of combination noted by Wissowa; Sir James Frazer sees similarities, but cannot see differences: the method of patient discrimination of elements has no attractions for him in his search for large and effective combination, and the result, as is inevitable, is that the immense structures which he rears lack foundations and fall in ruins as soon as their bases are examined with due circumspection and care. Some of the worst of the errors which disfigured Sir J. Frazer's work have, it is satisfactory to note, disappeared in the third edition; the *sexta luna* of Pliny ceases to figure as the sixth month of the year (xi. 77), the idea that Plautus (*Cas.* ii. 5, 25-9) refers to the priests of Nemi as mortal Jupiters (ii. 379) has been exorcised by Dr. Farnell, and it is admitted (ii. 311) that the simple facts of the Roman calendar dispose of the theory which connects the *regifugium* with the supposed killing of a victim at the Roman Saturnalia. But the fact that these important supports of his theories have turned out to be mere mistakes of his own has not availed to induce the author to reconsider the theories which induced him so to misinterpret facts, and even the exposure by many competent minds of the mass of untenable hypotheses which made up his attempt to bring the Crucifixion into the main line of his theories, has not persuaded him to do more than relegate his theory to an appendix (ix. 412-23), where it will remain as the best possible *reductio ad absurdum* of the author's tenets.

Within the limits of a review it is only possible to indicate a few of the main defects of the author's methods of developing his theories. Sir James Frazer has found (i. p. ix.), not without surprise, as he has not studied the works of Hegel, that his own views on the relation of magic and religion have points of contact with those of the philosopher. The coincidence might have warned the author to consider how it came about that he was uttering pronouncements on the origin of religion while having no claim to adequate philosophic training or knowledge. The origin of religion, it cannot be too often pointed out, is not a question for anthropology to decide: it is essentially a question of philosophy, and the most difficult of all questions, one far from solution, and one which science can no more solve than it can solve any other question of philosophy. In dealing with this question Hegel was acting strictly within his rights as a philosopher: his solution is not very satisfactory, because his general philosophy is open to serious criticism, but he was not attempting with alien materials to achieve a result which could not be reached in this way. On the same anthropological grounds Prof. W. Ridgeway has in his recent work, *The Drama and Dramatic Dances of non-European Races*, come to the perfectly decided conclusion that magic is not prior to religion, and that belief in spirits of the dead is, as Elard Hugo Meyer held, the source of all religion. The opponents can never convince each other or anybody else, for they are seeking to attain results which the nature of the subject as treated by them denies. Sir James Frazer assures us (i. 220-43; xi. 304-5) that the progress of thought has been from magic through religion to science, that man first believes in a certain established order of nature on which he can surely count and which he can manipulate for his own ends, and that he falls back on great invisible beings when he finds that both the order and the control are imaginary, and ascribes to these beings the far-reaching powers which he once arrogated to himself.

But where in his vast treatise is there the slightest evidence as opposed to mere assertion adduced for this constitution of the mind of primitive or other man? The suggestion is a pure *petitio principii*, based on the same fallacy which produced Euhemerism.

A second fundamental error of the author is that expressed in his assertion (i. p. xi), "It can hardly be too often repeated, since it is not yet generally recognized, that in spite of their fragmentary character the popular superstitions and customs of the peasantry are by far the fullest and most trustworthy evidence we possess as to the primitive religion of the Aryans. Indeed, the primitive Aryan, in all that regards his mental fibre and texture, is not extinct. He is amongst us to this day." For Sir James Frazer all the evidence of ethnology, all the theories of the origin of race and the mingling of peoples are as nothing, and tales from the Deccan are cited as evidence of Aryan views, oblivious of the fact that whatever admixture of Aryan blood be allowed for north-west India in the early dawn of history, the proportion of such blood in the people of the southern parts of India, the great majority of whom do not even speak an Aryan tongue, must be nearly infinitesimal, and that folk tales are rather representative of the lower than of the higher classes of the population. We have here again a useful corrective in the views of Prof. Ridgeway, who goes to the opposite extreme and decides that the *Atharvaveda* is not Aryan at all.¹ On the other border of Aryan language Sir J. Frazer treats the Celts as clearly Aryan, and his faithful follower, Canon MacCulloch,² manfully supports this view in the face of very formidable authority to the contrary. The problem of Aryan religion is in all human probability insoluble, but it is perfectly clear that to declare that modern European or Indian folk-lore represents the religion of the Aryans—in whose reality as a single united people in early times Sir J. Frazer believes—is to fly in the face of ethnology, and to do so without explanation or defence is not excused by the fact that the doctrine is borrowed wholesale from Mannhardt.

