

## REVIEWS.

### TWO STUDIES ON THE GRAIL LEGEND.

ZUR FRAGE ÜBER DIE HEIMATH DER LEGENDE VOM HEILIGEN  
GRAL (*Archiv für slavische Philologie*, vol. xxiii.). A. N.  
WESSELOFSKY.

UEBER DEN URSPRUNG DER GRALLEGENDE. Ein Beitrag zur  
Christlichen Mythologie. Von W. STAERK. J. C. B. MOHR.  
Tübingen und Leipzig. 1903.

PROFESSOR WESSELOFSKY is an acknowledged master in fields of Oriental and semi-Oriental history and literature, unfamiliar to or neglected by most Western students. His present investigations form a valuable supplement to Dr. P. Hagen's discussion of the Oriental element in the Grail romances. Personally, I have read them with pleasure and profit. Yet they seem to me to bear only upon secondary and comparatively unimportant factors in the Grail problem, and if I discuss them in some detail it is rather in view of what I regard as an unsound method of investigating romantic legend, than because I think Professor Wesselofsky has done much to elucidate the origin and early development of the Grail cycle. Briefly, he regards the Christian origin of the legend as undoubted, its localisation in Britain as comparatively late; and he finds the sources of the Grail romances in legends of the Christian-Jewish *diaspora* in Palestine, Syria, and Æthiopia. The parallels he adduces illustrate chiefly Robert de Borron's *Joseph d'Arimathie*, and the early portion of the *Grand St. Graal*.

At the very outset he is compelled to make an admission of which the import seems to escape him. Syriac legends are postulated, and their direct transference into French is in some cases explicitly, in others implicitly, involved in his arguments. But versions presupposing a Greek intermediary are also used. Yet, as he admits, no single trace of the Grail legend in its

assumed wanderings from East to West exists in Byzantine literature. The existence of a fully-formed Eastern Grail legend is postulated, and as it now only exists in the West, nay, only in a particular area of the West, it must have reached this area *per saltum* without in the least affecting either of the two chief mediæval intermediaries between East and West: the Græco-Christian literature of Byzantium, the Arabo-Jewish literature of Eastern and Southern Europe. Does not this fact suffice to discredit the hypothesis? Assume, for argument's sake, the validity of every parallel adduced, assume the existence of a Grail legend among populations speaking various dialects of Syriac and Hebrew, what might we reasonably expect to find? If not Syro-Jewish versions of the legend (*their* disappearance cannot excite wonder in view of the vast social and political changes that have taken place in the Syro-Palestinian area), at least mediæval Hebrew and mediæval Byzantine versions, which, in their turn, would affect primarily and most markedly those literatures with which Byzantium and mediæval Jewry stood in nearest contact, the literatures of Eastern and Southern Europe. Yet no trace of a Grail legend, as such, exists in Slavdom, and, alike in Provence, Spain, and Italy, it is a late comer obviously introduced from North France. Again, why, if originally Eastern imported into the West, should it be unknown to Germany save as an acknowledged loan from France?

In the Middle Ages transference of a legendary theme from one speech and culture area to another *per saltum* is, I venture to urge, unlikely in the last degree. The mode of transmission would be undulatory, and if, in presence of alleged influence of one body of literature upon another, we find no intermediary stages or links, then doubt as to the influence is justified. At the present date transference of this kind is, I admit, possible; we can conceive a traveller bringing back with him to Europe a romantic cycle from Japan or New Zealand which he makes known for the first time. Note, however, that *now*, when this is possible, it remains without effect. Macpherson's pseudo-Ossian, Longfellow's adaptation of Red Indian sagas, have thus been transferred from their own to alien speech and culture areas, but they have exercised absolutely no seminal influence. In any case, whether in the Middle Ages such transference be, as I hold, impossible, I can certainly recall no single instance of an imported Eastern theme affecting only one section of Western mediæval literature.

Apply these considerations to the Grail problem. In every Grail romance without exception the "British localisation," regarded by Professor Wesselofsky as "comparatively late," is a factor of more or less importance; in most of the romances, and notably in what, obviously, are the oldest existing, it is the chief factor. Surely a sound method compels us to start from this fact, to seek the origin and development of the cycle within the British "sphere of influence," remembering, however, how thanks, firstly to the Norman Conquest and later to the Angevin lordship of Britain, that sphere of influence comprised most of existing France. Professor Wesselofsky, like all other opponents of British origin, needs must recognise that the legend, allegedly non-British at first, did become localised in Britain, did become Britonised. Why and how? This is what they entirely neglect to explain, what indeed they seem to hold unworthy explanation.

