

Art. 3.—THE TRAVELS OF SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE.

1. *The Buke of John Maundevill*. Edited with Introduction and Notes by Sir George Warner. Roxburghe Club, 1889.
2. *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. Edited by A. W. Pollard. Macmillan, 1900.
3. *Untersuchungen über Johann von Mandeville und die Quellen seiner Reisebeschreibung*. Von Albert Boven-schen. Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde. Berlin: Reimer, 1888.
4. *Handschriftliche Untersuchungen über die englische Version Mandeville's*. By J. Vogels. Crefeld, 1891.
5. *Étude Critique sur Jean d'Outremeuse*. Par G. Kurth. Memoirs of the Royal Academy of Brussels. Hayez, 1910.

It has long since been proved that the book known as 'The Travels of Sir John Mandeville' is a mere compilation, written by a man who need not have travelled beyond his library, and who probably was a resident and a native of the episcopal city of Liége. In learned documents, such as the catalogue of printed books in the British Museum and in the National Biography of Belgium, we find him entered under the fictitious name of Jean des Preis, which he assumed along with a fantastic and aristocratic pedigree, while his real surname, d'Outremeuse, appears only in a subordinate position. Far from having set out on his travels in 1322, as stated of Sir John Mandeville, he was in that year a resident in limbo, from which he emerged through birth in 1338; in 1356, the date of the fictitious journey's end, he was only a stripling, probably in minor orders, and on his way to become a notary. His learned biographer knows of him as having in 1383 served on a commission of enquiry against certain partisans of the anti-pope Clement VII, and three years later, on a similar commission against local aldermen. In 1395, he held a claustral house of the Cathedral of St Lambert. The date of his death is 1400. He was thus almost exactly contemporary with Geoffrey Chaucer (1328-1400).

Being thus provided with an outline of the life of the

notary who did not travel, how are we to account for the appearance in literary history of the English Ulysses, Sir John Mandeville, knight? From three various sources particulars of his life have been collected and built up into a biography. First there is the book of Travels itself, which claims him as its author; but, being neither original nor truthful, it deserves little credit. A testimony that cannot so easily be set aside is that of his funeral monument, which has been inspected and described by four independent witnesses in four separate centuries, and from which his epitaph has been copied and published several times. It seems hypercritical to dismiss this as a fake, and to argue that a notary who made himself guilty of a book of semi-fictitious history is likely to have spent money on contriving a cenotaph in the church of the Guillemins near Liège, and on devising the effigy, epitaph and coat of arms of a man who was not buried there. Even if we could admit that our notary was capable of a practical joke of that kind, there would still remain another difficulty. Would the prior of the convent of the Guillemins have lent the consecrated soil of his church for the purpose? This we take the liberty to doubt. He might, we imagine, allow the heirs of Sir John Mandeville (or Montevilla) to draw up the funeral inscription in any style they pleased, but he would like to think that the deceased, in whose name 'Priez pour moi' was carved on the slab, was a Christian soul, and not the figment of a scoffer's brain. We are therefore inclined to accept the evidence of the tombstone as genuine, even if the facts stated in it might be coloured, as epitaphs are apt to be, by the piety of survivors.\*

The epitaph itself, as reconstructed from various readings by Dr A. Bovenschen, contains no preposterous claims to high nobility and may very well be that of a popular physician :

'Here lies the gentle Sir John Mandeville, otherwise called With the Beard, knight, lord of Camp[er]di, a native of England. He was learned in physic, much addicted to prayer,

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\* Readers of M. Bédier's learned book, 'Les légendes épiques,' may object that cenotaphs of fictitious characters are mentioned by him (vol. ii, pp. 309-310). But he rightly argues that such monuments were not likely to have arisen unless the hero's fame was first firmly established.

and left large legacies to the poor. After travelling nearly over all the world, he died in Liège on November 17th, 1372.'

'All the world' is a very elastic phrase, both in the French and English vernacular, and no one need take it too literally. A more serious objection is raised by the ascription of knightly rank to the dead man, as we have no record of an English knight of that name whose dates tally exactly with his. Yet let us remember that the number of villages and families called Montville, Magneville, etc., is fairly large. All the other statements contained in that epitaph are perfectly acceptable. Why should we deny that a native of England, claiming to be a knight, lived in Liège during the reign of Edward III (whose queen hailed from Hainaut and who fought so many battles near or in the Netherlands), that he had visited the medical schools of France and Italy, that he laid claim to some acquaintance with the East, from which drugs and talismans were procured, and that he died as a well-to-do and successful empiric?

