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Book Reviews

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REVIEWS.

PORPHYRE. *L'Antre des Nymphes*, traduit par JOSEPH TRABUCCO; suivi d'un essai sur *Les Grottes dans les Cultes magico-religieux et dans la Symbolique primitive* de P. SAINTYVES. Paris: Émile Nourry. 1918.

M. ÉMILE NOURRY, a member of the Folk-Lore Society, who has written several valuable studies on folklore subjects under the pseudonym of P. Saintyves, has employed this translation of Porphyry's tract on the Cave of the Nymphs mentioned by Homer, as a peg whereon to hang his dissertation on Caves in magico-religious cults and in primitive symbolism.

According to his theory the cave was considered in ancient times as the universal matrix from which the world and men, light and the heavenly bodies alike have sprung, and that the initiation into the ancient mysteries always took place in a cave. Many caves in Palestine and elsewhere now regarded as centres of Christian history or legend, such as the cave of Bethlehem where the Nativity is said to have taken place, were, he contends, originally caves dedicated to the worship of Adonis and similar pagan deities. This is interesting, and in many cases probable; but the author is not always very critical of his evidence, nor does it always appear whether his authorities are cited for the fact or for the tradition. Indeed, in the case of the cave alleged to be the burial-place of Jesus Christ, his quotation from Eusebius seems to show that it was not a prehistoric place of worship. In his reference to the Baptism, too, he has placed the cart before the horse, by making the Fasting and Temptation precede, instead of following, the rite.

Speaking generally, however, the well-known custom of the

Christian Church to seize upon sacred places of older religions and convert them to Christian worship leads naturally to the suspicion that this took place in many more instances than have been identified. And though many of the festivals and of the sacred names are now known to be far older in one form or another than Christianity, probably more remain to be investigated. The author's identifications cannot be regarded as by any means always established; but his speculations are ingenious and should be kept in view for further research. In particular, his suggestion that creation legends are often or usually the libretto of a seasonal or initiatory ritual should not be forgotten.

E. SIDNEY HARTLAND.

GERALD FRIEDLANDER. *JEWISH FAIRY TALES*. Illustrated by BEATRICE HIRSCHFELD. London: R. Scott. 1917. 8vo. Pp. viii + 88.

OUT of the vast treasury of Jewish tales, the Rev. Gerald Friedlander has picked out eight tales. Of course, they are no real fairy tales; it is somewhat of a misnomer. The fairy as we know it from our Western tales is often a mere she-demon in the East, and in these tales there is perhaps only one that approximates to our Western tales. Still they are unquestionably characteristic tales, full of the romance of the East, and cast in the mould of the Jewish spirit, independent of whatever their primitive origin may have been. The tales are: 1. King Solomon and the Worm, *i.e.* the legend of the stone cutting Shamir and the adventures of Benayah who was sent to capture Ashmedai, the King of the Demons, who alone possessed the secret of that stone so essential for the building of the Temple without the use of iron.

2. Falsehood and Wickedness, allowed to enter the ark of Noah as a pair. Wickedness agreed to be the mate of Falsehood on condition that Falsehood should give to Wickedness all the profits made in the ark. In the end Wickedness cheats Falsehood of the whole of her gains in the ark.

3. The Wicked King and His Bride. This is the story published by me some years ago in the *Journal* of our Society from a Hebrew MS. of the twelfth century. Mr. Friedlander, evidently ignorant of that fact, took it from the Jewish-German "Maasse-Buch,"—the Jewish *Gesta Romanorum* of the sixteenth century. I may mention incidentally that at the request of the American Jewish Publication Society I have been engaged for some time already in a complete translation of the above mentioned "Maasse-Buch."

4. The Story of the Two Jewels from the Work of Aben Verga. This is more an allegoric parable than a tale. It is the source of "The three rings" in Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*.

5. The Beggar at the Wedding is the disguised Angel of Death, who is appeased by the hospitality shown to him, and the death sentence is averted by the bride's intercession with God.

6. The Clever Wife who was barren and consented to become divorced after ten years of married life if allowed to take with her the best beloved object. She makes her husband drunk at the parting feast and carries him in that state to her house.

7. The coins of Elijah are bringing blessing and riches to the man who, following his wife's advice, accepts the loan of them for the immediate seven years and not the last seven years of his life. He acts charitably and the coins remain with him to the end.

The last (No. 8) is only a fable taken from the collection of Berachyah of the twelfth-thirteenth century, whose relation to the fables of Marie de France is still a problem waiting for final solution.

These tales and apologues belong also to other cycles, and students of folklore have often referred to them; especially is this the case with the first tale, which has a history of its own. The incident alone of the dialogue between Solomon and Ash-medai leads up to that of "Solomon and Markult," and to Bertoldo. Vesselofski has written his famous book *Solomon i Kitouras* about this legend, and follows up many of its main features throughout the literature of the world. Mr. Friedlander has contented himself with the translation of these tales from the Hebrew into English and has presented them to the

reading public without any reference to parallel literature. It is a pity that in his desire to interest the modern and probably youthful reader, he should have modernised the quaint old style which is not the least charm of the old tales.

In spite of these strictures I was bound to make in the name of our science of Folk-Lore, Mr. Friedlander's book deserves commendation as a contribution to the store of Jewish Medieval Tales and apologues, inasmuch as they have been translated directly from the Hebrew.

A special feature of this publication upon which I should like to lay stress, is the spirited illustrations of Miss Hirschfeld. They are taken from the symbolical and ceremonial life of the Jews, and reflect the oriental setting of the tales. The artist is to be heartily complimented on her clever achievement.

M. GASTER.

SHORT NOTICES.

DREAMS: WHAT THEY ARE, AND WHAT THEY MEAN, by J. W. WICKWAR. A. F. Denny & Co., London. 2nd ed. 1917.

THIS little book gives a clear survey of an interesting subject. The author explains the origin of dreams as follows: "By the automatic activities of the nerve cells of the brain, conscious and unconscious memories are worked up and visualised into new and startling combinations, and dreams are revivals of actual sensory impressions either in whole or in part." "Memory, including latent inherited ideas, temperament and environment, have some part to play in the control and quality of dreams. . . . Memory plays the most important part, inasmuch as a dream is, in most cases, simply a repetition, a re-formation, and a revealing of past cerebral conceptions." The brain, in short, "may be likened to a sensitised plate used in photography." The best-remembered dreams seem to be those which immediately precede the moment of waking, when the functions suspended by sleep have partially regained their power. A chapter is usefully devoted to demolishing the position of modern psycho-analysts, following the lead of certain German and Austrian writers.