What then is my position? I distinguish two main elements in the Grail cycle: the one originally non-Christian, solely British in origin; the other Christian, and so primarily non-British but, secondarily, British in its object: which is, to relate the Conversion of Britain. The fusion of these two elements, originally effected within the British area, produced the existing Grail legends which spread throughout the British "sphere of influence," and thence into the neighbouring literatures of Germany, the Scandinavian North, and the Southern Romanic area. That the Christian element is associated with Joseph of Arimathea fully explains the presence of many Eastern legendary features drawn from the rich apocryphal literature of which he is the hero. This primary source of Oriental elements is supplemented by the conditions amid which the Grail romances assumed their present shape; the cycle as it stands, is a product of that period of Crusading energy during which the social life and the literature of Western Christendom were profoundly modified. I not only recognised, I emphatically proclaimed this fact in my earliest written utterance on the subject nearly twenty years ago. But it is only of late that I have become conscious of its full import in connection with what may be called the Temple element in the Grail romances.

Thus the presence of Oriental traits and features in the Grail romances does not surprise me. I am ready to examine Professor Wesselofsky's parallels with an unbiassed mind, and to admit that many subsidiary features in the extant texts are only explicable by

reference to Eastern legend. My quarrel with the Russian scholar is that, interesting as are his parallels, they assist but slightly the interpretation of the cycle. He first deals with Borron's poem. Here, Joseph, thrown into prison by the Jews and there forgotten for forty years, is miraculously sustained by the Grail. Now this lengthened captivity without any visible means of sustenance is a prominent feature in those apocryphal texts which hitherto have been used to account for Borron's version, and has been generally regarded either as suggesting the food-producing powers of the Grail found in the French poem, or as facilitating the fusion of a Wondrous Vessel legend with that of Joseph. In Borron as in the apocryphal texts hitherto regarded as his source, Joseph becomes possessed of the holy vessel and uses it to collect Christ's blood *before* he is thrown into prison. Professor Wesselofsky gives at great length a story, interesting enough in its way, in which Joseph's captivity lasts a very short while, in which the holy blood is collected *after* the deliverance, *not* in a cup or dish but in a cloth. Further consideration of this and allied stories leads him to the conclusion that Grail was originally no cup or bowl, but a basket, the word being etymologically connected with *crates* through the forms *cratalis*, *cratala*. His parallel thus leaves out of account the most characteristic trait of the purely Christian portion of the legend (Joseph's sustenance in prison by the Grail), and his explanation assumes that the earliest Christian adapters of a wholly Christian legend so misunderstood it as to alter the central feature. This process of development is characterised as "natural."

The method of dealing with the proper names in Borron's poem is, if possible, even less convincing. A prominent figure is Joseph's brother-in-law, Brons or Hebron; both forms occur, but the latter is the rarer, and is unknown to every other romance in which Brons appears. Yet it is this isolated variant which Professor Wesselofsky equates with a Syriac *habra* = companion, friend. There is no jot of evidence for the existence of any Syriac legend in which a brother-in-law of Joseph's appears, no jot of evidence that *habra* is ever used in Syriac as a proper name. Again Borron sends the Grail hosts westwards "ès Vaus d'Avaron." Here too the form is isolated; all other writers of the cycle, even the very scribes who turned Borron's verse into prose, write *Avalon*. Yet as there is a Syriac word *hevārū* =

white, pure, it is used to explain Borron's form. Nay more, the epithet white, shining, applied to Britain in some of the romances is traced back to this hypothetical Syriac designation of the land whither the Grail host proceeded. The French translators from the Syriac would seem at the same time to have *misunderstood* the force of the term, as they took it for a proper name, and to have *understood* it, as is shown by their applying it to Britain. Professor Wesselofsky seems unaware of the earlier use of the term "white" for Britain or of the natural explanation of that use.

The section devoted to the *Grand St. Graal* is of greater value and deserves careful consideration. The story of Joseph's relations to and conversion of the heathen kings of Sarras differs markedly from the remainder of that interminable romance by its precise and realistic detail; we feel in contact with a local legend. It is marked also by an extremely crude and materialistic presentment of the Eucharistic sacrament and by its pronounced heterodoxy in matters ecclesiastical and liturgical. Professor Wesselofsky places at Sarras at Harran, the seat of old and powerful heathen cults of an astral nature which lived on as Ssabaism, and pseudo-Ssabaism contaminated with Judaism, in an organised form down to the middle of the eleventh century. Human sacrifice was a marked feature of these cults, and the one which especially called down upon them the wrath of the Mohammedan conquerors; elaborate descriptions survive of the sacrifice of boys in which the flesh mixed with flour was eaten sacramentally. Conceptions and practices such as these are, it is urged, reflected in the *Grand St. Graal* account of the Eucharistic sacrifice first established by Joseph by Christ's own bidding; Christ appears to the officiant in the guise of a young child, bids him dismember His body, and is partaken of under this form.