The evidence of the funeral monument does not throw the least light on the book of Travels or on the connexion between the dead doctor and Jean d'Outremeuse. The doctor may have had nothing to do with the book, as the leading Belgian and English scholars seem inclined to believe. For in the common Latin version of the Travels a new problem is raised, by which the whole tale is still further confused. Here Sir John Mandeville and the physician 'ad Barbam,' instead of being two names for one character, as in the epitaph, became two separate individuals, whom chance brings together in distant climes and under different circumstances. First they meet in Cairo, in the Sowdan's household, to which each is attached in his professional capacity. In later years, when the knight is laid up with gout in Liège:

'I consulted,' says the text, 'several physicians of the town, and, as the Lord would have it, one came in whom his age and white hair made more venerable than the others, and who gave proof of being very expert in his art. He was there called Master John ad Barbam. After some conversation he spoke words which renewed the old acquaintance formed long ago between us at Cairo in Egypt, in the Sowdan's castle, as I said above in Chap. VII. After applying

his knowledge of medicine to my great relief, he warmly admonished and prayed me to commit to writing some of the things that I had seen during my travels through the world, so that posterity might read and hear it for their own advantage. So this my treatise was put together by his advice and assistance. . . .\*

Let us first notice, in passing, that this new story is an instance of the familiar process of duplication, by which most of d'Outremeuse's inventions were generated. Next we shall point to its inconsistency with one of the other two accounts of the composition of the Travels which are contained in the familiar English version. According to one of these, the traveller wrote down his experiences before his return, and submitted his book for approval at the Pope's court in Rome on his way home. To this the commentators object that in 1358 the Papal Court was in Avignon, so that it cannot possibly be correct. Immediately after this untrue (and, I believe, ironical) account comes another; the traveller first returns to Liège, is laid up with gout, and 'taking solace in his wretched rest,' writes down his marvellous adventures. Here, then, we are confronted with three presentations of the same fact, each at variance with the two others, and one contradicted by the epitaph in the Guillemins' church. If one of them were less acceptable than the others, we might get rid of it by the well-worn trick of calling it an interpolation, but it will be safer to credit all of them to the fertile brain of d'Outremeuse the romancer, from which so many elaborate and plausible fables have been hatched.

Whether there was not a grain of truth at the bottom of those various accounts of the physician John ad Barbam's authorship it is impossible to tell. A book patched together, like the Travels, from extracts or slips drawn from various sources may very well have been the fruit of collaboration; and over the whole composition hangs a flavour of the dispensary. Names of drugs and health-giving stones are enumerated, the animal side of humanity, even in its more unsavoury manifestations, is dwelt upon with a medical student's zest, nor is there a lack of what Sir Thomas Browne calls 'the slander of

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\* Itinerarius, chap. 50. Black letter. British Museum, G 6700.

our profession,' the suggestion of Epicurean or atheist views, with which the physicians of the body were commonly credited. But at best, the authorship of the knight and practitioner of medicine is only a vague possibility, while the notary's is an hypothesis put forward by the most competent authorities and supported by many surrounding facts.

Jean d'Outremeuse was thirty-four years old when the English doctor died. He had then already finished the Travels and fathered them on Mandeville, in the same way as, in his chronicle, he fathered historical events on contemporary fellow-townsmen. He might be indebted to him for the loan of manuscripts on Eastern travel and Oriental medicines, or for oral information on such rare plants and minerals and such stuffed and dried animals as adorned the houses of medieval physicians. Of course he might also have made use of the Englishman's name without any reason at all.

In addition to the fiction in the book of Travels and to the truth in the epitaph, a third tradition has reached us from a lost book of d'Outremeuse's chronicle. One extract from that book, transmitted through many intermediaries, tells that the English knight, when lying on his death-bed, confided to the chronicler that he was in reality a Count of Montfort, and had to fly from England for killing another Count. This is universally rejected as a story drawn no doubt from the well-known historical fact of two English Montforts, the sons of Earl Simon, killing Henry Earl of Cornwall at Viterbo in 1271. The transfer of this incident from one century to another is thoroughly characteristic of Jean d'Outremeuse. It puts the finishing touch on the manifold tales spun by him round the personage known to us through his funeral monument.

We may wonder why, instead of stringing his extracts together in the form of a geographical description of the East, he chose to introduce an imaginary hero into his account of the Promised Land and the countries beyond. The reason is that his literary instinct taught him how tedious a mere enumeration of inanimate things is apt to become, unless some personal interest is awakened, such as may spring from an active, adventurous, fighting visitor. His knight is not always content to see, hear

and report; he will also argue with heathens and Saracens, serve the Sowdan and the Great Can, dissent from views which strain the reader's credulity, strengthen bold statements with an eye-witness's confidence. He acts the warrior for a public accustomed to the conventions of chivalrous and crusading literature; he also acts the critical inquirer for a generation that was exercised by doubts and questionings. He compares Western views and manners with the novelties observed by him in the fabulous East. Trite and commonplace facts he animates with the magic of a living presence. Rare and extravagant marvels he supports with specious reasonings. The many guide-books to Palestine that lack his enlivening touch have lost their interest for the general reader, while he remains the undying protagonist of the most successful of early travellers' tales.

