

BOOK
I.

Perseus. If Kephalos, having won the love of Prokris, is obliged to leave her for a time, Apollôn in like manner is constrained to desert Korônis. If Prokris yields her affection to one whom she almost believes to be Kephalos, the guilt of Korônis is not many shades deeper; while both are alike smitten by the fatal spear of Artemis. In the legends of Thebes, Athens, Argos, and other cities, we find the strange yet common dread of parents who look on their children as their future destroyers. Thus Oidipous is cast forth to die on the slopes of Kithairôn, as Paris is abandoned on those of Ida or Arthur to the mysterious Merlin, while Perseus is entrusted to the mercy of the deep sea. Nay, the legends interchange the method by which the parents seek the death of their children; for there were tales which narrated that Oidipous was shut up in an ark which was washed ashore at Sikyôn.¹ In every case the child grows up beautiful, brave, and strong. Like Apollôn, Bellerophôn, and Herakles, they are all slayers of monsters. The son of the gloomy Laïos returns to destroy the dreaded Sphinx, as Perseus slays the Gorgon, and the Minotauros falls by the sword of Theseus. They have other features in common. The fears of their parents are in all cases realised. Akrisios and Laïos are killed by Perseus and Oidipous, as Romulus and Cyrus bring ruin on Amulius and Astyages.² All of them love fair maidens and are somewhat prone to forsake them; and after doing marvellous things, they return to the maiden whom they loved at the beginning of their career, or to the mother from whom they had been parted long ago. Herakles finds Iolê by his funeral pile on Oita, while in the myth which has invested his character with a solar colouring Oinônê cheers Paris in his last hour on Ida.

¹ In this version of the myth he is a son of Eurykleia, a name which belongs to the same class with Euryganeia, Eurydikê, Eurymedê, etc. In the same way Dionysos, who, in the Theban legend, was born amid the blaze of the lightning which destroyed his mother, is in the Lakonian story placed in a chest with his mother and carried to Brasiaï, where Semêlê was found dead. Paus. ii. 24, § 3.

² This illustration must not be re-

garded as banishing Cyrus wholly to the domain of mythology, although it seems sufficiently to prove that to the person of the historical Cyrus, as to that of Charles the Great, a mass of floating mythology has attached itself, and that, from such traditions we cannot be said to derive any part of our historical knowledge. The conclusions which these facts seem to force upon us are given elsewhere. (Ch. ix.)



Still more significantly, Oidipous marries Iokastê (the connection of the name with that of Iolê is manifest),¹ and the unwitting sin thus committed becomes the starting-point of a more highly-complicated history.

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Wonderful, again, as is the seeming variety of action and incident in these legends, the recurrence of the same imagery, freshened by ingenious modifications, is not less remarkable. If Heraklê begins his career of marvels by strangling the serpents who have twined round his limbs, the youthful Apollôn slays the huge snake Pytho, and Perseus smites the snaky haired Medousa. The serpents, in their turn, win the victory when Eurydikê falls a victim on the banks of the Hebros, or assume a more kindly form in the legends of Iamos and Melampous.² The former they shelter in the thickets, because, as with Perseus, Oidipous, Romulus, and Cyrus, his kinsfolk seek his death, while to Melampous,

The imagery of these legends.

¹ The violet or purple colour can be traced through a large number of Greek mythical names. Iolaos is the son of Iphikles, the twin-brother of Heraklê, (*Scut. Her.* 74). Through Epaphos and Danaos, the line of Heraklê is traced back to Iô, in whose story is brought out the favourite image of the bull, as a figure of Indra or the sun. The names of Iasion, whom Dêmêtêr loved, and Zeus slew, of Iasô, the daughter of Asklêpios, and Iason, were referred to the idea of healing (*iaosis*); but Æschylos derived Lykios, as an epithet of Apollôn, from the destruction of wolves,