There is much that is fascinating in this hypothesis; it focusses a number of facts which, unconnected at present, have yet struck many students of the cycle as linked together by ties of genuine kinship: the curiously heterodox presentment of the Eucharist in the Grail cycle, the obscure but potent Temple element in the development of that cycle, the vague but persistent accusations brought against the Temple. I think Professor Wesselofsky has proved that this portion of the *Grand St. Graal* embodies a Conversion legend of which Joseph is the hero and the Harran district, lying between Syria and Northern Mesopotamia, the home. It

does not seem to me impossible that such a legend should have appropriated traits and conceptions derived from the very cults of which it celebrates the overthrow. Nor should I be disposed to question the possibility of a legend such as this, heterodox alike from the doctrinal and the ecclesiastical standpoint, being caught up by some adherent of the Temple and fashioned anew in more or less conscious opposition to canonical orthodoxy as embodied in and interpreted by the Church. In so far I recognise that Professor Wesselofsky has illumined an important section of the Grail legend, once that legend had definitely assimilated its Christian elements and assumed its Christian form. But that such a Harran Joseph-legend as is here postulated could originate the Grail cycle as we have it, that it can in any sense be regarded as aught but a secondary element belonging to an already advanced stage of development, are propositions which I deny, and which cannot, I think, be maintained by anyone who surveys and strives to account for the cycle as a whole.

Dr. Staerk's pamphlet, which only came into my hands after I had finished my notice of Wesselofsky's article, raises questions of the utmost delicacy and importance, affecting, as they do, not the Grail legend alone, but the nature of those portions of doctrinal Christianity with which that legend is associated. A survey of the points of agreement and disagreement between Dr. Staerk and myself will best show this. We both regard the existing Grail cycle as formed by the fusion of two originally independent strands of story, one derived from Christian writings, canonical and apocryphal, one from Celtic romance. We further distinguish two elements in the conception and presentment of the Grail itself: one, material, mythical, or pre-Christian, as it may be termed according to the stress laid upon this or that aspect; the other, spiritual, or Christian. So far we agree; here is where we differ. I trace the material or mythical element largely, if not chiefly, to that portion of the completed legend derived proximately from Celtic romance, ultimately from Celtic myth; this pre-Christian factor, so I hold, affected, modified, transformed almost the Christian factor. Not so, says Dr. Staerk, the material, mythical aspect under which the Grail, the Vessel of the Last Supper, is presented in the romances requires for its explanation no hypothetical contamination of Christian legend and Celtic pre-Christian myth; it is essentially inherent in the sacramental con-

ceptions of which the Eucharistic Vessel is the centre and expression; the drastic materialism with which the Grail is presented in most works of the cycle is older than they, is characteristic of the Eucharistic Vessel as such, and not merely of the Eucharistic Vessel as Grail. The sacramental, Eucharistic, conceptions of Christianity are, largely he says in effect, a legacy from pre-existing mythology, of which the oldest form is preserved by the clay tablets of Babylonia; the myth in which they have their root and from which they derive their sustenance is that ancient vision of a land of perpetual bliss and undying youth, of Paradise with its fruit and water of immortality, rejuvenation, and healing, of its inmates who enjoy, thanks to these miraculous foods, an existence which appeals to mankind at large as the summit of imaginable felicity. It is, he further urges, thanks to the essential kinship between the mythical features and conceptions thus absorbed into and persisting within the body of organised Christianity, and the Celtic myths which supplied body and spirit to the romances worked into the Grail legend, that the fusion took place as readily and completely as it did.

Dr. Staerk's knowledge of the Celtic Elysium is wholly derived from my 1888 *Studies*, as he is unacquainted with the *Voyage of Bran*, in which I set forth with far greater detail the range, depth and variety of the Elysium conceptions in Celtic romance. His insistence upon the kinship between the magic realm to which the Grail quester penetrates, and the primeval Paradise which he regards as moulding the presentment of the Christian Eucharist, is all the more noteworthy.