Now that Jean d'Outremeuse has been stripped of his borrowed plumage as an historian, his importance as a man of letters has become somewhat difficult to estimate. The literary Pantheon of France has found no place for a statue or even a bust in his memory. His ponderous chronicle 'The Mirror of Histories,' printed at the expense of the Belgian State, can await the dust of ages in dignified repose, but no edition of his book of Travel has appeared in the original language for a long time (the last reprint of extracts from it appears to date back to 1735, in a *Recueil des Voyages*); and his 'Lapidary,' occasionally alluded to by scholars, is accessible only in old editions. That a writer so utterly neglected by the public familiar with his own idiom should have been adopted, raised to the position of a classic, edited and commented upon by English readers and scholars; that he should have been graced with such inconsistent and pompous titles as 'l'Ennius liégeois' and the English Ulysses, shows that posterity has recognised in him some definite literary excellence. His success in gaining the confidence of men of learning, many of whom accepted him as an authority on historical and geographical questions, testifies to the boldness and ingenuity of his inventive powers.

It was only about 1890 that the insight of modern scholars finally banished Jean des Preis, *alias* Sir John

Mandeville, from his usurped throne as an explorer and historian. His pilferings for the sake of his Travels were simultaneously exposed by Sir George Warner and Dr Bovenschen; and his claims as a chronicler were finally shattered in 1910 by the late Prof. G. Kurth, the historian of Liège. In this condemnation the reading public, who care little about accuracy, have no need to join; and the number of popular reprints lately issued in England testifies to the unabated love felt by them for our book of imaginary travels. As they probably had the good sense to disbelieve the Mandeville stories from the first, it mattered little to them that they were finally pronounced to be false; and in this they are supported by Prof. Kurth, who includes a fair appreciation of d'Outremeuse as a story-teller in his critical exposure of his unreliability as a chronicler. We are then at last in a position to appraise the Travels as fiction, after divesting them of any pretensions they may have had to be a record of fact. Our first duty is to absolve their author of any guilt, and to dismiss all charges of deceit which have been brought against him. The Bishop who, as the report goes, found it hard to accept every statement he read in Gulliver's Travels had no legitimate grievance against Dean Swift; no more have those readers of Mandeville a right to complain who are unfit or unwilling to understand and appreciate fiction.

Prof. Kurth's intimate knowledge of medieval romance has enabled him to analyse the mannerisms and literary devices borrowed by d'Outremeuse from the *trouvères*. Before becoming a prose chronicler and assuming the dogmatic gravity of a scholar, he had composed a number of tales in rhyme, one of which, 'La Geste de Liège,' has been preserved and published under his name. Others may yet be identified. In his 'Mirror of Histories,' he set himself the task of collecting information from various sources, which he sometimes followed literally, and sometimes expanded by padding and fabrications of his own. Given an event read by him in an old chronicle, he would add a list of minor characters, with names of his own invention. A general statement he would particularise and describe in dramatic fashion, as if he had witnessed it himself. His readers would be minutely informed of the locality where the event had happened,

and even of the weather prevailing at the time. In all such cases he invented the concomitant circumstances rather than the main fact, but his favourite device was that of duplication, by which a real story would first be stated as known through the sources, to be subsequently retold at large and with such variations and embellishments as d'Outremeuse's brain would produce out of its familiarity with the incidents and personages of romance. If an old chronicle barely mentions the occurrence of a fight, the 'Mirror of Histories' is ready with a list of combatants, their full names and pedigrees, with a glowing account of the noise, dust and stir, with the picture of severed limbs flying through the air, of the splinters of spears, shields and swords dropping to the ground.

This was literary artifice rather than forgery; the reader was to be not only taught the great events of the past, but also amused with lively and dramatic incidents. The groundwork being true, why should any one complain if the setting was as entertaining as that of the epics of Charlemagne and of the Conquest of Jerusalem? No less epic in its origin is Jean d'Outremeuse's admiration of birth and wealth, for which his critic takes him somewhat severely to task. A true chronicler of the feudal world could not but extol the social structure of his own time; and he could neither have enjoyed the great romances of the past nor fired the imagination of his contemporaries without his enthusiasm for knightly rank and prowess. The Travels themselves would be less delightful if the profusion of gold and jewels were less in the palaces of Eastern potentates, and if the Caliphs, Soudans and Cans were not glorified with sounding titles and stately households.

Thus much about the 'Mirror of Histories,' d'Outremeuse's main work, which is finally doomed to oblivion by the leading historian of Liége. As to the respective dates of our worthy's various writings, we have no information. Allowing some years for the composition of his rhymed romances, which have somewhat rashly been assumed to be lost, and considering that his weighty chronicle, however hastily and carelessly put together, must have occupied him for the best part of his manhood, we may place the publication of the Travels shortly before the year 1371, that of the earliest dated French



manuscript, at present in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. There is no reason for dating the Travels, which are full of the echoes of former reading, earlier than the more voluminous compilation; and the author probably collected notes for both at the same time.

The traveller's tale that imparts an air of reality to fanciful inventions and mentions names and distances in the land of Nowhere was not unknown to ancient Greece, and soon chose the fabulous East for the scene of its roamings. We learn from M. E. Faral that it was called *stadiasma* because it measured its vagaries by *stadia*, and that it was parodied so early as the second century of our era in Lucian's 'True Tale,' an open satire on story-tellers, and the model of similar works of later date.