Λύκει' ἀναξ, Λύκειος γενού
στρατὶ δαίφ. *Theb.* 145,

and thus unconsciously explained not only the transformation of Lykaôn into a wolf, but the origin of the superstition of Lykanthropy. See note 3, p. 62. In short, the Greek poets were far more frequently wrong than right in accounting for mythical names; and thus the names Iason, Iolaos, and the rest, may, so far as their belief is concerned, have had the same origin with that of Iamos, which is directly referred to the violet beds under which he was hidden by the Drakontes, who, in the myth of Iason bear the chariot of Medeia. There remain some epithets, as Ieios, and Iacchos, both of which are commonly referred to the cry *ἴη*, an explanation supported by

the known connection of words denoting sound and colour. About these it may be rash to speak positively, although the opinion of Greek writers is not worth much, and Iacchos may be another form of *Bacchus*, which Dr. Latham connects with the Slavonic *bog*, our bogy and Puck, the Welsh *Pwcca*, &c.—Johnson, *English Dictionary*, s.v. *Bogy*.

² In the Gaelic story of Fearachus Leigh (*Campbell, Tales of the West Highlands*, ii. 362) the snake is boiled in a pot, round which paper is wrapped to prevent the steam from escaping. 'But he had not made all straight when the water began to boil, and the steam began to come out at one place.

'Well, Farquhar saw this, and thought he would push the paper down round the thing; so he put his finger to the bit, and then his finger into his mouth, for it was wet with the bree.

'So he knew everything, and the eyes of his mind were opened.'

Farquhar now sets up for a doctor; but the old myth of Asklêpios must still be fulfilled in him. 'Farquhar the physician never came to be Farquhar the king, for he had an ill-wisher that poisoned him, and he died.' The poison represents the thunder-bolt of Zeus in the Greek story, and the ill-wisher is Zeus himself.

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I.

Signifi-
cance of
the names
employed
in Greek
legends.

by cleansing his ears, they impart a new power, so that he may understand the voices and the song of birds. The spotless white bull bears Eurôpê across the waters of the sea: the glistening ram soars through the air with the children of Nephelê, or the mist. Phaethousa and Lampetiê drive the cattle of Helios to their pastures, and Hermes steals the herds of Apollôn when he is scarce an hour old. The cattle in their turn assume an unkindly aspect. The Minotauros plagues the Cretans, the Marathonian bull ravages the fields of Attica. The former is killed by the child of the golden shower, the latter by the son of Aithra, the pure air.

The very names occurring in these tribal legends have a significance which the Greek language itself interprets, whenever they tell us of the great heroes whose lives run so strangely in the same magic groove. Oidipous loves Iokastê, as Heraklês loves Iolê; but he is also the husband of Euryganeia, who spreads the light over the broad sky. The names of Phaethon, of Phaethousa and Lampetiê, the children of Neaira, tell their own tales. In the obscure mythology of Tegea, when the name of Heraklês is introduced, the maiden whom he chooses is Augê, the brilliant.¹ She too, like Danaê, is driven away by the terror of her father, and in the far eastern land becomes the mother of Téléphos, who, like Oidipous and Paris, is exposed on the rough hill-side, and whose office as the bringer of light is seen again in the name of Téléphassa, the mother of Eurôpê. So, again, when the genealogy of Phthia is to be mingled with that of Elis, it is Protogeneia (the earliest dawn) who becomes the mother of Aethlios (the toiling and struggling sun), who is the father of Endymiôn, the tired sun at his setting, in whose child Eurydikê we see again the morrow's light restored to its former brightness.²

Opinions
of Greek

Thus in the marvellous tales which recounted the mighty

¹ Paus. viii. 4, 6; Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 240.

² Paus. v. 12. Aethlios is the husband of Kalykê, the night. By some canon of probability, better known to himself than to others, Pausanias chooses to marry Endymiôn to Asterodia, rather than to Selênê, as the mother of his fifty children. He was making a

distinction without a difference. Mr. Grote gives the several versions of the myth (*History of Greece*, i. 188 &c.): but he is probably mistaken in supposing that the names Aethlios and Endymiôn are of late introduction, although their connection with the Olympic games undoubtedly was.



deeds of Perseus and Heraklês the people of Argos saw a coherent whole,—the chronicle of the great actions which distinguished the founders of their state from those of any other. Yet the tale of Perseus, and still more that of Heraklês, is re-echoed in the Attic legends of Theseus; and even more significant is the fact of their utter unconsciousness that the life of Perseus is, in all its essential features, repeated in that of his great descendant Heraklês, through whose career the *epos* of Argos is twisted into a complicated chain with that of Attica. The conclusion is forced upon us that the Greeks knew no more about the historical facts possibly underlying these traditions than they knew about the names which occurred in them. We see at once that Athenians, Thebans, Argives, Spartans, regarded as independent narratives tales which are merely modified versions of the same story. Hence their convictions furnish not even the faintest presumption that the actors in the great dynastic legends ever had any historical existence, or that the myths themselves point to any historical facts.

