

REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

The Decameron: its Sources and Analogues. By A. C. LEE. London, David Nutt, 1909. 8vo, pp. xvi + 363.

Boccaccio and his Imitators in German, English, French, Spanish, and Italian Literature: "The Decameron." By FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE JONES, Instructor in Romance Languages, University of Illinois. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1910. Quarto, pp. iv, 46.

When so much has been done in recent years in the collecting, sifting, and categorizing of folk-tales, a tempting task for the student of comparative literature is to devote a book to the *Decamerone* of Boccaccio, in which each story could be taken as the kernel of an investigation of the particular theme to which it belongs. This would afford an opportunity to show at once Boccaccio's artistic treatment of his material, and the influence of his work as a source of literary inspiration. Such a study would imply a wide first-hand acquaintance with the literature of folk-lore; an equally wide acquaintance with Occidental literature, medieval and modern; and a familiarity with the results of the investigation of a variety of literary problems, to which scholars, in fields as widely removed as Romance, Germanic, Semitic and Sclavic philology have contributed their share.

Not one of these requirements seems to be possessed by the author of *The Decameron; Its Sources and Analogues*. His "List of Principal Works Referred To" contains nothing but a few of the obvious standard works, collections or investigations, devoted to storiology, in which the names of Köhler, Cosquin, Rajna and Vesselofsky are noticeable by their absence. To note the sins of omission in the body of the work would call for a book in itself; while a correction of the sins of commission would demand another supplementary volume. Effective use could have been made of the works, known to Mr. Lee, but what the reader of the book finds is nothing but the indiscriminate contents of a commonplace-book, in which discredited authorities are cited at second hand, antiquated editions quoted, and analogues referred to, which have nothing to do with the story under discussion; in short, a collection of unconnected notes, more confusing than informing. A very few samples will show Mr. Lee's small acquaintance with either the methods or results of modern scholarship. He knows nothing further about Benvenuto da Imola's commentary on the *Divina Commedia*, than the passages cited in Manni's *Istoria del Decamerone*, and the translation of Tambrini, *i. e.*, Tamburini (3, 23, 179), being quite ignorant of the worthlessness of the Italian translation, and of Lacaïta's edition of the Latin text. The *Gesta Romanorum*, probably compiled in England about the year 1300 is "a work ascribed to Petrus Berchorius, a Benedictine prior who died at Paris 1362" (7). The author of the Latin *Dolopathos* is known as Jean de Haute-Seille, and not as an indefinite "monk of the Abbey of Haute-Selve," and the French translator's name was Herbort not "Hebers" (67). The

translation by Laurent de Premierfait, "Laurens du Premierfait," of the *Decamerone* was not made in 1521 (109) but a century and more earlier. When a writer refers to the possibility that the source of Boccaccio's version of the "Purgatory of Cruel Beauties" (G. V, N. 8) is to be sought in the *Vers de la Mort* of Helinant (166); when he writes "Odo of Shirton" (112), instead of "Sheriton"; when he distinguishes "the 'Liber de donis' of Étienne de Bourbonne," from "the work of Stephen of Bourbon" or "Etienne de Bourbon," "called 'The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit'" (cf. 233, 4, 6, 209, 306); when he only knows the works of Marie de France in Roquefort's edition (161, 244, 278, 279, 313, 354), the *Ruodlieb* in Grimm and Schmeller's *Lateinische Gedichte* (303), and Enikel's *Chronik* in the few extracts given in v. Hagen's *Gesammtabentauer* (11, 278, 292); and when he shows his ignorance of medieval literature by a thousand similar errors, his book which treats largely of just that period of literary history can scarcely be considered seriously. The contribution of English scholarship to Romance studies, with a few brilliant exceptions, has been of a negative quality, and works like the book under criticism do not aid in the improvement of the situation. It is a pity that the head of the publishing house issuing the volume, whose activities in the cause of Romance and comparative literature are so commendable, has been so badly advised as to publish this uncritical compilation.

Miss Jones's work is less ambitious than Mr. Lee's; as it is only a list of the imitations of the stories of the *Decamerone*, and of the dramas, poems, operas, and even paintings inspired by the work of Boccaccio. Although there are omissions in these different categories, too numerous to note, the book has the merit of allowing the reader to see at a glance the results of the investigations of various scholars, known to Miss Jones, who has, moreover, given an independent value to her work by marking with a star the imitations that she has been able to read herself. For this reason one understands why she does not star versions of stories, found in collections of popular folk-tales, which did not have their source in Boccaccio's versions, as is at once evident to one who has the opportunity to read them. In both her introduction and list the author has been unfortunate in going counter to the unanimous opinion of Chaucerian scholars, in her assurance that the English poet was indebted to the *Decamerone* for six of the stories and the frame-work of the *Canterbury Tales*. What is more surprising is to find the *Heptaméron* not mentioned a single time, although its professed model was the *Decamerone*, even if it was only indebted to it for two of its stories (Cf. *Dec.* VII, 6; VIII, 4; *Hept.* I, 6 & 8). An Old-French miracle, an analogue, and not an imitation of *Dec.* II, 9 is properly known as *Le miracle d'Oton, roi d'Espagne* and not as *Le Miracle de Notre Dame*, "Comment le roi d'Espagne perdit sa terre" and its date is c. 1380, and not 1498. The volume of Lami's *Novelle letterarie* (XVII) containing "La Pianella" was published in 1756, not 1755, and the story, printed from a fourteenth century manuscript, was probably derived from the same source as Boccaccio's version. Miss Jones may well question whether Uhland's *Die Todten von Lustnau* was an imitation of *Dec.* X, 4; Liebrecht's study on the cycle, of which both stories are a version, settles that difficulty (*Zur Volkskunde*, 54 ff.).

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