There is little in common between Mandeville and that classical model of the kind. That both should approach the Island of the Blessed (which to the Christian is Paradise) and discover the Fountain of Youth in its neighbourhood, and that both should touch at the Continent lying opposite to their own, or Antipodes, is no more than might be expected. Even casual visitors to the land of Cockayne could hardly have missed the 'trees that bear meal,' or Lucian's superior vegetable variety, the wheat that bears 'loaves at the end of the stalk, ready-made and baked for eating.' Finally they both strike the same self-denying and dignified attitude in refusing the proffered hands of outlandish princesses. Lucian rejects a proposal to marry the heiress of Endymion, the king of the Moon, while the lady scorned by Sir John is a mere Paynim, 'a great prince's daughter.' If we add a marked leaning in both books towards the Epicurean way of thinking, and a looseness in dealing with certain moral questions, not in itself very surprising in a heathen Greek or in a reader of medieval *fabliaux*, we shall complete the list of analogies, which is thus found to be distinctly limited.

Looking at the general scope and plan of the two books, we must notice the bold imagination of the Greek, his wide range of thought and inventiveness, which begins by soaring to the moon and stars, while the medieval tale-teller is sly enough to conceal the snare

laid to catch the unwary reader's credulity, and keeps up a pretence of honesty and good faith. Lucian's creative power is a poet's; d'Outremeuse's insinuating tricks are those of a humorist.

The 14th century had no need to go to classical antiquity for examples of traveller's tales, true or false. Pilgrimages and Crusades had given birth to many narratives of adventure and exploration, which had been parodied in accounts of the land called by a later preacher 'the promised land of ridicule and fable,' viz. the land of Cockayne. In the French 'Fabliau de Coquaigne,' written in the 13th century, the author gravely states that he was sent thither by the Pope in expiation of his sins. The pleasures he describes are of the most simple and childish kind; perpetual feasting and self-indulgence fill the time, and money and clothing are to be had for nothing, as well as wine, roast venison, and cakes. To these a slightly Oriental flavour is added in the Middle English poem of the land of Cockayne, by the enumeration of Eastern spices and precious stones, whose appeal to the senses is somewhat less brutal, while all the animal childishness of the French *fabliau* is retained. By placing a nunnery and an abbey of monks in the land of sensuality, the English poem also admits an allusion to Church people which might originally be a harmless joke, but which to the lay mind of later days appears more or less satirical.

If we were to dwell too much on such parodies of pilgrims' tales, we should not approach Mandeville in the right spirit, for his compilation is mainly from truthful books, and contains many sober statements of fact. While not devoid of ludicrous touches, it must be called fanciful rather than comical, and is more nearly related to the romances than to the *fabliaux*. Most of its Eastern colouring is derived from the body of legends which gathered round the history of Alexander the Great in early crusading times. The Crusaders found a pre-figuration of their own aims of conquest in the book of Daniel, eked out by the account in Josephus of Alexander's respectful visit to Jerusalem, and of his sacrifice in the Temple. They conceived him to have been, under the Old Law, the conqueror of Asia and the protector of the Holy Land that many a Christian prince

dreamt of becoming under the New Law. They glorified him with the nimbus of natural philosophy and of geographical discovery, as became the pupil of Aristotle and the explorer of mysterious India. They traced his footsteps among monstrous beings of human or animal shape — cynocephali and hippopotami, pygmies and chameleons. They even imagined him soaring up into the air in a box carried by griffins, and diving to the bottom of the sea in a glass case. Besides the wonders of nature, they brought him into touch with the extreme types of human societies and modes of thought. The world-conqueror, whose greed and curiosity knew no bounds, was made to argue with the Bragmans (Brahmins) who professed to despise wealth and even comfort. In this way, the enterprising and worldly warrior's love of adventure was contrasted with the self-denying, contemplative spirit of Eastern ascetics. The epic cycle of Alexander was therefore equally stimulating to mere lovers of the wonderful and to more thoughtful readers, and provided both entertainment and what passed in the Middle Ages for information.

The learned commentators of Mandeville mostly quote a Latin version of the Alexander story, commonly called 'Historia de Proeliis,' as the book drawn upon for quaint and fantastic geographical lore. But it is highly probable that d'Outremeuse enjoyed versions in French rhyme, as well as imitations in which incidents are transferred from the Alexandrian to the Crusading romances, and is indebted to them for the general atmosphere of his book and for curious details, which he blended with materials borrowed from Latin works of scientific pretensions. Moreover, like many writers who collect and impart knowledge at second-hand, he made use of an encyclopædia; his main source is the repository of learning put together under the protection of St Louis, King of France, by the Dominican Vincent of Beauvais. Much history, geography and natural science d'Outremeuse conveyed from it with nearly literal faithfulness.

