

acquainted with much of the literature of Arabia, Persia, India, and Greece. While so engaged, whenever he came across a story or an anecdote that struck his fancy he made a note of it, and towards the end of his life the notes he had thus collected he classified, and from them he composed the book of laughable stories which is now rendered accessible to Western readers. A few of these stories have been previously published by Adler and Morales from a MS. in the Vatican, but the whole number, 727 in all, have now been published by Dr. Budge. The MS. in the author's own possession, which he has used as the base of his text, was written by a scribe who omitted some of the stories that he considered were not edifying; but these gaps Dr. Budge has fortunately been able to supply from a MS. in the India Office, so that there is every reason to believe that we now have the work in the exact form in which it left the hands of Bar-Hebræus. In the India Office MS., though the scribe did not go so far as to omit any of the stories, a note is frequently put in the margin as to what the reader is to skip and what to read; but, as Dr. Budge points out, the Western reader will probably doubt the wisdom of the man who made the selection. Dr. Budge himself has given us the book as Bar-Hebræus wrote it, though in his translation several of the stories, for obvious reasons, have been turned into Latin.

From a scientific point of view this collection of stories is of the highest importance, for not only do they illustrate the differences exhibited by Eastern and Western ideas of wit and humour, but we also find among them many interesting variations and developments of older traditions and beliefs. "Some of the stories," Dr. Budge remarks in his introduction, "may have existed in more than one form, or they may have been told in different ways. Thus in No. cclxxx., the scarabæus is made to say to its mother, "Whithersoever I go men spit upon me," and its mother replies, "It is because thy beauty and smell are pleasant." With this may be compared the Arabic proverb, "The beetle is a beauty in the eyes of its mother." Again, in No. cclxxv. we have the story of the ape of the mosque and the dog, but the turn given to the story is quite different from that of the Arabic version. We may also notice, in passing, that stories told of one man by one author are told of some one quite different by Bar-Hebræus. Thus in No. iv. it is said that Socrates once saw a woman who had hanged herself, and that he remarked, "Would that all trees bore such fruit as this; but in Diogenes Laertius the saying is attributed to Diogenes the Cynic. . . ." Dr. Budge has in this manner been able to indicate the sources from which several of the stories are derived, and to trace their subsequent development; the great majority, however, are entirely new, and are not to be found in any other work at present published.

It would be impossible within the limits of a review to do justice to the book even by lengthy quotations, but some idea of its scope and of the ground it covers may, perhaps, be obtained from a brief *résumé* of the contents of the twenty chapters or headings under which Bar-Hebræus classified his stories. The first eight of these contain notable sayings by sages, philosophers, and various classes of men of different nations; then follow

stories of physicians and legends attributed to them, stories of the speech of animals, of men whose dreams and divinations have come true, stories of rich and generous men, of avaricious men and misers, of workmen who followed despised handicrafts, laughable stories of actors and comedians, stories of clowns and simpletons, of lunatics and of men possessed of devils, stories of robbers and thieves, of wonderful accidents and occurrences, and finally a collection of physiognomical characteristics supposed to indicate a man's character or future actions. The chapter or section of most interest to the present writer is that dealing with dreams and divination, for in these stories we see the survivals of a complicated system of divination and sorcery that flourished in Western Asia more than 2000 years before the birth of Bar-Hebræus; in so varied a collection, however, it is probable that each reader will find something of interest for himself. In conclusion, we may add that Dr. Budge is to be congratulated on having opened up this rich field of study for all those who may be interested in ancient Oriental customs, legends, or beliefs.

OUR BOOK SHELF.

Biedermann's Electro-physiology. Translated by Frances A. Welby. Vol. i. Pp. xii + 522. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1896.)

STUDENTS of physiology who find, as many do, their ignorance of German to be an embarrassing obstacle in their reading, ought to be grateful to Miss Welby for her skillful translation of Prof. Biedermann's "Electrophysiologie," an account of which we gave some time ago to our readers. The value of the book consists chiefly in this—that it is a faithful record of the results yielded by the researches of the last half-century in the field of inquiry to which it relates. Some parts of this field are very unfamiliar to ordinary readers; consequently the difficulty of the translator's task has been considerably increased by the circumstance that many of the words used have as yet no recognised English equivalents. In such a case a choice has to be made between the method of introducing into an English book forms of expression obviously German, and that of devising new terms, whenever they are required for the exposition of new facts or new relations. Considering that the book is likely to be freely used as a source of information by the manufacturers of text-books, who often have no leisure to read original papers, at the same time that they desire to be up to date, it is well for their sakes, and still more for the students for whose use the boiled-down product is destined, that Miss Welby has succeeded in selecting short, simple, and expressive words. What could be better, for example, than her translation of "*ueberwerthig*" and "*unterwerthig*" by "above par" and "below par," or of "*abgeleitete Stelle*" by "lead off." On the whole Miss Welby has given the sense of her author with great care and accuracy, and writes, whenever the responsibilities of translation allow it, in good style. But in thus commending her work, we do not wish it to be understood that there may not be here and there slips to be put right in the second edition—such, for example, as the rendering of the German word *Canile* by *Canula* (*sic*) (p. 80), or of "*graphische Darstellung*" by "graphic record" (p. 370), or, in the same paragraph, of "*Boussole mit möglichst leichtem Magneten*" by "galvanometer with a very free magnet"; but even such small errors as these are few and far between.