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## 'Select Narratives of Holy Women.'

In the two companion volumes, forming Nos. ix. and x. of the important series 'Studia Sinaitica,'<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Lewis has laid readers in general, and Syriac students in particular, under a fresh obligation, and has definitely increased our knowledge of a very curious literature.

These 'Select Narratives' form the upper writing of the famous palimpsest of the so-called 'old Syriac' Gospels which Mrs. Lewis discovered in 1892, and they were written by John the Recluse, 778 A.D. Although, of course, greatly inferior in importance to the gospel text which lies below them, these narratives are not without their value and interest; and Mrs. Lewis's time and labour have been well spent in their publication. The first of the two volumes contains the Syriac text of eleven of the narratives, and of fragments of a hymn of S. Ephraim found amongst them. These are followed by appendices, giving the text of the story of Susanna; collations of the texts of the stories of Thecla, Pelagia, Theodosia, and Theodota; a portion of a Greek text of S. John's Gospel; fragments of a Syriac text, with translation, of the Acts of Judas Thomas—this being due to Mr. F. C. Burkitt; and a valuable note by John the Recluse throwing light on the colophon at the end of the narrative. An index of proper names, and eight handsome reproductions of pages of the famous palimpsest, complete the volume. In the second volume Mrs. Lewis gives a translation of the eleven narratives, and of the hymn named above. These translations leave very little to be desired; they are characterized by a delightful smoothness, and are quite pleasant reading, in spite of the fact that here and there John the Recluse's stories are certainly a little dull. Preceding the translations are useful 'introductory notes,' which give some brief account of the holy women, together with explanations of the method adopted in editing the text.

John the Recluse was not the original writer of these narratives: they are evidently from vari-

<sup>1</sup> *Studia Sinaitica*. IX. *Select Narratives of Holy Women*, from the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest, as written above the Old Syriac Gospels by John the Stylite of Beth-Mari Qanun in A.D. 778. Edited by Agnes Smith Lewis, M.R.A.S. Syriac Text. Cambridge University Press.—*Studia Sinaitica*. X. *Select Narratives of Holy Women*. Translated by Agnes Smith Lewis, M.R.A.S.

ous sources, and, so far as he can be tested, he reproduced them with sufficient accuracy. Some of the stories are known to exist in MSS written long before John's day, yet the differences between his text and theirs are unimportant. He seems, too, to have resisted the temptation to import the marvellous into the stories, where it did not previously exist. The marvellous certainly did not shock him, or he would never have given his readers such an extravagant tale as that of Irene; yet his account of Theodosia is free from the miraculous, and agrees substantially with the story as told by Eusebius. The narratives accordingly are of various degree of probability, ranging from the almost certainly true to the almost entirely imaginative and legendary. How much did John's pious readers believe of these stories, which sometimes hardly rise above the level of fairy tales? We need not necessarily suppose that they were ultra-credulous—probably they read and were edified by them, much as we may read and be edified by the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Admitting, however, that these pious monks did not believe to be true all the impossible incidents told in these narratives, we cannot so readily acquit them of entertaining very confused and imperfect ideals of Christian conduct. And this suggests a point of view from which these stories may be studied with profit. A popular religious literature gives no uncertain indication of the religious tone and ideals of its age; and, looked at in this way, these narratives throw a curious light on what was then thought to be not unworthy of Christian martyrs, and presumably of those for whom they were set forth as examples. Thus, passing by mere extravagances, some of these heroines treat their parents with scant respect; some pray for vengeance on their persecutors; one of them curses a shepherd who betrays her hiding-place; another persists in a suppression of the truth, notwithstanding that this brings trouble and scandal on a whole monastery, and upon religion in general. All this is very strange, and is in striking contrast to what we find in the histories, as told by Eusebius, of the martyrs of Palestine. Reading the vivid pages of his deathless records, we feel ourselves in a real world with nothing in it contrary to the spirit of the New Testament: but John the Recluse's stories testify to a lamentable degeneration and confusion of Christian ideals; and we cease to wonder that the monks, among whom the

tales were popular, exercised so little influence for good in the regions where they dwelt. At the same time, there is much in these stories which breathes a better spirit; and from every point of view they will well repay careful study. There is only one matter for regret, namely, that Mrs. Lewis did not print in full the text of the four narratives of which she has only given collations.