As for the route which he pretends to have followed, it is taken from two genuine books of travel—William of Boldensele's narrative of his pilgrimage to Palestine and Egypt, and Odoric de Pordenone's account of his religious and diplomatic mission to the Far East. William

was a German gentleman who at one time belonged to the order of St Dominic; he started for the Near East about 1332 and wrote a sober and truthful account of his experiences on his return in 1336. Odoric was a Franciscan friar born in Friuli, who was sent out to India and China about 1316-1318. His travels lasted some ten years, and were written down in 1330. Covering a vast expanse of unknown regions, they are less precise and matter of fact than the German's description of familiar Palestine. In the choice of these sources the author of 'Mandeville' showed excellent judgment; each of them makes good reading, has been found perfectly honest by modern geographers, and was fairly recent and up to date in d'Outremeuse's time.

The fictitious date of Sir John's departure is laid in 1322, between William's and Odoric's; that of the knight's return, some twenty years after theirs, viz. in 1356. As his book hardly dates much further back than 1370, it is about thirty years later than the accounts from which its framework is drawn. Not only does d'Outremeuse enumerate cities and kingdoms in the same order as do his two predecessors, but he boldly appropriates page after page from them and repeats most of their facts, while subtly colouring the atmosphere in which they are presented. A dry and uninspiring truth, put down by William in plain medieval Latin, is in his follower's rhythmical French prose expanded into a vague exaggeration, which seems to suggest more than it contains.

A single example may help us to realise that difference in attitude between our romancer of Liège and the German eye-witness whom he follows:

'About Calvary (writes the Dominican in his description of Jerusalem) are some marble columns which constantly drop water; and the ignorant people say that they weep and mourn Christ's death. This is untrue, for a fact due to nature need not be explained as a miracle. Now there is a species of stone not unlike marble, called *enydros*, whose nature, as books of mineralogy tell us, is such, that it condenses the surrounding air into water through the extreme coldness of its own complexion.' \*

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\* 'Die Edelherren von Boldensele oder Boldensen.' Von E. L. Grotefend. Hannover: Jänecke, 1855, pp. 60, 61.

He then proceeds to quote an Aristotelian formula to account for the well-known phenomenon of moisture oozing out of stone, and thus interprets it according to the scientific theories of his time.

'When I was in Constantinople (he continues), I saw in the basement of the old Imperial Palace some marble vessels of similar stone, which fill themselves with water and are regularly emptied; when a year is over, they are found full of water again without the help of any human agency, so that they run over on every side, and this passes for a miracle with the vulgar. When I saw them, I examined the composition of the stone and the surroundings, and explained the natural cause of the fact to the Emperor's officer. He was very pleased, and thenceforth showed me much friendship and attention.' \*

On reading this, d'Outremeuse saw that the German had missed an opportunity to surprise and please his readers, and remembered the weeping and sweating statues of gods in the Alexandrian romances. He therefore removed the prosaic scientific explanation and wrote of Calvary :

'And there beside be four pillars of stone, that always drop water; and some men say that they weep for Our Lord's death.' †

As for the vessels of Constantinople introduced by Boldensele as an illustration, he describes them as if he had himself seen them :

'And there is the vessel of stone as it were of marble, that men clepe *enydros*, that evermore droppeth water, and filleth himself every year, till that it go over above, without that that men take from within.' †

In this way what was to Boldensele a curious natural phenomenon is now brought into line with various marvels shown to pilgrims, with blood-drops appearing as stains in white rock, with white milk-marks on red stone, with miraculous oil oozing from the bones of a saint or from a picture of the Virgin. Only the author

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\* Ibid., p. 61. † Pollard's Edition, p. 52, † Ibid., p. 12.

of 'Mandeville' shows as little reverence for the miracles approved by the Church as for the pronouncements of Aristotle. All he wants is amusement for himself and for his readers. Of such a venerable relic as the head of St John the Baptist he reports with cheerful inconsistency that the whole or parts of it may be in Constantinople, or in Rome, or in Genoa, or in Amiens; and he archly concludes 'I wot never, but God knoweth; but in what wise that men worship it, the blessed St John holds him a-paid.'\*

To such a light-hearted compiler the Holy Land appealed as the scene of many wonderful stories from the time of the Patriarchs down to that of the Crusaders; and he is more concerned to entertain than to edify his readers when he enumerates the towns, hills and rivers associated with the lives of Our Lord and of the saints. Therefore he is not inspired by Jerusalem, which he could not well adorn with inventions of his own, and he is at his best when roaming through the hazy boundaries of the realms of fable. Therefore also the Far East, where he can give full play to his imagination, shows his quaint fancy and his inventive genius at its best.