CHAP.

V.

writers,
and their
value.

CHAPTER VI.

GREEK NOTIONS RESPECTING THE MORAL ASPECT OF MYTHOLOGY.

BOOK I.

Coarse develop-
ment of
certain
mythical
phrases.

THE method, which has enabled us to compare the story of the Iliad with the Volsung Tale or the epic of Firdusi, tends to show that, in many instances at least, even the grossest myths arose from phrases which were truthful and therefore beautiful descriptions of phenomena. But it has also shown us that these phrases, when translated into the conditions of human life and morality, would inevitably give rise to precisely those tales which, related boldly and nakedly, must appear coarse, repulsive, or disgusting. Nor can it be denied, that if children or grown men are only to cram their memories with a thousand tales which speak of Oidipous as marrying his mother, of Tantalos as roasting his own son, of Lykaôn as placing a meal of human flesh before Zeus, of Hephaistos as defiling Athênê, of Heraklês as a creature of unbounded and indiscriminate lust, it must be in every way better to remain ignorant of such things in spite of all the allusions of poets and the suggestions of painters and sculptors. If we are to know only these incidents or details, (and the works which do not avowedly adopt the method of comparative mythology attempt nothing more,) the knowledge must be simply unwholesome.

Protests of
Greek
writers.

It is no wonder that a mythology which still drives some critics to desperate shifts in their efforts to account for such strange developements, and which the Greek shared with barbarians, whose minds he despised and whose language he could not understand, should perplex and baffle the poets and philosophers of Hellas. Some little suspicion they had of the meaning of a few mythical names and phrases : how



the vast majority of them had come into being, they could have no idea. Still less, therefore, could they surmise that these names themselves had given rise to the tales which charmed, bewildered, or horrified them. They knew that Zeus sometimes meant the sky; they knew that Selênê must be the moon; they half fancied that Endymion must be the sleeping sun: but they did not know why Zeus and Heraklês must have many loves in many lands, why Kronos should maim his father Ouranos and swallow his own children, why Tantalos should place the limbs of his son on the banquet table of the gods, why Oidipous should marry his mother and bring unimaginable woes on her, on himself, and on his children. From all these horrors their moral sense shrank with an instinctive aversion. The Zeus whom they worshipped was the all-seeing ruler and the all-righteous judge. In him there was no passion and no shadow of turning. He was the fountain of all truth and goodness, from which could flow nothing impure or foul. How then should he be envious or jealous, capricious, lustful, and treacherous? The contradiction was glaring, and some among them had trenchant methods of dealing with it. Later philosophers condemned in a mass the glorious epics which bear the name of Homer: later poets contented themselves with rejecting every legend which was distasteful to their moral sense. Plato would give no place to Homer in his ideal commonwealth: Euripides, like Homeric heroes, could tell Zeus to his face, that he and his kinsfolk had done fearful things, or when he cast aside his mythological faith, could assert unequivocally,

If the gods do aught unseemly,
Then they are not gods at all.¹

The power of resting content without seeking to account for this portentous growth of an immoral theology seems

Limits of
their
knowledge.

¹ Fragm., *Belleroph.* 300. It can scarcely be denied that, from his own point of view, 'Plato was right in warning the guardians of his ideal polity against the danger to youth, if they were permitted to receive the Homeric tales concerning the gods and heroes

either as true descriptions of deity, or as examples of human conduct.' Some remarks on the connection of this subject with that of modern education may be found in Mr. H. B. Wilson's *Introduction to the Examination of Prevalent Opinions of Inspiration* (1861), p. xv.

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I.