A third source of confusion closely akin to the second is due to the acceptance as explaining classical antiquity of the customs and beliefs of the aborigines of Australia and elsewhere. The use of such evidence must be subject to the most careful scrutiny if it is to be accepted as of value. When a practice recorded in classical antiquity is very similar to one recorded of some modern savage race then, if enquiry shows a plausible explanation of that savage custom, it is legitimate to seek to apply that explanation to the classical usage, bearing however in mind that the same result may have different causes. But when from a savage custom, in itself of the greatest obscurity, a stage of society is conjectured into existence and then applied to the classical world, it becomes necessary to remember that so far is it from being true that mankind is essentially similar at all times and in all parts of the earth that history shows us the most extraordinary variations in national traits, and that a custom which is proved to have existed among savages may easily be not a universal stage of human development but a bypath, straying into which has condemned the race in question to savagery. Hence the rule observed by all scientific students of religion that a religion must be explained as far as possible from within the sphere of ideas which is found expressed in that religion. It is disregard of this fundamental principle which has induced Sir J. Frazer to cling to his theory of the *rex Nemorensis*, and in the face of the silence of all classical tradition to conjure up the yearly offering of a man at the Saturnalia and to assert that his theory is proved by evidence of 301 A.D. from the Danube, in which *inter alia* the essence of the practice recorded was a death by suicide, not a sacrifice,³ and to find in the records of the kings of Rome proof of the descent of the kingly power to the foreign husband of a daughter of the former king (ii. 266–323).

The last source of mistake which can be here dealt with is the author's ill-advised disregard of the evidence of Vedic literature. It is true that the names of Oldenberg,

¹ *Dramas and Dramatic Dances*, pp. 121–5.

² *Religion of the Ancient Celts*, pp. 294 sq.

³ See *Journ. Royal Asiatic Society*, 1915, pp. 133–8.

Macdonell, and Hillebrandt are to be found in the collection of works used by the author, which is misnamed a bibliography, but the use made of the vast stores of authentic information of actual ritual usage contained in the many published Vedic texts is wholly inadequate, and indeed inexplicable. Hence we have grave errors such as the mistaking of the mere speculations of the Brahmins (ix. 411) for real popular beliefs,⁴ and the overlooking of many pieces of evidence, which would however have had the grave disadvantage of warning the author of the unsafe grounds on which his theories were based. One striking instance may be adduced: Sir J. Frazer has now (x. 328-46: xi. 1-44) abandoned the real support of the theory of the offering of the god as a magic rite to produce fertility, namely, the fire festivals of ancient Europe, which Mannhardt interpreted as the burning of the vegetation spirit, by accepting the view of Westermarck that the burning was intended to destroy witches. It is true that despite his definite acceptance of the new view, which strictly speaking overthrows the whole of the principle of the death of the god in order to come to life again, Sir J. Frazer still argues that Balder was burned as a god, but this is perhaps merely an inconsequence. What is more important is that there exists⁵ a record of a period, which may safely be placed at not later than 800 B.C., which tells us of an Indian rite performed at a winter solstice in which an Aryan and a Sūdra fought each other for the possession of a round white skin, the Aryan proving victor: the text says expressly that the skin was a symbol of the sun, and every competent authority on the subject is agreed that the rite was essentially one connected with the giving of power to the sun, a fact which tells quite definitely in favour of the view of Mannhardt that the modern fire festivals are essentially connected with the sun's course. But at the same time the same texts show us that the fire was always a most effective weapon to burn up the evil spirits which assailed the sacrifice, an explanation which is surely worth at least as much as Westermarck's researches among the Berber tribes. Both features were at any rate present in the Indian winter fire festival of 800 B.C., and the choice between the two made by Sir J. Frazer is needless and unjustified; the difficulty is rather to assign each its due share.

A. BERRIEDALE KEITH.

The Asiatic Dionysos. By GLADYS M. N. DAVIS. x+276 pp. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1914. 10s. 6d. net.

This book is an interesting example of the misapplication of erudition in support of a theory based on false premises. Against the prevalent theory of a Thracian origin of Dionysos the author raises the objection that it is necessary to explain the existence of the parallel Soma cult in India, and the references to the connection of Dionysos with that country, Phrygia and Crete, and that this can only be done by holding that the Thracians were the proto-Aryans and that from Thrace the Soma cult spread into Asia and Greece, a hypothesis contradicted by the fact that the worship is not found in north-western Greece. The reason is obviously wholly without weight, but it has sufficed to lead the author to an elaborate effort to prove that the Dionysos myth and faith were introduced from India, being a reflex of the Soma cult: Soma in the process of entering Greece became a wine god: the chants of the priests were preserved in cult epithets: the metaphors used by them of the Soma were transformed into myths, while in the mysteries of Eleusis some of the deeper faith lingered on. Thus Dionysos Melpomenos is to be traced to the fact that in the Veda Soma is said to flow singing through the sieve, the Zagreus myth is due to the slaughter of a ram by the Brahmins at the time of the Soma sacrifice, as 'it is very probable that this ram's fate was considered typical of that

⁴ See *Journ. Royal Asiatic Society*, 1915, pp. 127-81.

⁵ Full accounts of the Mahāvratā rite which took place at the winter solstice will be found

in A. Hillebrandt, *Die Sonnenwendfeste in Alt-Indien* (Roman. Forschungen, v.), and in *Trans. of 3rd. Internat. Congr. Hist. Rel.* ii. 49-58