It was, I confess, with no little amusement that, after noting how at the outset Dr. Staerk rebuked me for shutting my eyes to the essentially Christian character of the Grail, it dawned upon me as I followed his argument that he, even less than I, regarded it as Christian in the ordinary sense of the word, and derived it equally from pre-Christian myth. I know far too little of early Christian legend to criticise his contention that Christian sacramental conceptions do contain such a large proportion of earlier mythical elements, that the Eucharistic Vessel is, by nature, a talisman producing food and material bliss. The evidence adduced strikes me as slight and unconvincing, the reasoning based upon it as loose and superficial. In any case I am more than ever impelled to put the question: Why, if the material, mythical

aspect of the Grail be an essential attribute of the Vessel of the Last Supper and not the result of contamination with the magic talisman of the Celtic gods, should the Grail legend only appear when and where it does, why has it only developed within the British sphere of influence? No explanation of the Grail problem which does not explain this fact can be considered satisfactory.

In the last pages of his pamphlet Dr. Staerk essays also to connect the Grail Quest with Babylonian mythology; he seeks in the Adapa legend an explanation of that mysterious feature, the omitted question, which has puzzled all investigators of the Grail romances. The explanation is hinted at rather than urged, and as the author does not withdraw his strongly expressed opinion in favour of the Celtic nature of the Perceval Saga (*i.e.*, of the Grail Quest) he must be assumed to attach little importance to it. I do not care to discuss it until it is put forward more seriously, but will only say that the parallel upon which Dr. Staerk relies does not strike me as close; nor, were it far closer, am I disposed at present to regard it as aught else but a curious coincidence.

ALFRED NUTT.

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DIE SAGE VOM HERZOG VON LUXEMBURG UND DIE HISTORISCHE  
PERSÖNLICHKEIT IHRES TRÄGERS. Von Dr. ANTON KIPPEN-  
BERG. Mit 2 vollbildern und 11 abbildungen im text. 8vo.  
Leipzig. 1901.

DR. KIPPENBERG has in a well-printed, well-illustrated, but un-indexed volume given a history of the Luxemburg-legend, an offshoot of the Faust-legend. The great marshal who played so prominent a part in the political and social world of his time, became a very short time after his death, and even before it, a person of mystery endowed by the Devil with magic powers. His deformity, his luck in battles, his love adventures, his favour at Court, his cynicism and impiety, were thus explained; nor did his importance cease with his life, for he was believed to have arranged with the fiend that he should reappear in ghostly form to his royal master and to his last mistress. Defoe knew the story, which was soon spread about in French, Dutch, Danish, and German books, and lost nothing by repetition, attaining its fullest form in the numerous German editions of the story that



followed the *Avis fidelle* of 1673, the *Histoire très Véritable* of 1697, the *Maréchal de Luxembourg au lit de la mort*, 1695, and the *Volksbuch* of 1680, containing the account of the marshal's pact with the Devil.

The author's industry appears to have missed the interesting parallels of Claverse, and Dalzell (German savants are almost invariably ill-informed and poorly read in the English literature of their subject), but it is difficult to be quite sure of omissions in the absence of an index. The bibliography is excellent in plan, and seems to be complete and correct.

All such late legends of which the origin and circumstances can be traced are of importance to folklore students as illustrating the growth of folk-sagas, and there are few monographs of the kind either so full, so careful, and so valuable as the one before us.

It is certainly one of the best studies of the kind that Germany has produced of late years, and worthy of a place in every working folklore student's library.

F. YORK POWELL.

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IM KAMPFE UM BABEL UND BIBEL. Ein Wort zur Verständigung und zur Abwehr von A. JEREMIAS. 3rd enlarged edition. Leipzig: Hinrichs. 1903.

DR. JEREMIAS, one of the most eminent among the younger Assyriological scholars of Germany, is, as known to English readers of his *Babylonian Conception of Heaven and Hell*, a recognised authority in the field of Babylonian mythology. The present pamphlet, which discusses, for the most part in a temperate and scholarly spirit, the questions raised by Fried. Delitzsch's sensational and (in the bad sense of the word) popular exposition of the import of Assyriological research for Biblical history and theology, would not concern *Folk-Lore* save that Dr. Jeremias raises, casually and slightly though it be, two questions of the highest importance to the folklorist who strives to form a general conception of his study and to utilise its facts in determining the main lines and tracing the salient features of man's development. It is good from time to time to test those "first principles" which consciously or unconsciously influence our methods of investiga-

tion and, not unfrequently it is to be feared, predetermine our conclusions.

In defending Delitzsch from the reproach of "mythologising" (if I may coin a word) the personages of Biblical history through undue insistence upon the points of contact between the Biblical record and Babylonian mythology, Dr. Jeremias touches upon the relations between heroic or romantic legend and mythology. He pleads for the historical character of the personages of the patriarchal legends, *but*, he urges, the writers to whom we owe the extant record modelled it upon, shaped, and coloured it in accordance with a pre-existing *schema* which was purely mythological in origin and development. Whilst incorrect and uncritical to claim Abraham as a moon-god,<sup>1</sup> it should be recognised that similarities of name and other circumstances have led to his genuine history being decked with and moulded by incidents derived from the pre-existing Babylonian myth of the moon-god. Incidentally Dr. Jeremias expresses his belief that the mythological *schema* which he postulates was essentially astral, nay, specifically zodaical in character.

