

access to the archives of the several Masonic libraries, he has traced the biographies of the great mystery mongers of the type of Cagliostro, and in spite of his admiration for this arch-charlatan and men of his ilk, Mr. Evans remains a critical historian and preserves his sound judgment and sobriety.

Besides his theoretical studies, Mr. Evans has himself practised the occult arts as a prestidigitateur, and we have ourselves seen him and admired him in his clever sleight-of-hand tricks which, though he does not claim to be a professional, are not excelled by Kellar or the late Hermann and his nephew.

We have no doubt that it would be difficult to find a better man adapted for the purpose of collecting and collating the facts of the mysteries, and we deem ourselves happy in having engaged his interest in writing for our periodicals. Mr. Evans's first contribution in this line of work appeared in the latest number of *The Monist*, being a comprehensive essay on the arch-enchanter Cagliostro, a typical personality of the modern imposter, half genius, half knave, admirable in his clever tricks and bold bluffs and at the same time contemptible when deceiving his gullible patrons and extracting from their purses the gold that he used for his own personal ends.

Mr. Evans's essay on Cagliostro is the best justification of his abilities in dealing with the topic of the mysterious, involving the study of many remote documents and inaccessible haunts, and we expect to publish several other articles in the same line and of the same method of treatment, both in *The Open Court* and *The Monist*.

In addition to his articles on Cagliostro and Pinetti, Mr. Evans promised to write on Eliphas Levi, Robert-Houdin, Madame Blavatsky, etc., etc. P. C.

MOUNT ATHOS.¹

The author records in this unpretentious pamphlet the impressions which he had during a sojourn of seven months on Mount Athos, that strange country where no woman is tolerated and monks have everything their own way. The booklet is divided (p. 59 ff.) into two parts, the first being a history of the place (pp. 5-59), the second (pp. 59-166) an account of the journey and personal experiences.

Our author is a German who sympathises with the Greek. He believes with Moltke that the Oriental question would best be solved by creating a Byzantine empire to take the place of the Turks, to the exclusion of the Russians. The Russians, however, have their finger in the pie everywhere on the whole peninsula, and are on the best way to take possession of Mount Athos. The number of Russian convents increases constantly, and Russian monks are now in the majority.

Mount Athos is a relic of Monkish Christianity, and the monks of Mount Athos cherish a conviction that they alone have preserved the original Christianity of Christ. Other Christians may shine like little lights in the heaven, but the monks, especially those of Mount Athos, shine like stars of first magnitude. They alone attain perfection of the Christian ideal. Mount Athos has been a refuge of Cenobites and recluses since the beginning of Christianity and was considered a holy place even in pagan times when the Greeks thought it had originated at the time of the giants' combat against Zeus, on which occasion a stone that had been thrown up against heaven, missed its aim and fell into the sea where it still stays, a monument of the battle of the Titans and the giants against the Father of gods and men.

¹*Das Klosterland des Athos.* By Alfred Schmidtke. T. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, Leipzig.

The old hermits were living in a haphazard way, every one according to his own rules, but in the year of 963 the monk Athanasius induced his friend, the General Nikephoros Phokas, to retire to Mount Athos. This valiant Greek warrior, a powerful noble and a friend of the Emperor of Constantinople, did not stay long. The needs of the empire called him back to the capital, but he remained a warm patron of Athanasius and supplied him with the necessary pecuniary and moral support for building a convent, giving him also an unrestricted title to the surrounding country. The aboriginal inhabitants were expelled, and the several hermits had to recognise the authority of the new Abbot. The history of the country had its ups and downs, passing through several changes, but remaining always the ideal of monarchism in one form or another. When the Byzantine empire was tottering, the Abbot of Athos offered his submission to the Turks even as early as twenty-three years before the conquest of Constantinople. Sultan Murad II. accepted the conditions, and his successors down to the present day have kept the promise faithfully. Although the Sultan is the sovereign owner of the land, keeping there a resident governor, the monks enjoy local self-government, and are left free to live according to their religion and monkish rules.

Herr Schmidtke attended services in the churches, vigils, masses, the reception of new members, and burials, and it is interesting to learn that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper begins with an imitation slaughter of a lamb, represented by a loaf of bread, that is offered as a sacrifice. After the performance of some further ceremonies, a priest and a deacon take the bread and the wine from the altar, symbolising the act of taking off Christ's body from the cross. The priest represents Joseph of Arimathea, and the deacon, Nicodemus. The gilded covers are supposed to be shrouds, and when they return the elements of the sacrament to their places, they represent their deposition as the burial of Christ's body in the grave. While the procession takes place, they exclaim again and again: "Lord! Remember in thy Heavenly Kingdom us and all orthodox Christians."

As a comical incident, Mr. Schmidtke tells us that while he offered cigars to some inhabitants of Athos, one of the severer monks, a man in whose arteries not warm blood but the cold holy water seemed to pulsate, was offered a cigarette, whereupon he promptly refused, stating that Christ had condemned smoking. Being asked on what occasion Christ had ever heard of smoking, he replied that Christ had said: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which goeth out of the mouth [referring to the smoke], that defileth a man." (Matt. xv. 11, Mark vii. 15.)

The monks of Athos believe that Mount Athos was the place to which the mother of God retired from the assaults of the wicked dragon, before bringing forth the Messiah as told, not in the Gospels, but in chapter xii. 1-5 of the Revelations.

The institutions of Mount Athos are a strange mixture of ancient pagan traditions and Mediæval Christian institutions, and in spite of their hatred and contempt of woman, their highest authority is the Virgin Mary, "the Panagia," i. e., the All Holy One, as they call her. When our visitor told the monks that there are powerful Christian Churches which do not worship the Virgin, the monks were horrified and expressed their sorrow for the heresy of the world. They did not, however, condemn heretics, leaving condemnation to God alone, only claiming for themselves possession of the true faith.

The book is illustrated with sixteen pictures, mostly electrotypes of photographs of convents and other buildings, and though the reproductions are a little unsatisfactory, they help to form a clear conception of the country and its inhabitants.