

(London: Arch. Constable & Co. 3s 6d.)

The vineyards of the Isles of Greece seem likely to afford a literature as interesting as that which has arisen in the Kailyards of Scotland. That literature is still in its infancy, but, if one may judge from the first product, there are great possibilities in store for it. "Tales from the Isles of Greece," written by Argyris Ephantiotis, and admirably translated by W. H. D. Rouse, is the title of a volume containing numerous short sketches of Greek peasant life. They are fresh and original in subject and style, and the translation reads as smoothly as though English were the language of the writer. The sketches are very varied in the topics illustrated, ranging from tales of love to tragedies of war, and introducing characters of many kinds, from the Greek peasant girl to the aged vine-dresser. There is none of the uproarious fun and wild horse-play that are now so frequently brought into the Scottish kailyard sketches, but even the most sombre of the stories has gleams of sunshine. One of the most finished of the tales is that entitled "Pappa Sophronios," in which an old Greek priest relates in a moving style the development of a domestic tragedy. For simple pathos the story of "Uncle Yannis and his Donkey" is excellent, and in no particular does it transgress the bounds of good taste. In his introduction Mr Rouse says truly that "there is something Homeric still lingering about rural Greece, and especially about those isles of the Aegean where few travellers come." These stories introduce the reader to modern survivals of the peasants that figure in early Greek poetry; and the mythology that prevails, though externally altered to suit the Greek Church, differs little from that which is familiar in Greek literature of the olden time. It is to be hoped that Mr Rouse may discover more of these stories of bucolic life to reproduce for Western readers. (London: J. M. Dent & Co. 2s 6d net.)

Pall Mall Gazette
10/4/97

girl if she were not so tediously prolix. Under the title of "Tales from the Isles of Greece" (Dent), Mr. Rouse has translated a budget of sketches by Argyris Ephantiotis, depicting romantic incidents in Greek peasant life. Apart from the fact that there is rather a boom in things Hellenic just at present, these stories are well worth the attention of the English reader. Among the islands linger the echoes of a grand and poetic folklore, the bequest of the golden age before Pan died, and dignify a simple peasantry with the glamour of past greatness. Simply and eloquently are these tales told, often with considerable dramatic power. The last three, more particularly, short telling scenes from the drama of the War of Independence, are really powerful. The Romaic dirge, by the way, which Mr. Rouse quotes in his otherwise excellent introduction, has already been done into the English verse by Professor Aytoun, under the title of "The Passing of Charon." Mr. Rouse's halting version does not bear comparison with Aytoun's beautiful elegiacs, and there is no reason why it should have been attempted.

Manchester Courier 21/4/97

"Tales from the Isles of Greece, being Sketches of Modern Greek Peasant Life," translated from the Greek of Argyris Ephantiotis, by W. H. D. Rouse. London: J. M. Dent and Co. 6s.

Present events in the East should cause considerable attention to be given to these sketches of modern Greek life. But artistic reasons alone would justify a warm welcome to the present volume. It is soon made clear that the "homely joys and destiny obscure" of the peasants, rather than fiery patriotism or love of liberty are the themes of the sketches, about thirty in number. But the writer has never forgotten the glorious background of his characters, and whilst their simplicity, shrewdness, and attention to the details of daily life, their marriage and holiday feasts, their melancholy gaiety and fatalism, their customs in life and on the occasion of death, form the subject matter of the papers, there is ever suggested the link with a golden past, when Homers trudged the country side, and in return for a welcome sang the heroic ballads of olden days. As it is we have pictures of the charm of the sunny land, the beauty and love of its women, the courage and cheerfulness of its men, the gaiety of its little children, who play an important part in these domestic sketches. Some of the tales are sad, but in general good is shown to come out of apparent evil, and we are constantly reminded of Greek courage and resource, whilst traitors and spies are shown

to have their due reward. It is altogether an interesting and charming volume.

A. B. I.

E. P.

Academy 10/4/97

Tales from the Isles of Greece. Translated from the Greek of Argyris Ephantiotis by W. H. D. Rouse. (J. M. Dent & Co.)

Mr. Rouse tells us that the book from which these stories and sketches are taken has excited much interest in Greece. They are principally studies of peasant life in the islands: a life apart, and only here and there faintly touched—corrupted, the author appears to think—by Western civilisation. They have, therefore, an interest, as preserving the memory of evanescent manners and fading picturesqueness. As literature they are nothing very remarkable. The grip of incident in them is peculiarly slight, and the primitive emotions are somewhat primitively observed. Such Hellenic affinities as they have are with Theocritus rather than with Euripides: they miss the Attic distinction, but catch something of the Doric delicacy and happy touch of idyllic landscape. The stories called "Angelica" and "Marinos Kontaras" have perhaps rather more substance than the rest; and it is fair to say that certain qualities of simplicity and naïveté which may have had their charm in the original seem to have evaporated in the process of translation. In view of recent events, two or three episodes from the Greek War of Independence have been included in the English edition.

Scottishman 5/4/97

The modern Greeks have hardly yet begun to write and prize their "Kailyard tales." The fashion in literature as in other matters has sought to follow classical or West European models; and the idylls of peasant life, which is found in its greatest charm and simplicity in the islands of the Aegean, have hitherto been overlooked. M. Argyris Ephantiotis's *Tales of the Isles of Greece* (6), delightfully translated by Mr Rouse, may, however, lay claim to being an exception. The island whose people, customs, and traditions he peculiarly knows is one that is still under Turkish rule—Lesbos, apparently. He knows it from within as well as from without, and makes his readers know it as well. The simple truth and vigour of his touch are manifest in the translation; and one is not surprised to hear that these tales and sketches of the peasantry of the Greek islands have attracted a notice and admiration in their native country. A mingling of gaiety and pathos, a frank hospitality, ardent patriotism, and reminiscences of the spirit as well as the forms of life of the ancient Greeks, are characteristic of these Hellenic pictures, which will be found to have no obscure bearing on the events of the day in Eastern Europe.

(6) Tales from the Isles of Greece, being Sketches of Modern Peasant Life. Translated from the Greek of Argyris Ephantiotis by W. H. D. Rouse. London: J. M. Dent & Co.