I have repeatedly insisted that heroic saga is dependent upon myth, and in so far I am ready to agree with Dr. Jeremias. I cannot, however, but think that he, and other assertors of the historical nature of heroic saga, reassure themselves too easily with their explanation. As I am never tired of urging, it really does not matter whether a particular hero actually lived and died; our concern is with what the story tells of him, and if the outlines of that story are determined by and its details mainly taken from the pre-existing mythological *schemata*, he belongs to mythology rather than to history. It is all a question of degree. In the case in point, Dr. Jeremias seems to hold that the transforming process has been scarcely more profound than in the case of the late Emperor William, whose figure is, it would appear, being remoulded in Germany under the influence of the Barbarossa legend. Whether he be right or wrong in this contention I am not competent to discuss, nor is this the place to do so. I would merely urge upon him, and upon fellow-students generally, that the device favoured by him for reconciling the partisans of the

<sup>1</sup> As, e.g., by Dr. G. Margoliouth in his *Hebrew Babylonian Affinities*, London, 1899.

historical and the mythical elements in heroic legend is in reality far less efficacious than he seems to imagine.

The effect of admitting his postulate—the pre-existence of a mythological *schema*—is of no concern to Dr. Jeremias' immediate argument, so he does not consider it. He would doubtless hold with me that it is strongly adverse to certain neo-ehemeristic theories which have of late become rather fashionable with English students of the anthropological school. The numerous and undoubted cases of actual deification, noted more particularly in India and Indo-China, now of an English general, now of a native chief, now of a notorious brigand or saint, have affected our views of the status of the mythical *dramatis personæ*. But if all that this deificatory process implies is the providing of a new tenant for a structure of immemorial antiquity, I cannot see that it accounts for the origin of that structure, or for those singular features which are alike its distinguishing characteristic and its standing puzzle. To revert to Dr. Jeremias' analogy: *we* know that the Barbarossa myth is older not only than the late Emperor William, but than his Hohenstaufen predecessor. Why should we assume that 3,000 or 4,000 years ago an actual man originated, or even greatly modified the myth, more than was the case in the twelfth or the nineteenth century of our era? Yet such an assumption is not seldom tacitly made, and is, in some mysterious way, regarded as advancing our comprehension of the myth, when in reality, were it valid, it would leave that myth more incomprehensible than ever. The nature of the mythological *schema*, the sanction of its persistent vitality, its enduring attraction, these are the vital problems of mythological study.

Their consideration leads me to the second point raised by Dr. Jeremias' argument, raised slightly also and *en passant*, but definitely and with a clear understanding of its significance and import. As he himself insists, the special mythological conceptions which, following Winckler, he favours, the special mode in which he figures the formation and persistence of the mythological *schema* involve a return to the point of view, immensely widened and deepened it is true, of the late eighteenth century, of men like Volney and Dupuis, and involve also the denial of the evolutionary hypothesis accepted by most English students of the history of religion. To put it briefly, the Early-Eastern (Dr. Jeremias prefers this term to Babylonian) conception of the Universe as expressed

in the mythological system has influenced not only Israel but all mankind which has but borrowed and transformed it. And at the back of, animating and informing this mythological system, lies an esoteric Monotheism.

Thus the religious history of mankind would, save in the case of Israel where the Monotheistic conception abandons its esoteric form and boldly appeals in its naked simplicity to all mankind, be the history of the transformation, the "degradation" of what was imagined at some remote period in the Ancient East. If Dr. Jeremias were an Englishman he might, instead of referring to Volney and Dupuis, have cited Bryant, and the citation would have been even more to the point.

What is stated by Dr. Jeremias is implied in the arguments of earlier Assyriologists. I have during the last twenty years repeatedly protested against the implication, so now I would record my dissent from the statement. The question is of course far too large and too important for discussion here. I am content to point out to English fellow-students, especially to those of the "Anthropological" school, that the fundamental conceptions of their exposition of mythical and religious evolution are challenged not only implicitly but explicitly by the latest developments of Early-Eastern research.

ALFRED NUTT.

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TRADITIONAL ASPECTS OF HELL (ANCIENT AND MODERN). By JAMES MEW. Swan Sonnenschein & Co. 1903.