Explanation of the seeming immorality of Aryan mythology.

to be reserved for modern minds. Examining this subject at greater length, Mr. Max Müller remarks that the Greeks 'would not have been Greeks, if they had not perceived that the whole of their mythology presented a problem that required a solution at the hand of a philosopher.' But, however great their efforts might be to explain its origin, the same causes which prevented them from discovering the affinity of their own language with that of Persians, Thracians, or Italians, must have placed insuperable barriers in their way; and thus they were the more tempted to accept a compromise, which saved them from antagonism with 'some of the most venerable institutions' of their country.¹

But if the examination of the most complicated epic poetry discloses precisely the frame-work which we find even in the most fragmentary legends,² if Theseus and Sigurd,

¹ *Lectures on Language*, second series, ix.

² It is impossible to determine the aid which Comparative Mythology might have received from the lost poems of the so-called epic cycle. There can, however, be little doubt, that they would have made still more evident the truth of facts which, even without them, seem to be indisputably established. We might also, with their aid, have been better able to measure exactly the knowledge which the poets of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* had of legends which they have not mentioned or have treated only incidentally. The epic poem, which had for its subject simply the capture of Oichalia by Heraklēs, the Danaids, the Eurōpia, might have added to our knowledge of the materials with which all these poems were built up. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have assumed in our eyes more than their fair proportions, from the mere fact that they alone have survived unhurt the wear and tear of ages. Whether our *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are really the poems which were known under those titles to the Attic historians and tragedians is a graver question, which these lost epic poems would have aided us in answering, and which must be examined by the aid of such materials and evidence as we have at our disposal. That the fact of their transmission to the present day is not to be explained on the ground of their manifest supe-

riority to the lost poems, is at once clear, when we remember that the great Athenian poets deliberately drew the characters and incidents of their dramas from poems which we called cyclic, in preference to those which we regard as alone deserving to be called Homeric.

The so-called Orphic hymns consist almost entirely of invocations to the various beings with which the old mythical language peopled the visible world, followed by a string of all the epithets which were held to be applicable to them. Almost every one of these epithets may be made the germ of a mythical tale. Thus the hymn to Protogonos (whose counterpart is Protogeneia) hails him as born from the egg (of night), and having the face of a bull (Indra), as Phanes the brilliant, and Antauges (Antigonē), reflecting the light of the Sun (vi.). Helios (viii.) is Paian, the healer, merging into the idea of Asklepīos; he is also Zeus, a relic of the interchangeable character of the earlier Vedic gods, the moon being also still male and female (ix.). Heraklēs (xii.) is the father of Time, benignant and everlasting, producing and devouring all things, yet helping all, wearing the dawn and the night round his head. Adonis (lvi.) dwells partly in Tartaros and partly on Olympos. The rays of the sun and moon cannot come without the Charites, the Harits or glistening horses of Indra (lx.). Asklepīos is Paian the healer as well as Helios, and he has



Phoibos and Achilleus, Odysseus, Oidipous, and Perseus are, though different, yet the same,—if their adventures or their times of inaction are simply the fruit of an inevitable process going on in all kindred languages, all charges of immorality founded on the character of these adventures fall completely to the ground. It is simply impossible to believe that the great Athenian poets were descended from a people who, some centuries earlier, had deliberately sat down to invent loathsome or ridiculous fictions about the gods whom they worshipped and the heroes whom they revered. To the mind of Æschylos there was a depth of almost inexpiable guilt in the sacrifice of Iphigeneia. The imagination of Sophokles was oppressed by the unconscious incest of Oidipous and all its frightful consequences, while Pindar turned aside with contemptuous indignation from the stories which told of gods devouring their own offspring. But we, to whom the tale of Kronos points to the Time which consumes the years to which it has given birth,—we, for whom the early doom of the virgin Iphigeneia, caused by the wrath of Artemis, is a mere reflection of the lot which pressed alike on Dahanâ and Daphnê, on Iolê, and Brynhild, and Oinônê,—we, who can read in the woeful tale of Iokastê the return of the lord of day, the slayer of the Sphinx and of the Python, to the mother who had borne him in the morning, must feel, that if Greeks or Northmen who told of such things are to be condemned, they must be condemned on other grounds and not because in Achilleus or Sigurd or Odysseus they have given us pictures of obstinate inaction or brutal revenge. Possibly, to some among those old poets, the real nature of the tales which they were telling was not so completely hidden as we may deem. It is not easy to think that the writer of the Hymn to Hermes knew nothing of the key which was to unlock all its secrets. The very form of their language would warrant us in saying much more. But the words of Kumârila prove, that among the Eastern Aryans the real character of their mythology had not been forgotten. He,

Health as his spotless bride. The date of these hymns is a matter of little moment. To whatever age they may belong, they lay bare not a few of the stages in the mythopœic poems.