From the prosaic itinerary of Boldensele these poetical gifts could derive no direct stimulus, but they were in unison with a writer of crusading literature, the Franco-Belgian Cardinal Jacques de Vitry, who lived about a century and a half before d'Outremeuse. As part of Jacques' life was spent in a religious community which flourished in Oignies (now in the Belgian province of Namur), his works must have been easily accessible in the diocese of Liège. A divine with a leaning towards mysticism and an inspiring preacher, he had the power of stirring his fellow-men to emotion and action. One critic passes sentence upon him as a vain, conceited rhetorician, untrustworthy, because always striving after effect. Another admits that his Oriental history would shrink to half its length if shorn of its padding and repetitions. These censures, which apply still more to Mandeville, disclose the mental kinship between the two men. The Oriental History, from which much of the legendary and curious matter contained in the Travels

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\* Pollard's Edition, p. 72.

is derived, is a popular tract, destined to fire the imagination of readers and to make them join or support the crusading movement. There is nothing pedantic or dry about it; it is an appeal to reconquer Our Lord's sepulchre and to crush the Infidels, a glowing account of the gorgeous and entrancing East, such as might call warriors to renew the glorious adventure of the First Crusade. Its interest is enhanced by the insertion of curious pieces of Oriental lore, with descriptions of the familiar monsters of Alexandrian romance. How far Jacques de Vitry himself believed in their reality is a secondary question; they belonged to the stock in trade of all who dealt with the Eastern question.

Of the Infidels Jacques de Vitry writes with the uncompromising hostility of the Churchman; on this point Jean d'Outremense parts company with him and discards the particulars of Mahomet's immorality and crime, of his lust, greed, deceit and violence. Instead of invective, he gives us anecdotes; and these he obtains from another authority, indirectly connected with the diocese of Liège, the Dominican William of Tripoli. This friar, who wrote in 1280, some thirty years after Cardinal Jacques de Vitry's death, and with much better understanding of the Saracens, was a native of Syria, and therefore intimately acquainted with the language and manners of the Mahometans; he supplied what the author of Mandeville required, a mass of precise and picturesque details and a broad-minded, tolerant judgment of the doctrine of the Koran. While William has no love of the Saracen faith as such, he is clear-sighted enough to perceive that mere ignorant hatred never will convert a Mahometan. What he recommends is argument founded on knowledge; and his treatise accordingly contains all the main facts about the Koran, the Prophet and his followers.

Of this Mandeville gives a simple and popularly written summary. He even agrees with medieval novelists and satirists in praising the honesty and morality of the Infidels, in order to shame the Christians, whose creed is perfect, but whose lives are wicked, into repentance and amendment. From this satirical touch, which was a commonplace of contemporary literature,

he takes a further step towards an impartial judgment of all religions. His allusions to the various sects within Christianity and to idolatries and superstitions outside it are not only surprisingly numerous, but also remarkably free from bias. What could be kinder than the following reference to the Indian gymnosophists :

'And albeit that these folk have not the articles of our faith as we have, natheles, for their good faith natural, and for their good intent, I trow fully, that God loveth them, and that God taketh their service to gree, right as he did of Job, that was a paynim, and held him for his true servant.'\*

Here tolerance of the heathen is coloured by means of a Scriptural allusion. In the story of Hermogenes (or Hermes), who was saved two thousand years before Christ's birth, because he believed in anticipation, it is strengthened by a similar example in a work of such undoubted orthodoxy as the 'Divina Commedia.' Dante has allowed a seat in his Paradise to Rhipheus, a Trojan hero killed during the sack of Troy, in virtue of his faith, hope and charity, which were to him in the place of baptism.

If d'Outremeuse had confined himself to such accepted cases, his views would call for little comment. But he goes far beyond them. Not content to apply the same word, 'law,' which in his phraseology means religion, to the one true faith and to all the false ones indifferently, he is also fond of repeating the phrases 'law of nature' and 'kindly law,' 'God of nature' and 'God of kind,' till all modes of worship appear to be mere variations from a single type. In this he felt countenanced by the Alexandrian romances, for the Macedonian king is depicted not only as a protector of the people of Israel, but also as a friend of Serapis, the God of nature. So far, then, d'Outremeuse does not overstep the bounds of tradition.

But he also writes about un-Christian practices with undeniable sympathy. To the Buddhist believers in the transmigration of souls, who keep thousands of animals in a garden and feed them as Christian monks help their poor, he refers without disapproval.† He even compares the worship of heathen idols to that of the Virgin Mary

\* Pollard's Edition, p. 195.

† Ibid., p. 137.



and of the saints.\* For the funeral rites of the Parsees, who expose the bodies of the dead to be devoured by birds of prey,† and for the pagan custom of cremation, 'to that intent that [the dead man] suffer no pain in earth to be eaten of worms,‡ he has not a word of blame.

It is probable that his frequent references to the God of kind, 'that made all things,' mean something more than an empty phrase. It is known that the belief in a lower god or god of matter, whose special care was the increase of earthly things, was familiar to Eastern Christians down to the time of the suppression of the Templars. Throughout the Middle Ages, a body of materialists maintained itself more or less in secret under the names of Averroists or Indifferents, claiming to be students or disciples of Nature; and the identification of God and Nature is even suggested in the heretic pamphlet known as 'The Three Impostors.'