Thanks to Mrs. Gibson's careful search for errors, the short list of errata requires but few additions. Among these may be noted, in vol. x. **ص** on p. xiv, which should be **ص**; 'twenty-eight' on p. xxiv, which should be 'eighteen'; 'Magdu'

on p. 113, which should be 'Magedo'; and on p. 67, 'the besoms of the prison-house' hardly represents the original. In vol. ix., **ب** in the list of errata, is an obvious printer's slip for **ب**. These, however, and a few other trifling errors, the critical reader will correct for himself; they do not detract from the general excellence of these volumes; and Mrs. Lewis, and those who have assisted her, are to be congratulated on the successful carrying through of a difficult and important work.

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## Contributions and Comments.

### An Interpolation in 'Ambrosiaster.'

THERE is a certain number of passages in the printed text of 'Ambrosiaster's' commentary, as it appears, for example, in the Benedictine (Migne, *Patrol. Lat.* xvii.) edition, which are wanting in the majority of MSS. I am unaware that any attempt has been made, in modern times, at least, to track these passages to their sources. I propose here to indicate the source of one of them, in the hope that others may be traceable to the same origin, and that some light may thus be cast on the vexed question of the transmission of 'Ambrosiaster's' text.

In the commentary on 1 Co 6<sup>18</sup> occur the following words:—"Fugite fornicationem." Recte fugiendam monet fornicationem, per quam filii dei fiunt filii diaboli. "Omne peccatum, quodcumque fecerit homo, extra corpus est." [Quia cetera peccata, etsi per corpus generantur, non tamen animam ita carnali concupiscentia faciunt obstrictam et obnoxiam, quem ad modum commiseri facit animam cum ipso corpore usus libidinis, agens in opere carnalis fornicationis; quia in tantum adglutinatur anima corpori, ut in ipso momento nihil aliud cogitare homini liceat aut intendere, quia ipsam mentem captivam subdit ipsa submersio et absorbitio<sup>1</sup> libidinis et concupiscentiae carnalis. Unde subditur:] "Qui

<sup>1</sup> It was this word which gave me the scent. See my note in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* i. (1900), s.v.

autem fornicatur, in corpus suum peccat." Ostendit grauissimum,' etc.

The passage within square brackets is interpolated from Augustine, *Sermones*, 162, 2 (a sermon on the above text), a document which is known only from the excerpts of Eugippius. Knöll's edition of the latter in the Vienna *Corpus* (vol. ix. p. 1028, 2 ff.) offers some trifling differences of text, which do not affect the argument. The Benedictines, in their note on the passage of 'Ambrosiaster,' say: 'Hic articulus abest a mss. nostris, at contra in cunctis exstat edit.' The passage is absent also from seven of Father Brewer's MSS, collations of which he has lent me, and, according to Ballerini, from the MSS of Monte Cassino and Monza Rabanus Maurus, bishop of Moguntiacum (Mainz) in the ninth century, in his vast commentary on the Pauline Epistles, which is a 'catena' of passages from patristic commentaries, including those of 'Ambrosiaster' and Augustine, reads the above passage thus (Migne, *P.L.* cxii. col. 60A):—"Fugite fornicationem." Recte fugiendam monet fornicationem per quam filii dei fiunt filii diaboli. "Omne peccatum quodcumque fecerit homo extra corpus est, qui autem fornicatur in corpus suum peccat." Ostendit grauissimum,' etc. He thus knew nothing of the interpolated passage. It is probable that it exists in no MS., but as to this I cannot make a definite statement. If this should be the case, however, we should be led to the conviction that the early editors added anything which