

A general criticism, which has already been indicated, is the relative neglect of non-American investigations. One would naturally expect emphasis to be given to American work and examples to be chosen largely from North American vegetation; but more consideration of various methods of study, both of vegetation itself and of the factors of the environment, which have been developed in Europe and elsewhere would have added greatly to the value of the first half of the book. It is also unfortunate that, in common with many other text-books of ecology, the dependence of good ecological work on the correct determination of the organisms composing the communities studied is not stressed.

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LOCAL GENII OF BRITISH FOLK-BELIEF

The Minor Traditions of British Mythology

By Lewis Spence. Pp. 176. (London: Rider and Co., 1948.) 16s. net.

THIS volume is an attempt to present in concise and summarized form some of the lesser facts and circumstances of British mythology which, although dealt with in some detail by writers in the more specialized journals devoted to folk-lore, have not yet received adequate attention in more popular books. It has been Mr. Spence's object to collect together many of the more local British traditions as they are expressed in legend and folk-tale, and show how the rivers, mountains, lakes and wells are peopled by a motley collection of goblins and demons, giants and monsters, vegetation spirits and supernatural birds. To the stories concerning these monsters the author has added the legendary material which has collected in such quantity around the standing stones of Britain and the dolmens and menhirs which can be treated with them.

It follows from the plan designed by the author that a good deal of the material with which he deals is concerned with those local genii and solitary spirits who rarely seem to have attained more than a local distinction, but who, in many cases, can be linked up with more prominent mythological figures.

Having discussed the spirits which are connected with British rivers, lakes and wells, Mr. Spence proceeds to give an interesting account of mermaids and seal-folk, and then goes on to discuss the giants and ogres of England. He is of the opinion that many of these gigantic divinities were the original deities of this island; and from the passages he quotes it would seem that at one time Britain must have been the home of many giants, some of whom were guilty of exceedingly unpleasant habits. Passing in review the giants of Scotland, Ireland and Wales, Mr. Spence then continues his narrative by an account of British goblins and demons, a chapter which could, I think, have been considerably enlarged with great advantage to the reader. The author points out that what he calls the demonology of Britain is the equal of any to be found in Europe, and although it does not present the number of fantastic varieties to be found in Germany, the type is broader, owing perhaps to the great admixture of stocks which makes up the British population. How far this is true it would be difficult to determine

without a much more detailed examination of the legendary figures and their possible sources than has been attempted here. What is clear is that British goblins have appeared in numberless forms, many of which were described by Scot in his famous sixteenth-century book on witchcraft. Here will be found a catalogue of sprites listed under such names as bull-beggars, sylens, pans, kit with the cansticke, calcars, the hell-waine, the puckle "and such other bugs". Mr. Spence rightly points out that few of the types listed by Scot are actually of British provenance, while others are of the fairy class to which, in the present volume, the author has not turned his attention.

In the discussion of these curious demonic figures some of them are compared with so-called poltergeists, inasmuch as a few were noted for their tricks and troublesome antics. Thus the Hedley kow seems to have been of this type, for it would disguise itself as a truss of straw, and when someone tried to pick it up it would become so heavy that it would have to be laid down to let the bearer have a few minutes rest. Thereupon it would suddenly come to life and shuffle away with a peal of laughter.

It would be of interest to discover whether legends of this sort can be in any way linked up with the many accounts of poltergeist activity to be found in Great Britain. In the present volume, however, Mr. Spence has confined himself to a bald statement of the facts, and the reader is often left with a desire to know more just when his attention is directed to a fresh case. Indeed, the author might have been wiser had he not attempted to deal with so much material in so small a space. In its present form the book is little more than a very convenient and useful summary of the subject; but it would have been much improved if the dates of publication had been added to the material listed under the references, and the index much enlarged so as to include more of the proper names, and not only a certain number of them based on a method of selection the principle of which does not seem to be at all clear.

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THE GRADUATE IN INDUSTRY

The Graduate in Industry

By Dr. Percy Dunsheath. Pp. x + 276. (London: Hutchinson's Scientific and Technical Publications, n.d.) 10s. 6d. net.

THIS book is a thoroughly competent piece of workmanship which to some extent breaks new ground in that, unlike most 'careers' books, it indicates the trend of numerous occupations for university-trained men and women in industry and attempts to demonstrate the opportunities for service to the community which lie therein. In this his first objective, Dr. Dunsheath sets out deliberately to overcome some of the prejudices against entering industry which, according to Sir Lawrence Bragg and others, are sometimes manifest among students. While thus endeavouring to satisfy the ideals which often influence such students, Dr. Dunsheath remains essentially factual and has assembled a considerable amount of information not otherwise accessible in one volume, which should make his book of real value to the university appointments boards and to the higher appointments officers of the Ministry of Labour and National Service.