BOOK
I.

too, had to listen to complaints like those which Pindar and Plato bring against the follies or the vices of the gods. His answer is ready.

‘It is fabled that Prajâpati, the Lord of Creation, did violence to his daughter. But what does it mean? Prajâpati, the Lord of Creation, is a name of the sun; and he is called so because he protects all creatures. His daughter Ushas is the dawn. And when it is said that he was in love with her, this only means that, at sunrise, the sun runs after the dawn, the dawn being at the same time called the daughter of the sun, because she rises when he approaches. In the same manner, if it is said that Indra was the seducer of Ahalyâ, this does not imply that the god Indra committed such a crime; but Indra means the sun, and Ahalyâ the night; and as the night is seduced and ruined by the sun of the morning, therefore is Indra called the paramour of Ahalyâ.’¹

The morality of
Hesiod.

It is the legend of Oidipous and Iokastê, one of the most awful and, in some aspects, the most repulsive in the wide range of Greek mythology.² If the real nature of this tale is laid bare before us, we may at once assure ourselves that these stories are not the fruit of depraved imaginations and brutal lives. There is no longer any mystery in the strange combination of repulsive legends with a sensitive morality in the Hesiodic poems of the ‘Works and Days.’ We cease to wonder, that the same poet who has recounted the tale of Pandora should tell us that the eye of God is in every place, watching the evil and the good;³ that the duty of man is to

¹ Max Müller, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 530. Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, part iv. ch. i. sect. 2.

² Nothing can exceed the coarseness of the legend of Erichthonios as given by Apollodoros, iii. 14, 6. It is, however, nothing more than a strange jumble of images which are found scattered through a hundred legends, and which may be translated into the following phrases:—

The Dawn stands before the Sun, and asks him for his armour.

The face of the Dawn charms the Sun, who seeks to embrace her.

The Dawn flies from the Sun, and a soft shower falls on the Earth as his piercing rays shoot across the sky after her departing form.

From the soft shower springs the Summer with its fruits.

The Dawn would make the Summer immortal, and entrusts the Summer to the care of the Dew.

The serpents of night lie coiled round the Summer in the morning.

The sisters of the Dew are slain by the Dawn.

³ *Works and Days*, 252, 253, 265.



avoid the smooth road to evil,¹ and to choose the strait path of good, which, rough at the first, becomes easy to those who walk in it.² CHAP.
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¹ *Works and Days*, 286.

² μακρὸς δὲ καὶ ὀρθίος οἶμος ἐπ' αὐτὴν
καὶ πρηχὺς τὸ πρῶτον. ἐπὴν δ' εἰς ἄκρον ἵκηται,
ῥηιδίη δὴ ἔπειτα πέλει, χαλεπὴ περ ἐοῦσα.—*Ib.* 288.



CHAPTER VII.

THEORY OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY AS AN ECLECTIC SYSTEM.

BOOK.
I.
Reproduction of the
same
myth
under
different
forms.

FEW who have considered the subject at all will be disposed to deny that the Argive legends which relate the exploits of Perseus might well be expanded into a longer poem than the *Iliad*. We have, therefore, the less reason to be surprised if the *Iliad* itself, on examination, is found to relate part only of a more extended legend, or to exhibit under a different colouring modified versions of a single story. If in the mythology of Argos alone we have the ideal of Perseus recurring in the tale of Heraklês, there is the less reason for wonder if the Hellenic Achilleus is but the counterpart of the Lykian Sarpêdôn and Memnôn, the son of Eôs,—nay, if the character of Achilleus recurs in that of other Achaian heroes. The *Iliad*, or rather, as Mr. Grote would say, the *Achillêis*,¹ sings of the wrath of the Phthiotic chieftain, who is also the child of the sea-goddess Thetis, and this wrath is followed by a time of gloomy and sullen inaction. The glorious hero, the lightning of whose countenance struck terror into his enemies, hangs up his weapons and hides his face. The sun has passed behind the veil of the storm-cloud. The expression is literally forced from us: we cannot withhold the metaphor. But so was it with the men of Kalydôn while Meleagros lay sullen and angry in his secret chamber with his beautiful wife Kleopatra. So complete is the identity of the two characters, so thoroughly does it rebuke his moody anger, that the episode of Meleagros is recited at length by Phoinix, in the hope that it may appease the fury of Achilleus.² But the issue with both is the same. Meleagros comes forth at last