MR. MEW has selected an interesting and unhackneyed subject, and has treated it well. He describes eleven hells: the Egyptian, Assyrian, Brahman, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Classic, Scandinavian, Hebrew, Christian, Muslim, and Barbarian. The last of these is all but negative; and this leads to the melancholy reflection that belief in hell is an accompaniment of civilisation. Many savage races have not arrived at the conception of continued existence after death, and some of those who have, like the Pawnee Indians, "fear nothing after death worse than they know now—all [the good] will live again and be happy. One who is bad dies, and that is the end of him—he goes into the ground and does not live again." (Grinnell: *Pawnee Hero Stories and Folk Tales*, 355.) Others, like the Blackfoot Indians, believe that

those who in this world lead wicked lives take the shape of ghosts, and are compelled ever after to remain near the place where they died. (Grinnell: *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, 273.) The Tahitians invented a kind of purgatory, and supposed that, in the case of all but the very pure, the spirit of the dying man was scraped with a shell in the dwelling of the gods, served up at their table, and eaten and ejected three times in succession, when it was fit for the Tahitian paradise, to which the very pure are admitted without preliminary preparation. (Featherman: *Races of Mankind*, Division II., 37.) The idea of a future of eternal punishment is not derived from the beliefs of those we are pleased to call savages.

When the Egyptian mythologists formed the conception of a judging or weighing of souls, on which their religious system turned, that of the punishment of those who are condemned or found wanting was necessarily involved in it. That punishment appears to have included fiery torment, and was thus the precursor of the Christian hell, though it seems to have ended in annihilation, which in their religious ideas was itself a punishment. The evidence of an Assyrian hell is but slight. Brahman hells form a very elaborate system, both as to the offences that lead to them and the forms of torture inflicted in them. He who explains the sacred law to a low-caste person gets very severely handled, and his disciple as well. The Buddhist hell is probably that which has most directly influenced the mediæval imaginations with which we are familiar; it contains the elements of boiling in various liquids, worrying by animals, sulphurous and tormenting flame, mutilation, and the other incidents of horror which the church decorators of the Middle Ages used to think edifying. Mr. Mew quotes at some length a Chinese treatise, called "The Divine Panorama, published by the mercy of Yü Ti, that men and women may repent them of their faults and make atonement for their crimes," describing ten courts, held by infernal judges, in which offenders of various kinds are tried and condemned, with illustrations of the punishments inflicted. The Zoroastrian hell introduces some ingenious varieties of torment. The Classic hell, with its furies, its "gorgons, hydras, and chimeras dire," is familiar to us from many fine passages in the classical authors, but is not so startling as that which presented itself to the imagination in the dark ages. The Scandinavian hell and the Hebrew hell probably both contributed some elements to what is described as

the Christian hell. Of this latter Mr. Mew has selected thirty examples for illustration from various sources. The work is an instructive study in the evolution of religious ideas and of religious art. We should have been better pleased if it had been a little more methodical in style. It has the unpardonable fault of lacking an index. We hope the author may soon have the opportunity of amending these defects, and correcting some misprints, by being called upon to prepare a second edition.

E. W. BRABROOK.

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THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF SOUTHERN MEXICO.

*Physical Characters of the Indians of Southern Mexico.* By Professor F. STARR. University of Chicago Press, 1902.

*Notes upon the Ethnography of Southern Mexico*, by the same author. Putnam Memorial Publication Fund, 1902.

PROFESSOR STARR in these two monographs continues his elaborate inquiries into the ethnography of Southern Mexico. The first paper is devoted to the physical anatomy of these people, and contains a valuable series of anthropometrical observations, accompanied, as is usual with American publications of this class, by an excellent collection of representative portraits.

The second paper will be of more interest to members of this Society, as it is devoted to an elaborate account of a peculiarly interesting group of tribes, headed by the modern Aztecs, the wretched survivors of a great conquering race. I select from this great collection of folk-beliefs the following as some of the most interesting facts.

During the Aztec funeral rites a great washing-basket, which must be new and never previously used for any ordinary service, is filled with articles provided for the dead, separate portions being allotted to each soul, and one added for those souls that have no surviving friend to make provision for them. "Flowers of the dead," are spread over it, and the corners are sprinkled with holy water, the "flowers of the dead" being used as an aspergillum. Cigarettes are also provided for the dead at San Martin, but at Tlaxcala "the souls are not supposed to smoke." This reminds us of the offering of brandy and water and cigars at

the tomb of a European in India, who in life was supposed to enjoy such luxuries.

