



The Vampire in Europe: True Tales of the Undead

Montague Summers

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Presents a detailed account of vampires in legend, reality, and literature.

The Vampire in Europe: True Tales of the Undead Details

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From Reader Review The Vampire in Europe: True Tales of the Undead for online ebook

Alex Bledsoe says

Interesting folklore hidden among really dated science and even more dated theology.

Malcolm Forman says

I love this book. I actually own several copies.

Mel says

I got this book at treadwells when I was there a couple weeks ago. I had remembered reading Montague Summers book on witchcraft, and I thought enjoying it, so I thought it would be fun to see what he had to say about Vampires. I ended up enjoying the book a great deal. In many ways it was exactly what I'd hoped the Golden Bough was going to be and wasn't. It was a very charming collection of folk lore, often told as interesting stories. The author's agenda seemed to be much smaller, and while he did occasionally slip from the topic and take some rather strange diversions, they were almost wholly very entertaining. The edition I bought had a brief introduction and history of the author, I was surprised to see that he lived and wrote so recently, there is a wonderful archaic writing style, as well as seeing that he was rather a devout catholic, though the more I read of the book the more obvious this became. The book looked at Greece and Rome, Britain, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, modern Greece (which was the least interesting) and lastly Russia, Romania and Bulgaria. The book had some rather wonderful passages. It contained the first chapter of Varney the Vampire which seemed terribly overdone but quite fun. There was a great extract from Apulius that had a very long story about a young man who had to guard a corpse overnight from witches. It also had huge chunks of Latin, Greek and French, a lot largely un-translated which made Bill happy, and made me happy I have someone to translate for me! There was a great list of 18th century sources published about Vampires all from Leipzig which made one author refer to the vampire as the "le diable a leipzeig" which because of Treffen I found extra funny. My favourite quote of the book though came from the chapter on Russia which began, "It is no matter for surprise that in so sad and sick a country as Russia the tradition of the Vampire should assume, if it be possible, an even intense darkness." (282). Which reminded me again that I really do need to read more Russian literature! In many ways this book reminded me of the zhi guai tales of the strange that I am so fond of reading in China. It was obvious in this book that despite being a 20th century English man Summers still believed in the stories he was talking about and thought the examples he was using were credible. This is interesting as lately scholars such as Glen Dudbrige and Robert Ford Campany have been arguing that the Chinese stories should not be viewed as fiction but representative of people's beliefs and ordinary lives, (as if the supernatural element must be believed then the day to day details must also be accurate). It was nice to see a modern example where this was clearly the case and could possible give further arguments against the tales being written as fiction. It was a very enjoyable book and I think I shall have to track down more Montague Summers for further reading. This book was actually a sequel to one he wrote earlier called Vampire Kith and Kin which I shall have to find.

Cathy says

Waiting in the stacks

David says

Goes into great detail about historical documented cases of vampirism in Europe from Classical time to very recently. Summers was credulous to say the least, but the book reads like a learned tract, and surely all these court proceedings and testimonies can't have been made up...

Kenneth says

This was the second book on vampires that Montague Summers published (in 1929). Summers was a graduate of Trinity College, Oxford University in England in the early 20th century and was an authority on late 17th century English drama and the gothic novel, as well as on witchcraft, vampires and other occult subjects. In this book he begins by surveying the folklore relating to the undead in the classical literature of ancient Greece and Rome, moving on to the British Isles, Central and Eastern Europe, as well as modern Greece. He often goes off on tangents which seems to be a major part of his writing style, but does so quite entertainingly. He is sort of a comparative folklorist at work. He includes a scholarly apparatus of footnotes - he is quite conversant with a huge amount of 17th century scholarly literature on his subject. He also has extensive quotes in their original Latin, Greek, French and German, which he leaves untranslated - I believe because an educated graduate of Oxford University from his time (and prior thereto) like himself, would assume that his readers would be educated similarly to himself and therefore able to read and understand the quotes in their original languages. Sadly, that is not the case for most Americans of the early 21st century. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to understand these passages to follow his line of thought, so one should not hesitate to pick up this book for that reason.

Summers is also notable for taking his supernatural subjects seriously. He is not a debunker. Some of us, if not totally sceptical, would still be quite happy if vampires and such remain in the realm of the folk belief of other times and places, and modern horror movies. But who knows what exists in the supernatural realm? If it really exists, it is what it is.
