A Storehouse of Mythology.*

There are few subjects upon which more learning has been expended by scholars of distinction than that of mythology. Conjectures in regard to the origins and distribution of myths have given rise to numerous theories both startling and fascinating.

Many of these scholars have been possessed by a preconceived idea, which led each one to

---

*The Mythology of All Races. Edited by Louis Herbert Gray, A.M., Ph.D., and George Foot Moore, A.M., D.D., LL.D. Volume X., North American Mythology, by Hartley Burr Alexander, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy, University of Nebraska. Illustrated in color, etc. Boston: Marshall Jones Co. (Sold only in sets of thirteen volumes, by subscription.)

explain all myths by his own especial formula. The Solar School, and the Anthropological School, for example, with Max Müller and Andrew Lang as their respective leaders, waged great intellectual battles, each insisting upon the paramountcy of its own explanation. In the midst of the battle, Sir James G. Frazer, like the dog in the nursery tale, carried off the bone with his tree and vegetational hypothesis. But the bone did not remain long in his sole possession, for to-day the survey of the whole field of mythology perceives that every scholar has a right to his nibble at the bone, and that each one has evolved a theory which explains one or more elements in the origins and growth of myth. The task now before the scholar is to make these various theories fit into some general scheme.

In the meantime, lay readers, for the most part unconscious of the profound interest taken by men of learning in the early thoughts and imaginings of the human race, have read myths, or rather mutilations of myths, simply because they found them interesting as stories.

When one considers the vast amount of expert knowledge which has been for years accumulating about the myths of all races, it would seem as if the appropriate moment had arrived for the initiation of the general reader into a deeper and more widespread understanding of mythology as a cultural study, recording the religious, scientific, and imaginative development of the human mind. The art and literature of the world cannot be properly comprehended without a knowledge of Culture Mythologies; while in primitive myths, the beginnings of religious aspiration, scientific method, and philosophical conjecture are found. Primitive man had as strong a desire to know the causes of things as has the scientist to-day. Observation, curiosity about the things observed, a wish to control natural forces, aided by a most astonishing imagination, led on the one hand to myths of explanation, and on the other to ceremonies in sympathetic magic; and from these grew primitive religion, literature, and art. To know the story of the development of myths is to know the first chapter in sociology and psychology,— a chapter rich in a strangeness and variety, arousing wonder and admiration hardly to be called forth by any subsequent chapter in human development.

It is a source of genuine satisfaction, therefore, that, under the general editorship of Dr. Louis Herbert Gray, one who is thoroughly equipped in this field, a comprehensive work upon the "Mythology of All Races" has been undertaken, and is now issuing from the press. This work will be completed in thirteen volumes, five of which are to be ready by December of this year. The thoroughness of the survey and the assurance of scholarly and authoritative work are evidenced in the titles of the volumes, and the names of their respective authors. The first volume, on Greek and Roman Mythology, is by Professor W. Sherwood Fox, of Princeton University. The second volume, devoted to Teutonic Mythology, is by Dr. Axel Olrik, of the University of Copenhagen, author of "The Epic Poetry of Denmark" and other important works. The third volume is divided between Celtic and Slavic: Canon John A. MacCulloch, Rector of St. Saviour's, Bridge of Allan, Scotland, and author of "The Childhood of Fiction," etc., writes on the Celtic Myths; and the Slavic section is written by Professor Jan Machal, of the Bohemian University of Prague, the author of important works on Slavic Mythology which have never been translated. In the fourth volume, Dr. Uno Holmberg, of the University of Finland, writes of the Finno-Ugric and Siberian Mythology. The fifth volume, on Semitic Mythology, is by Captain R. Campbell Thompson, the author of several well known works upon Oriental mythological subjects. The sixth volume is divided between India and Persia,— the first being dealt with by Professor A. Berriedale Keith, of Edinburgh University, author of the "Vedic Index of Names and Subjects," and the second by Professor A. J. Carnoy of the University of Louvain, author of the "Religion of the Avesta" and other works. The seventh volume includes Armenian Mythology, by Professor Neardiros Anani Kian, of the Kennedy School of Missions, and the Mythology of the Pagan Africans by George Foucart, head of the French Institute of Oriental Archæology at Cairo and the author of "La Méthode Comparative dans l'Histoire des Religions." Chinese Mythology, by Professor U. Hattori of the Imperial University of Tokio, and Japanese Mythology by Professor Masaharu Anesaki, also of the University of Tokio, make up the eighth volume. The ninth volume, by Professor Roland Burrage Dixon of Harvard University, author of "Maidu Texts," discusses the Mythology of the Nealayo-Polynesian and Australian peoples. The tenth and eleventh volumes treat of North American, Central and South American Indian Mythology, and both are by Professor Hartley B. Alexander, of the University of Nebraska, author of numerous articles on the American Indians. The twelfth volume includes ancient Egyptian Mythology by Pro-