It is a matter of common belief among Mestizos or half-castes that every pure-blooded Maya has a violet or purple spot on the back at the *vertex coccigeus*, which is called "bread"; to refer to this is deemed an insult. Recent travellers have noted that a similar belief prevails in China. Indigo has special virtues, and a cross marked with it on the forehead protects the wearer against "the air," which is held responsible for a long list of diseases. They also believe in a creature like the *Churel* of India, called the *Xtabay*, which may be either male or female, and lures wayfarers to their doom. "As a female it is usually a beautiful lady in white, with her lowered hair falling down on her shoulders. She is most likely to be seen at night under large and spreading trees. She asks the passer whither he goes; suggests a ramble; even forcibly seizes and drags him to the edge of a precipice or cavern, over which, or into which, he is hurled. The heart of the victim is then torn out." Apparently she has not her toes turned back where her heels should be, as is the case with her sister in India.

They have also the common belief that eclipses are the work of a demon. "They believe that a creature named *baboal* is devouring the luminary, and make a great din to scare it; a pregnant woman must not touch any part of her body with her hand during an eclipse, lest she injure that part of the babe which is to be born." Exactly the same belief prevails in India.

Professor Starr gives a full account of the H'men, or medicine man, who gives oracles by consulting crystals. He performs various rites at seed-time and harvest, exorcises disease, and so on. "The Indians foretell the weather for the year by observation of the days in January. The days from the first to the twelfth give the weather for the corresponding months; those from the thirteenth to the twenty-fourth, taken in inverse order, modify or verify the observations. Thus the thirteenth gives the verification for December, the fourteenth for November, and so on." But Professor Starr doubts if this system be of Indian origin.

An interesting addition to this valuable report consists of sixteen folk-songs of the Zapotec tribe, recorded with the music, native words, and an English translation. Professor Starr was assured by a musician friend that the music had been profoundly

affected by European influence. The report closes with a long series of vocabularies and some good illustrations of objects of ethnographical interest.

A perusal of this fine series of ethnographical reports, compiled by the most competent authorities and printed and illustrated in an artistic way, only tempts us once more to express wonder and regret that nothing to be compared with this American work is being done in our vast colonial empire. The time is rapidly passing away when such inquiries are possible, and it is not pleasant to forecast the verdict which a future generation of anthropologists will pass upon a government and people which deliberately declines to utilise the vast opportunities for scientific work of this kind which are open to us at present.

W. CROOKE.

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**BASUTOLAND : ITS LEGENDS AND CUSTOMS.** By MINNIE MARTIN.  
London : Nichols & Co. 1903.

MRS. MARTIN has written an unpretentious, popular account of a most interesting branch of the Southern Bantus and the country they live in. It contains a short sketch of their history, needlessly divided between Chapters I. and IV. The country is the most beautiful and one of the most fertile parts of South Africa. It is under the protectorate of the British Crown, and thus escaped the ravages of the war which lately desolated all the surrounding country. No white men are allowed to reside there except Government officials, missionaries, and a few traders. Mrs. Martin is the wife of one of the first-named class. She speedily became interested in the people, and, at the suggestion of a friend, she made herself acquainted with their life and customs for the purpose of writing this little work.

The first white men to penetrate into Basutoland and form permanent settlements there were French Protestant missionaries. Of these men, Arbousset and Casalis have left us practically the only accounts of the people hitherto written. I have not Arbousset's work at hand ; but I have compared Mrs. Martin's statements with those of Casalis. Neither of these writers addresses a scientific audience. Consequently a really scientific account of the people is still wanting. Mrs. Martin, however, supplies some interesting details and variants of customs not



previously recorded, so far as I am aware. Her account of the death-customs is particularly valuable in this respect.

But that she has not gone far beneath the surface of things will, I think, be evident from the following observations. She speaks of native "schools" of girls and of boys, meaning the puberty customs. These customs are, we know, observed by the adolescent children in bands: hence, apparently, her notion that they are "schools." Her information about them is very vague, though perhaps she knows more than she cares to say, about the girls at all events, in a book intended for popular reading. At the best she seems hardly to have grasped their real significance.

"The Basuto," she says, "are the people of the crocodile (Kuenta), or as it is in Sesuto, 'Bakuena,' the crocodile being their sacred animal." This is not quite accurate. The Basutos are, like most of the Basuto people around them, in a late stage of totemism. They are composed of six clans, one of which only is the clan of the crocodile. It is true, the crocodile clan is that to which the reigning chief belongs. It may be that in the decay of totemism the remaining clans have to a great extent abandoned their own totems and are becoming merged in the clan of the chief. Evidence to this effect would be interesting. The authoress does not supply it, because totemism is obviously a foreign subject to her.

