

personal english



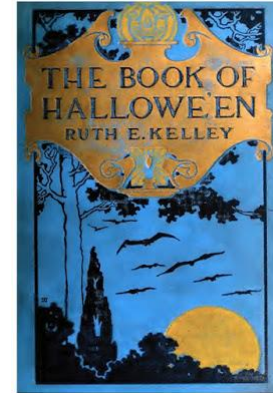
Book #29

The Book of Halloween by Ruth Edna Kelley

Ruth Edna Kelley (1893-1982) was an **American librarian** who in **1919** wrote and illustrated the first book-length study on Halloween, which in those days was becoming increasingly popular in the USA as a consequence of the massive **Irish migration waves** in the 1880s and 1890s.

The book endeavors to give a comprehensive account of the origins of this celebration, which the author – adopting an ethnological and anthropological perspective – traces back to the **Celtic festival of Samhain** as well as to a range of Norse and Teutonic traditions connected to sun worship and the beginning of seasons. Among these traditions, it is worth mentioning at least **Walpurgis Night** (made famous by Goethe's *Faust*) and the **witches** who participate in this celebration of the arrival of spring on April 30.

The archetypal connections between these two pagan festivals and the figure of the witch lie in the fact that those crucial moments of the solar year remind mankind of **death**, which has always been personified in many cultures by the **Fates** (Was, Will and Shall Be), three women (or 'weird sisters', as they are called in *Macbeth*) reminiscent of the ancient figure of the priestess, such as **Pythia (Greece)**, **Sybil (Rome)**, and **Gallizenae (Gaul)**.



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