Short Notices

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back as 200 years ago at the latest, constructed the infinitely more elaborate and more "literary" *manuscript* "runs." Otherwise we must conclude that the *manuscript* "runs" were degraded in precisely the same way in Cork, in Galway, in Argyleshire, and in Inverness-shire, a conclusion which strikes me as infinitely more unlikely, *a priori*, than the other one. But the question is one which can only be settled by trained linguistic examination of the originals. The particulars in which the various Irish dialects differ among themselves, and in which all differ from Gaelic as it has differentiated itself in Scotland during the last 300 years, are fairly well known. A careful examination, such as is now possible, of the same *oral* "run" in half a dozen different dialects of Gaelic, both Irish and Scotch, cannot fail to reveal whether it is, as I believe, older than the oldest similar *manuscript* "run" we possess. If it proves to be so, the further conclusion (which I maintained in the first paper I ever read before the Folk-Lore Society) follows as a matter of course; viz., that the living folk-tale is substantially older than, and is presupposed by, the Irish manuscript romance of which we have examples dating back to the early sixteenth and even the fifteenth century.

I warmly commend M. Dottin's volume to all storyologists.

ALFRED NUTT,

SHORT NOTICES.

Licht und Nebelgeister. Ein Beitrag zur Sagen- und Märchenkunde. Von Professor KARL AMERSBACH. Baden-Baden: Köblin. 1901.

This interesting paper is an attempt to determine the origin of the superstitions in reference to various kinds of apparitions. The author begins with the *ignis fatuus*. He has no difficulty in explaining as forms of either the *ignis fatuus* or St. Elmo's fire many fiery appearances which the imagination of the peasant has clothed in the form of animals of various kinds, or of human beings or evil spirits in their likeness. He ingeniously explains the apparition at night of a dark body with shining eyes, or accompanied by a light, as the negative after-impression produced

by the light on the retina. All this part of the paper is excellent. When, however, he goes on to apply the theory to such tales as those of Polyphemus, King Laurin, the adventure of Theodelinda with the sea monster, and so forth, I cannot follow him. Do such apparitions beget children? If King Laurin on his goat be nothing more than a spectral light surrounded by a mist, what becomes of Walter Map's tale of King Herla? It is a pity that Professor Amersbach has driven so far a theory which affords a probable explanation of a large class of stories. He should rest satisfied with convincing us as to these. He cannot unlock a whole mythology with the same key.—E. SIDNEY HARTLAND.

- (i.) *Morien, A Metrical Romance rendered into English prose from the Medieval Dutch.* By JESSIE L. WESTON.
- (ii.) *Marie de France; Seven of her Lays done into English.* By EDITH RICKERT. David Nutt. 1901.

Two volumes have been added to the attractive series of Arthurian Romances published by Mr. Nutt, which already includes some very interesting works. The first is a translation from the pen of Miss Weston of the Morien incident in the Dutch *Lancelot*. This adventure is not known in any other version. It is therefore impossible to say definitely whether it was an invention or at least original composition of the Dutch translator, or whether it existed in some French *lai* or episodic romance now lost; though the latter is distinctly the most likely of the two views, and is supported both by M. Gaston Paris and Miss Weston. The central idea of the story, however—the appearance of a Moorish knight who is closely related to Percival—reappears in Wolfram von Eschenbach's poem. In the latter case the Moor is Parzival's brother, in the case of the Dutch romance his nephew, though we are told that by some he was said to be his son. Miss Weston regards the relationship in Wolfram as the earlier conception, succeeded by that of son,—the Moorish hero being ultimately fathered upon Percival's brother Agloval; but though suggestive, her arguments, cannot be regarded as conclusive upon the point. In any case, the story must owe its origin to a period before the introduction of the ecclesiastical Grail tradition.

The other volume consists of a translation of seven of the *lais* of Marie de France, furnished with copious introduction and notes. This does not strictly belong to the series with which

it is uniform, since the *lais* chosen are mostly unconnected with the Arthurian cycle—*Guigemar, Le Fraisne, Les dous Amanz, Yonec, Lawstic, Chievrefoil, Eliduc*. It forms, however, a welcome supplement and companion volume to Miss Weston's translation of four of the *lais*, published in the series in 1900, and is a pleasing and handy version of Marie's delightful work. It is of course hopeless to attempt to render in prose the fascinating quaintness and happiness of Marie's verse, but on the other hand the translation of these *lais* into their original metre is an almost impossible task. The introduction, dealing with the whole question of Marie's work and its relation to sources, though of course not attempting to treat the subject in scientific detail, is ample for the needs of the general reader; so also are the notes, in which the relation of the *lais* to analogous tales elsewhere preserved is discussed fully and satisfactorily.—W. W. GREG.

Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg. A Translation into modern English Prose. By JOHN R. CLARK HALL, M.A., Ph.D. Swan Sonnenschein & Co. 5s. net.

The list of versions of, and hooks on, this old English poem, which have appeared in English, cuts a sorry figure beside the work of German scholars, and any addition to it deserves a welcome. The latest, now before us, will be valuable to any who desire to gain a knowledge of the poem, or who want a handy key to the various theories about it. The text is interspersed with a paraphrase in distinct type, designed to elucidate obscure passages. There is an exhaustive bibliography and useful indexes, genealogies, &c., and a few well-chosen illustrations of Scandinavian weapons, ornaments, &c. The translator in his introduction distinguishes carefully between the facts and theories about the poem. His own conclusion is that the story belongs to Denmark and Southern Sweden, but was brought to England by the Angles, or Jutes, and the poem probably composed by a Mercian, a converted heathen, about the year 660. It would form an admirable text-book, if English schools thought the early literature of their race worth study.—ALBANY F. MAJOR.

Popular Studies in Mythology and Folklore. No. 12. *The Edda:*

I. *The Divine Mythology of the North.* By WINIFRED FARADAY, M.A. D. Nutt. 6d.

This is an excellent and scholarly account of the Asa-Faith

and of the various channels through which it has come down to us. The author perhaps hardly attaches sufficient value to Snorri's *Edda*, which may not unfairly be described as a transcript in longhand of the shorthand notes of the poetic *Edda*. Of course there are amplifications in some of the tales, where Snorri lets himself go as a story-teller ; but, seeing how saturated with mythology was the poetic speech of the Scandinavian lands, it is clear that a knowledge of the origin of that speech must in the main have been preserved by the skalds, and must have been known to Snorri, who made it his business to explain in his *Skaldskaparmál* the *kennings* of the northern poetic tongue. Miss Faraday sketches clearly the main points of the mythology and the attributes of the chief gods, touching but lightly on controversial questions, which obviously could not be discussed in a brief handbook. The main points over which issue is joined are, however, indicated sufficiently to guide inquirers who may wish to go more deeply into the subject.—ALBANY F. MAJOR.