¹ *History of Greece*, ii. 236.

² *Iliad*, ix. 529-599.



to the aid of his people, and Achilles, after a long struggle, makes up his quarrel with Agamemnon to avenge the death of Patroklos. Both again are doomed, after their time of obstinate inaction, to an early and violent death, preceded by a brief outburst of their former splendour. That such was to be the lot of his great hero, the Homeric poet knew well; but, ignorant though he may have been of the source of the materials of which he made such splendid use, he chose, with a poetical instinct rarely surpassed, to close his tale when Achilles grants the prayer of Priam, and yields to him the body of his dead son, Hektor.

If, however, resemblances of detail are not wanting to show that Eastern and Western legends have in the *Iliad* been blended together, it would follow that such a blending of the mythology of different cities or countries must issue in a highly complicated story. But it is obvious, at the same time, that no historical inferences can be drawn from the mere fact of such a complication. Rightly convinced that the tale of Troy, with its marvellously vivid details and astonishing incidents, must have some foundation, Bishop Thirlwall is disposed to refer it to some great expedition in which the chieftains of Western Hellas were combined against an Asiatic power ruling in Ilion.¹ The evidence of such a fact may possibly be found in isolated statements contained in the *Iliad*, but scarcely in the plot of the story. If it may be assumed, from the form of the prophecy of Poseidôn, that

No historical conclusions can be drawn from the complications so caused.

¹ *History of Greece*, vol. i. ch. v. Dr. Thirlwall is struck by the contrast of the futile efforts of Agamemnon and his host with the success of Heraklès in his attack on Troy during the reign of Laomedon. He makes some plausible historical conjectures to account for this difference. But the tale explains itself. Heraklès is a transformation of the invincible sun-god, and his might therefore beats down every enemy, when the actual moment for conflict has come. But Agamemnon and his host must wait ten years before they can be permitted to storm the citadel of Ilion. They are the children of the sun, seeking through the weary hours of darkness the beautiful light, which after sundown was taken away from the western sky.

They can do nothing, therefore, in spite of their numbers, until at the fated hour Achilles comes forth to help them. Such, at least, is the burden of the *Achilleis*. The interpolated *Iliad* was the result of a patriotic feeling struggling against the laws of mythical speech. Dr. Thirlwall sees clearly that the abduction of Helen may have been 'a theme for poetry originally independent of the Trojan war,' and he rightly insists that the tale of the war, 'even if unfounded, must still have had some adequate occasion and motive.' This is indisputable: but hypotheses connecting it with Greek colonies in Asia prove nothing; the comparison of Greek legends among themselves and with the systems of mythology explains all.

BOOK
I.

Substantial identity of Greek and Norse mythology.

princes claiming descent from Aineias ruled in the poet's time in the Troad,¹ no light is thrown by it on the existence of that chief, or on the reality of the Trojan war. The ruins of Tiryns attest to a certain extent the truthfulness of Homeric description in the catalogue of the contending forces;² the walls of Mykênai bear out the statement that it was once the seat of a powerful dynasty, but archæological evidence tells us nothing of Perseids or of Pelopids.