fessor Max Müller of the University of Pennsylvania, author of "Egyptological Researches," etc., and the Mythology of Burma, Siam, and Annam, by Sir George Scott, editor of "The Upper Burma Gazetteer."

Much of this material — as for example, the mythologies of the Slavs, the Armenians, the Australians, and the Siberians — will come before English readers for the first time.

In planning this set of books, the authors and publishers have had in mind both the needs of the general reader who is awaking to the importance of a more unified study of mythology, and those of the student. The general reader will find in the body of the text a broad survey of "simple facts" as they have been presented chiefly by travellers, missionaries, and anthropologists. The intention, as outlined by Dr. Gray in his preface, is not to bring forward any special theory of mythology which seeks to solve every problem by one and the same formula, but to give the facts in the case, leaving the theories to take care of themselves, as they can safely be trusted to do when built upon solid foundations; and yet so to relate the different volumes that they will not form a chance collection of monographs, but an organic whole. The work aims to be scientific in the best sense, and at the same time eminently readable,— "to set forth myths as living entities, and, because each writer knows and loves the mythology of which he treats, to fill the reader with enthusiasm." Furthermore, as Dr. Gray expresses it, "there will be nothing in our series that can be, in Roman Catholic phrase, 'offensive to pious ears.'" The student will find information of a technical nature in copious notes at the end of each volume, a bibliography of the works consulted in the preparation of the volume, and in the thirteenth volume an Index, prepared by the Editor, which will give not merely the names and subjects discussed in the various volumes, but also a topical arrangement by which variant myths and mythic themes of the different peoples may be found readily and accurately.

The plan is, on the whole, an excellent one. It will be recognized at once, however, that the value of the work to scholars will be somewhat discounted by the consideration accorded to "pious ears." On the other hand, the scholar will not be harmed by dwelling upon the more beautiful consummations of primitive imagination; while the general reader will find only what will delight and stimulate him. It was no doubt also a sensible determination that no preconceived theories were to be adopted in the interpretation of myth. But it may be said that the day of a "single key to all the mythologies" has passed away with the passing of George Eliot's Casauban. In a general sense, the various collaborators may be able to live up to the determination of presenting "mere facts," but it is doubtful whether any genuine scholar in mythology can be wholly satisfied with mere description. If he ventures upon any interpretation whatever, it must be colored by his own or received theories in regard to origins, variations, and distributions. Nor would such coloring of fact detract in the least from the interest felt by the general reader. Rather would it help to coördinate and fix in his mind the knowledge he has gained, and indicate to him the true value of mythology in mind-development. Fortunately, each author is given full latitude to plan and arrange his own section; and we confidently prophesy that the presentation of "mere facts" will be enriched by much interesting interpretation in line with the most advanced scholarship. Indeed, the prophecy is already fulfilled in the first volume to appear,— that on "North American Mythology," by Dr. Hartley Burr Alexander.

In his Introduction, Professor Alexander has passed in review the sources of primitive inspiration,— all of which once belonged in the region of the hypothetical conjectures of scholars. These are the suggestions of environing nature, the analogies of human nature, both psychical and physiological, imagination and borrowings. Enlarging upon these suggestions, he gives a most interesting and comprehensive sketch of the general characteristics of North American Mythology, in the course of which he touches upon many of the theories which have been advanced.

