Review

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documents, on accounts of voyages and travels, on fairy-tales, on hymns to the gods, on moral and philosophical treatises, and on poetical compositions, with a final chapter on "Miscellaneous Literature." The works passed in review are partly translated, partly described in outline. Little is omitted, but it is strange that among the omissions should be so interesting and well-known a work as "The Adventures of the Mohar" in Palestine. There is nothing which gives us a better insight than this remarkable production into the geographical conditions of Palestine in the age of the Exodus, or the hardships which a tourist was likely to experience. Among the Miscellaneous Literature are included the medical and mathematical papyri, one of which was written in the Hyksos period.

Both volumes are provided with very complete indices.

A. H. SAYCE.

Studien zur ägyptischen Verwaltungsgeschichte in ptolemäisch-römischer Zeit. Der Βασιλικὸς Γραμματεὺς.

By ERHARD BIEDERMANN. pp. ix+123. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1913. 3 mark 60 pf.

This is a very useful collection of all the available evidence relating to the activities of the "royal scribe" under the Greek and Roman rulers of Egypt. The conclusion drawn by the author is briefly stated on p. 93, at the end of his second and main section: it is that the special duties of the "royal scribe" consisted in the compilation of the lists which served as the basis of assessment for taxes and of the general distribution of state burdens: these lists included the land survey, the census register of individuals, and the record of property in houses, slaves, and cattle. Upon these duties depended all the other functions which he is found performing, in conjunction with other officials, such as the assessment and collection of taxes, the supervision of monopolies, the direction of public works, the transport of corn, and the administration of land. His relationship to these other officials is treated briefly in the third section, which is not so conclusive as the second: but this is hardly the author's fault, as the evidence with regard to the relative positions of the numerous minor Ptolemaic and Roman officials is not only scanty but usually incoherent: it seems probable that the powers of any given officer were not strictly defined, but might be extended or limited to suit the circumstances of the moment. The discovery of new material may throw further light on some of the problems: but so far as the documents at present available carry us, there is practically nothing left unnoticed by Dr Biedermann.

J. G. MILNE.

The Samson-Saga and its place in Comparative Religion. By A. SMYTHE PALMER, D.D. London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1913. 5s. net.

In this book Dr Smythe Palmer has written an elaborate treatise on the solar elements which may underlie the Hebrew legend of Samson; and we have no doubt it will prove very instructive to the readers the author has in view, to some of whom, he anticipates, it will come as a shock "to be told that the Hebrews, like every other people, had a childhood which they outgrew, a period in their early history when they delighted in stories of adventure, abounding in exploits of supernatural prowess, from which even a coarse mimic element was not excluded." The book is written in a more popular and in a far more attractive style than the late Dr Robert Brown's treatises on astronomy and comparative religion. It draws its inspiration, in fact, not so much from independent research into a possible astronomical background to some mythologies, but rather from the influence of the astral theory of religion, as elaborated by that brilliant orientalist Hugo Winckler and by the rather less brilliant school he founded. Dr Palmer could not have selected a stronger peg on which to hang his web of solar analogies, for there can be no doubt that Samson, an account of whose exploits happens to have been included in an old Hebrew Book of Heroes, betrays the insignia of a local solar deity, and in this aspect may be treated as the Hebrew counterpart of the Phœnician Melkarth and the Babylonian Gilgamesh. But chance resemblance, whether in sight or sound, seems to have a compelling fascination for the comparative mythologist, who is out hunting for supports to a theory; and, if he is a wise mythologist, he will check his natural impulse to identify at the first glance by means of stringent linguistic study. It seems to us that a defect in Dr Palmer's work, which

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