

The essay which follows occupies an important place in the history of folklore scholarship because it demonstrates the excesses and absurdities of the solar mythologists at a time when Max Müller's ideas were still gaining new adherents. Although it has been attributed to various scholars, the author of this delightful parody remains unknown. The article first appeared unsigned in an 1870 issue of Kottabos, a literary magazine published at Trinity College, University of Dublin, and has been thought to be the work of Reverend Dr. Richard Frederick Littledale (1833-1890) (See Richard M. Dorson, The British Folklorists, p. 185 and Peasant Customs and Savage Myths, p. 171). But if this is so, then it was the only time Littledale ever wrote on a folkloric topic or indicated any interest in or knowledge about solar mythology. Furthermore he left Dublin in 1862 and spent the rest of his life in London, where he made a reputation for himself as the author of a number of polemical pamphlets.

In 1884 "The Oxford Solar Myth" appeared in a French translation with some additions by Henri Gaidoz (1842-1932) in the journal Mélusine. This led some scholars, the most notable being Stith Thompson, to conclude the essay was written by Gaidoz. Andrew Lang's name was affixed to the end of the French translation along with the statement that the article was translated from English and had appeared in the Folk-Lore Journal. I have, however, been unable to find any other evidence it ever appeared in the Journal or its predecessor, the Folk-Lore Record, or its successor, Folk-Lore.

It seems most likely that the person responsible for the article was a graduate student at the University of Dublin who, for some reason, chose to remain anonymous. This theory seems more plausible when one realizes that Kottabos was a magazine that published mainly student articles. Certainly the Folklore Forum staff, because ours is a journal devoted to publishing scholarly works by students, would like to believe that some student penned this classic parody.

The present reprinting is only the second time "The Oxford Solar Myth" has been published in the twentieth century. Its last reprinting was in a 1909 edition of Max Müller's Comparative Mythology, An Essay edited by Abram Smythe Palmer who, incidentally, graduated in 1865 from Trinity College, University of Dublin. It is reissued in Folklore Forum both because of its historical value and also as an assurance to faculty members that students of the past were just as audacious as their twentieth century counterparts. Perhaps one Victorian student even dared to ridicule Max Müller, one of the intellectual giants of the day.

W. K. McNeil

The reader of the following reprint has his choice of errors: aside from the high quality Forum typing and proofreading errors, there are a number of possible manuscript errors. The copy of the article from which this reprint has been taken is a very poor photo-copy of an original, irreparably blocked out in places by ink-stains. Consequently, some parts of the text, and especially some of the Greek words and phrases, have proved indecipherable. By comparing this copy of the original with the French version in Mélusine (2 [1884]: 75-83), and by locating the full Greek texts from which the Greek quotes were taken, together with H. M. Simmons' ingenuity in reconstructing Greek words, we have been able to fill in most of the gaps with reasonable assurance. However, should anyone find a better original, please tell us where our reprint varies from it, send us a decent copy of it, or tell us how we can get our hands on it.

J. C. G.