

**ESSAYS.
CLASSICAL**

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Essays. Classical by F. W. H. Myers

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F. W. H. MYERS

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F. W. H. MYERS

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
GREEK ORACLES	1
VIRGIL	106
MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS	177

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PREFATORY NOTE.

IN reprinting this Essay from *Hellenica*, I have thought it needless to repeat my original list of authorities consulted. Since the Essay was written M. Bouché-Leclercq has published his *Histoire de la Divination dans l'Antiquité*, where the bibliography of the subject is given with exhaustive fulness. The chief resources to oracles in classical authors have been long ago collected, and are now the common property of scholars. The last considerable addition to the list was made by G. Wolff, and they have been judiciously arranged by Maury and others. What is needed is a true comprehension of them, towards which less progress has been made than the ordinary reader may suppose. Even Bouché-Leclercq, whose accuracy and completeness within his self-proposed limits deserve high admiration, expressly excludes from his purview the lessons and methods of comparative ethnology, and hardly

cares to consider what those phenomena in reality *were* whose history he is recounting. I can claim little more of insight into their true nature than suffices to make me conscious of ignorance, but I have at least tried to indicate where the problems lie, and in what general directions we must look for their solution.

It is indeed true (as was remarked by several critics when this Essay first appeared) that I have kept but inadequately my implied promise of illustrating ancient mysteries by the light of modern discovery. But my difficulty lay not in the defect but in the excess of parallelism between ancient and modern phenomena. I found that each explicit reference of this kind would raise so many questions that the sequence of the narrative would soon have been destroyed. I was obliged, therefore, to content myself with suggestions and allusions—allusions necessarily obscure to the general reader in the absence of any satisfactory treatise on similar phenomena to which he could be referred. I am not without hope that this blank may before long be filled up by a research conducted on a wider and sounder basis than heretofore; and, should the sway of recognised law extend itself farther over that shadowy land, I shall be well content if this Essay

shall be thought to have aimed, however imperfectly, at that "true interrogation" which is "the half of science."

POSTSCRIPT, 1887.

Since the above words were written in 1883, some beginning of the suggested inquiries has been recorded in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research. Some discussions on human automatism which will there be found are not without bearing on the subject of the present essay.

POSTSCRIPT, 1897.

The work of the Society for Psychical Research has now been pushed much further; and its *Proceedings* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.) are indispensable for persons interested in the inquiries above referred to.