M. E. Montégut, a French critic of Mandeville, imagined that the higher God, 'who is one, eternal, a pure spirit and the maker of all things,' was acknowledged in our book of Travels as above the god of nature, whose idols were worshipped by the Tartarians. But this assumption is not warranted by our text. So far as can be made out, the God of kind is himself the one eternal maker and mover of changeable and material things. He differs from them only as a permanent cause is distinct from its accidental effects; in other words, he is the life-principle acknowledged by materialists. His supreme commandment, dressed up by our author in a biblical phrase, is: Increase and multiply. In the same way as he cares for the reproduction and preservation of animal and vegetable species, mankind included, so by various laws or religions or social conventions and rules he maintains human societies, which are kept together by such agreements, clean or repulsive, as ensure the preservation of human life on earth—polygamy, polyandry, even community of wives, as well as monogamous Christian wedlock. As to Christian charity, helpfulness and humility, he is as favourable to them as to other factors of social cohesion, though the Isle of

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\* Pollard's Edition, p. 206.

† Ibid., p. 203.

‡ Ibid., p. 114.

Bragman, in India, where they are located, may seem suspiciously distant from the centre of Catholic orthodoxy.

Attempts have been made to connect Mandeville with some of the numerous heresies that prevailed in his time in and round the Netherlands, and thus to claim him as a precursor of the Reformation. The editor of the English text of 1725 points to passages that reminded him of the tenets of the Adamites; they should rather be put down as mere cynicism, and are perhaps reminiscent of the traditional contrast between Alexander and Diogenes. The Travels relate about the idolatrous Tartars as follows :

' Also when they will make their idols or an image of any of their friends for to have remembrance of him, they make always the image all naked without any manner of clothing. For they say that in good love should be no covering, that man should not love for the fair clothing ne for the rich array, but only for the body, such as God hath made it, and for the good virtues that the body is endowed with of nature, not only for fair clothing that is not of kindly nature.' \*

Numerous other instances might easily be adduced of Mandeville's covert attacks on accepted institutions and rules of behaviour. The rights of property, matrimony, the powers of government, are all attacked in the spirit of covert and mischievous irony, with a view perhaps to shock the reader into surprise or to turn him against the established order of things. Many such references occur in the argument between the wise Bragmans of India, who despise worldly goods and have no need of laws or rulers, and the grasping conqueror Alexander. D'Outremeuse's position with regard to such more or less anarchist views remains ambiguous. While repeatedly enlarging upon them, he carefully avoids committing himself. He may merely have indulged his love of topsy-turvydom, just as the rhymesters of the fable of the land of Cockayne included in their picture of the happy realm of laziness and gluttony every form of sensual self-indulgence. He may also have had in his mind heresies known to his readers and affording some amusement to his curiosity.

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\* Pollard's Edition, p. 165.

The absence from his book of direct praise of heresy, as such, may be due to his fear of the ecclesiastical courts, but his references to the dissenting Christians of Syria certainly do not err on the side of intolerance. After quoting the Psalter and three of the Church Fathers in favour of the Jacobites' opposition to auricular confession, he adds: 'but our Holy Father the Pope \* has ordained to make their confession to man and by good reason.' † Mandeville, therefore, submits to the Pope's authority only after having contrasted it with that of the Bible and the Fathers. Similarly the Papal authority is set against the tradition of the early Church when the ritual of the Indian priests or Christians of St Thomas for consecrating the Host is described, 'for they know not the additions that many Popes have made.' ‡

Altogether there are in Mandeville six references to the Papacy, two of them obliterated in the English version, and not one respectful or complimentary. At the very beginning a fictitious Latin epistle from the Greek schismatics to Pope John XXII is inserted, in which his power is defied and himself accused of pride and covetousness, without a word in his defence. Further on, another Pope wrongly orders St Athanasius to be imprisoned for heresy and has afterwards to acknowledge his mistake. In the Prologue, the Holy Father is, most unjustly, charged with remissness for the reconquest of Palestine. But the slyest and perhaps the most cutting attack occurs at the end of the book, and seems to have passed without suspicion. The imaginary traveller there explains that he has submitted his fables to the Papal Court in Rome, and that he has secured its sanction and approval. To this the commentators have objected that there was no Pope in Rome at the time referred to; on the impudence and irreverence of the joke they have nothing to say. If we take any one of those utterances by itself, its bearing on the irreligious character of our book may be denied. But we can hardly doubt their tendency when considering them together.

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\* Thus in the French original. Mistranslated in English as: St. Peter the Apostle.

† Pollard's Edition, p. 80.

‡ Ibid., p. 53.

'They sell benefices of Holy Church,' d'Outremeuse writes of the Greeks, 'and so do men in other places; God amend it when his will is! And that is great sclaundre, for now is Simon king crowned in Holy Church; God amend it for his mercy! '\*

It seems impossible to read into these sentences any other meaning than bitter hatred of the Sovereign Pontiff, who is implicitly accused of being, 'in bond with iniquity,' as the Acts say of Simon Magus.