In Professor Alexander's opinion a distinction must be made between myth and religion proper; though intimately related, they are not identical. "The Indian's religion," he tells us, "must be studied in his rites, while many mythic heroes are not important in ritual at all." Myths, he declares, belong more properly to the realm of science and æsthetics than to that of religion,— or, as he continues, myths detailing causes, so being related to science in its infancy, are "perhaps the only stories that may properly be called myths." It may be questioned whether the "search for the cause" is not the chief underlying element in both religion and science,— one differentiating through various stages in which magic plays a part into ceremonies for the honor or propitiation of the cause; the other through magic also into ceremonies for

the control of the cause. Imagination, coloring every stage, finally breaks loose and works solely on its own account. Then we leave the purely æsthetic myth,— in which, however, are survivals of the previous stages. Why are they not all mythology in different phases of growth? Professor Alexander himself proves the impossibility of getting away from religion when writing on mythology, for he constantly describes the gods of the different Indian tribes, which descriptions he evidently derives from both ritual and explanatory myths.

It is a matter of some regret to the reviewer that Professor Alexander does not give in his Introduction a detailed account of animism and its relations to clan totemism and personal totemism or guardian spirits; also, of the practices of sympathetic magic, even if some points here are still in the "preconceived idea" stage. Certainly primitive civilization based upon these ideas underlies the mythology of the savage, just as surely as our civilization to-day underlies all our literature. One already possessed of the knowledge feels everywhere in the description and myths the prevailing influence of animism; yet it is nowhere expressly dealt with except in a short note. Again, totemism is only mentioned expressly in the text in connection with the Indians of the North Pacific Coast, though there are a few references to it in the notes. These omissions from the Introduction may be due, as already hinted, to the fact that many points in regard to these subjects are still in the controversial stage, and the author may therefore have decided that it would be better to refer to them only in connection with the separate descriptions in the body of the text, generally under other terms. Or it may be due to the fact that Professor Alexander seems to be especially interested in the cosmic and geographical aspects of myths.

This brings us to the body of the text, which shows an amazing knowledge of the myths, especially the cosmogonic and hero types, of the North American Indian. The influence of geographical situation and climate is everywhere traced; and comparisons of the myths of different regions are made, bringing out the similarities and variations. Many curious parallels are also drawn between American myths and those of classical antiquity.

Professor Alexander has certainly fulfilled with conspicuous success the task he set for himself,— that is, "a kind of critical reconstruction of a North American Mythology." This was an immensely difficult task. "Beliefs vary from tribe to tribe, even from clan to clan; yet throughout, if one's attention be broadly directed there are fundamental similarities and uniformities that afford a basis" for such a reconstruction. No single tribe and no group of tribes has completely expressed this mythology — much less has any realized the form; but the student of Indian lore can scarcely fail to become conscious of a coherent system of myths, of which the Indians themselves might have become aware in course of time if the intervention of Old World ideas had not confused them. All who read the book will feel that, for the first time, they truly know the North American Indian in all his fantasticalness and in all his profundity.

Under divisions treating of such tempting subjects as "The Great Spirit," "The Deluge," "The Theft of Fire," "Tricksters and Wonder Folk," "Spirits, Ghosts, and Bogies," "Prophets and Ghost Dances," "Sun Worship," besides the cosmogonic myths of Algonquians, Athapascans, Iroquoian, Pueblo, Zuni, and many others, will be found a rich mine of Indian lore, made especially valuable both to ordinary readers and to the student by the illuminating observations and interpretations of the author. The notes at the end add much valuable information on technical points, with references to their sources, and, with the full bibliography and map of the distribution of American linguistic stocks, add scholarly weight to the volume.

A word should be said of the admirable scheme of illustration, which aims to include pictures of deities or of mythic incidents as delineated by the people who themselves believed in those deities or incidents. In the volume before us the illustrations are full of interest, not only for the light they throw upon the text, but for their intrinsic significance and the excellence of their reproduction. Good paper, large and handsome type, and substantial binding in brown buckram lend their aid to the permanent value of the series.

Publishers and authors alike are to be congratulated upon this brilliant inaugural volume, which in constructive interpretation and fascinating information more than fulfills the promises of its author and the general editor.

HELEN A. CLARKE.