Again, in her account of the death-customs she represents the mourners crying "Our God, hear us! . . . May the old God pray to the new God for us!" The word rendered "God" is doubtless *Molimo*, and Mrs. Martin has been misled in her translation by the fact that it is the word adopted by the missionaries to translate our word God. The idea we express by "God" is, however, unknown to the Basuto. She might have been put on her guard by the fact of having used the same word in a plural form on the same page, where she says: "The cattle are called 'Melimo a'ngo e metse' (the *spirits* with the wet noses)." <sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Martin seems also to have mistaken the motive for treating with indifference a child born shortly after the death of another child of the same parents, and for dubbing it Mose la 'ntja, "which means 'the dog's tail,' a term of the greatest contempt." M. Christol, a French Protestant missionary, in his sketches of

<sup>1</sup> See on this subject my Presidential Address, *Folk-Lore*, vol. xli., p. 25.

Basuto life entitled *Au Sud de l'Afrique*, is nearer the mark when he says that it is a name as disagreeable as possible for the purpose of frightening death away. He gives other instances of contemptuous names bestowed on children in similar circumstances. The custom is in fact well known to anthropologists. Its object is not so much to avoid offending the spirit of the deceased child, as to secure the life of the newly-born from evil influences of all kinds by pretending that it is of no value.

Although the book is intended for popular reading, the authoress has forgotten to explain that, while Basuto is the name of the people, a single individual is Mosuto, the country is Lesuto, and the language Sesuto. She uses, indeed, these words correctly enough; but the readers whom she addresses are likely to be puzzled.

A small collection of native stories, ten in number, concludes the work. Unfortunately for the student they are not told as the natives tell them, but are decked out in a meretricious "literary" garb—thus: "Bitter tears rolled down Siloane's cheeks. What evil thing had befallen her, that the babe she had borne, and whom she had felt in her arms, strong and straight, should have been so changed ere the eyes of his father had rested upon him? Not once did she doubt Mokete. Was she not her own sister? What reason would she have," &c., &c.? Still, they are genuine stories, and perhaps this costume is calculated to commend them to "the general public." I can only wish the authoress had taken Dr. Theal, M. Junod, or Bishop Callaway as her model. Moreover, her method and the "popular" character of her book made me a little doubtful whether some of the incidents have not been consciously or unconsciously modified in preparing the stories for publication. Several have already been published by M. Jacottet, another French missionary, in his *Contes Populaires des Bassoutos* (Paris, Jeroux, 1895). A comparison of M. Jacottet's work with Mrs. Martin's reveals a number of suggestive variations. To give only one example, in all the versions of the story of Takane known to M. Jacottet, (who declares it to be a widespread and favourite tale), Masilo is refused by the heroine because he is her brother. Mrs. Martin describes him vaguely as her cousin. Thus the question of incest, which would account both for the secrecy of the wooing and for the heroine's refusal, does not, according to our ideas, arise.

It may be that this is to criticise the book too exclusively from a scientific point of view. That is the business of a reviewer in a scientific periodical. I believe Mrs. Martin has real gifts of observation and sympathy with the natives. If she will continue her study of them, make herself acquainted with some elementary anthropology, and take *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* in her hand, she may yet give us what is greatly needed—a detailed and accurate account of the Basuto, their civilisation and their ideas, before these are obliterated by the missionary and the trader.

E. SIDNEY HARTLAND.

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SHORT NOTICES.

- Vowel Sounds of East Yorkshire Folk Speech.* By the Rev. M. C. MORRIS, B.C.L., M.A. 1901. Henry Froude. 1s.
- Lakeland Words.* By B. KIRBY. Edited by Professor G. WRIGHT, 1898. Kendal. T. Wilson, Highgate. 2s. 6d.
- Letters and Poems.* By NATHAN HOGG. Edited by R. DYMOND, F.S.A. Exeter: Drayton and Sons. 3s.
- Wit and Wisdom of the South Lancashire Dialect.* Collected by F. E. TAYLOR. 1901. Manchester: John Heywood.
- Proverb Lore.* By F. EDWARD HULME, F.S.A. 8vo. pp. viii., 270. 1902. Elliot Stock.

The first two books noted above are careful studies in local dialects and terms of speech, valuable rather to the philologist than to the folklorist. And although there is a witch-story on p. 49 of Nathan Hogg's *Poems*, and some scattered references to folk-beliefs occur in his pages, their chief interest, apart from the language, is rather personal than popular.

But in *Wit and Wisdom* there are many things besides philology. The book is divided into comparisons and proverbs, quaint and personal sayings, with a few folk-rhymes at the end. Proverbs tell us what the folk really are, better than any other class of folklore, and in these 1,001 sayings are mirrored the homely philosophy and shrewd judgment so characteristic of the Lancashire people. There is a good-humoured cynicism running through the whole, which makes for placidity, though it may not lead to high ideals