If this view be correct, the success of Mandeville in England is easily explained. Edward III, to whom the Travels are dedicated in a letter prefixed to some French manuscripts, had repudiated the Pope's supremacy over the realm in 1366; and the Wycliffite movement was maturing in the very years when they were being published and translated. Their insistence on natural as opposed to revealed religion, their open sympathy for all forms of belief and of social organisation that departed from the standard of the Roman Church, are perhaps signs of the secularising spirit at work. England, one of the centres of rebellion, figures prominently in the tale of fictitious authorship; and even the mystery hiding the real writer's identity may be interpreted as a convenient veil to shelter him from punishment. The book, launched with an eye to the state of affairs in England, which was no doubt well known to d'Outremeuse, would in its turn be welcomed by supporters of Wycliffe and translated by one of the more ignorant among them. Its later fortune, in its manuscript and printed forms, seems to have risen and fallen with the Reformation. In Protestant Great Britain it has remained popular to this day, while it is nearly forgotten in the Catholic land of its origin.

When that strenuous enemy of Rome, John Bale, named Mandeville in his Catalogue of British writers, he repeated from the Latin version a distich against the corruption of the times, which has accompanied the abridgment of the Travels in Hakluyt's collection:

'On his return to England he saw the soils of his century and the pious man said: In our time it may be said with

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\* Pollard's Edition, p. 14. The English version spoils the sense by reading 'simony.'

more truth than before that virtue is faint, the Church down-trodden, the clergy in error, the devil powerful, simony prevailing, etc.' \*

No reader would think of calling Mandeville a pious man now-a-days, but there appears to be still some danger of exaggerating his proximity to the Wycliffite movement. This has been done by M. E. Montégut, owing partly to his disregard of the conclusions previously reached by other workers, and partly to his lack of familiarity with medieval modes of thought. He has yielded to the temptation to vindicate the Travels as a sign of the coming Reformation, and has thus come to read into them a zeal and a gravity utterly alien to d'Outremeuse's temper. We shall come nearer to the truth if we connect them with the quarrels of Popes and Anti-popes, for our Liége notary was a plagiarist born, a slave to the past, and constitutionally incapable of divining the future.

Instead of a proselytiser's earnestness, we can find in Mandeville only frivolity verging on the indecent, and loose and superficial expressions of an indifferent on-looker's irony. Is it not indeed significant enough that a detached, impartial survey of religious variations should have been possible at the end of the 14th century, and that such by-names as Averroist, Indifferentist and Naturalist should be applicable to a popular author, who described infidelity as an entertaining show, without aversion, and even with indulgent apologies? In fact, the peculiar flavour of the book and the perennial difficulty experienced by critics in passing a satisfactory judgment upon it are due to its elusive irony; the reverential phrases of the ages of faith are repeated in it without sincerity and without demur, and intermixed with the most flippant utterances. A mere rationalist could only feel impatient with the whole pilgrimage and with its meandering progress. A sincerely religious mind must be shocked at its worldly and careless handling of solemn subjects. Only the amateur's superficial interest in the Middle Ages can find pleasure in it. And this is the reason for the success enjoyed by it during

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\* Script. illustr. catal. n.d. Press mark 819, l. 18. Brit. Mus.

two periods of scepticism—the century after its appearance, which struck the first blow at ecclesiastical authority; and the romantic revival that began about the time when the English Mandeville was first edited with painstaking conscientiousness (1725).<sup>\*</sup> Whatever attraction the book retains to-day is largely due to the backwash of that great movement.

It is in the rare position of being at the same time a parody and a full presentation of the thing parodied, a string of orthodox devotional sentiments and a mockery of them. Good and bad, true and false, are subtly blended into a medley which the reader can take neither quite seriously nor quite in jest. Should a summary of its general attitude be desirable, we should look for it in passages where doubt is cast on the value of all absolute standards, and where men are taught never to accept any tenet without remembering that the opposite doctrine is no less worthy to be considered or apt to be defended—in other words, that our antipodes walk as upright as we do.

'For from what part of the earth that men dwell, either above or beneath, it seemeth always to them that dwell that they go more right than any other folk. And right as it seemeth to us that they be under us, right so it seemeth to them that we be under them' (Mandeville, ed. Pollard, p. 123).

This love of topsy-turvydom can hardly be raised to the dignity of a philosophical system. Only d'Outremeuse's wonder at what was strange and marvellous destroyed his respect for all things obvious, established and orthodox, and mere common truths appeared to him tame, dull and unexciting, in comparison with the whimsical realm of improbabilities and monstrosities. He was then no more a satirist or moralist than he was an historian or geographer; and his lineal descendants are those peculiarly Anglo-Saxon humorists, the dreamers and writers of books of nonsense. If his thoughts were less frivolous, and his writing less slovenly, he might be called the Swift of his day, and the traveller Sir John Mandeville the lineal ancestor of Captain Gulliver.

PAUL HAMELIUS.

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<sup>\*</sup> Cf. Mr Gosse's recent lecture, given before the British Academy, on Joseph and Thomas Warton as pioneers of Romanticism.