But if we can trace this recurrence of the same ideal in different heroes and of the same imagery in the recital of their adventures in Hellenic mythology alone, the marvel is intensified a thousandfold when we compare this mythology with the ancient legends of Northern Europe or of the far-distant East. There is scarcely an incident in the lives of the great Greek heroes which cannot be traced out in the wide field of Teutonic or Scandinavian tradition; and the complicated action of the *Iliad*, or rather of the whole legend of which the *Iliad* forms a part, is reproduced in the *Edda* and the lays of the *Volsungs* and the *Nibelungs*. It may seem almost superfluous, and yet the persistency of traditional opinion makes it necessary, to repeat, that if the Greek tales tell us of serpent-slayers and of destroyers of noxious monsters, the legends of the ice-bound North also sing of heroes who slay the dragons that lie coiled round sleeping maidens. If the former recite the labours of Heraklês and speak of the bondage of Apollôn, Sifrit and Sigurd are not less doomed to a life of labour for others, not for themselves. If Heraklês alone can rescue Hesionê from a like doom with Andromeda, or bring back Alkêstis from the land of Hades, it is Sigurd only who can slay the serpent Fafnir, and Ragnar Lodbrog alone who can deliver Thora from the Dragon's grasp. If, at the end of his course, Heraklês once more sees his early love; if Oinônê comes again to Paris in his death hour, so

¹ *Iliad*, xx. 307, 308. It is, after all, the merest inference.—Grote, *History of Greece*, i. 428.

² It must, however, be remembered, that alleged archæological evidence must not be accepted in every case without question. It is now asserted that 'Offa's dyke' is a natural work, and Offa himself is thus carried suspiciously near the

cloudland of mythology. The supposed canal of Xerxes, at the base of mount Athos, has shared the same fate; and the suspicion of Juvenal, x. 74, that the story was a myth has thus been unexpectedly verified. Offa's dyke and the canal of Xerxes are, in short, not more artificial than Fingal's Cave or the Giant's Causeway.



Brynhild lies down to die with Sigurd who had forsaken her. If Achilles and Baldur can only be wounded in a single spot, Isfendiyar in the Persian epic can be killed only by the thorn thrown into his eye by Rustem. If the tale of Perseus is repeated in the career of Herakles, the legend of Ragnar Lodbrog is also a mere echo of the nobler story which told of the sun-bright Sigurd. It is scarcely necessary to enter into more minute detail. The chief features of Hellenic mythology may be traced in the mythical system of all the Aryan nations.

CHAP. .
VII.

But at this point we encounter a difficulty which, if not removed, must prove fatal to the method which Comparative Mythology applies to the legends of the East and West. If that science has guided us to any measure of the truth, it has taught us something not merely of the growth of tales which recount the actions of deified heroes, but of the conceptions from which sprang the highest deities of Olympos—Artemis, Dêmêtêr, Apollôn, and Zeus himself. It has identified Phoibos with Helios, Herakles, Perseus, Theseus, Oidipous, and many others. It has traced the several aspects of his character through the phases presented in the legends of Theseus, Kephalos, Daphnê, Endymiôn, Bellerophontes, and Meleagros. It has taught us that he is the child of Zeus and Lêtô, while the maiden Persephonê is sprung from Zeus and Dêmêtêr. It tells us of Ouranos looking down on Gaia, and of Gaia returning the love of Ouranos by her unbounded fertility. It speaks of the toiling sun, visiting all the regions of the earth as he ascends or goes down the slope of heaven, and of earth as yielding to him her fruits wherever his light may exercise its beneficent power. It speaks of Zeus as the son or the husband of Gaia, and of the tears which fell in rain-drops from the sky when he mourned for the death of his son Sarpêdôn. It seems to tell us, then, of a mythological or religious system which, simple at the first, became at the last excessively complicated, and further that this system was the result not of philosophical generalisations, but of the consciousness of an exuberant life which was extended from man to every object which he beheld in the visible creation. It seems to show that once upon a time, while the ancestors

Conclu-
sions
drawn
from a
comparison
of Greek
with Norse
legends.

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of European nations and tribes were still comparatively united, man had uttered as the simple phrases of every day speech sayings which became afterwards the groundwork of elaborate religious systems; that once upon a time they spoke of the dawn coming from the chambers of the night, while the night herself was struggling with the birth of the brilliant sun; that the new-born sun saw and loved and pursued the dawn, which vanished at his touch. It seems to teach us that from such phrases, which, slightly varied, were expanded into the tales of Kephalos and Prokris, of Korônîs and Apollôn, grew finally the more definite personalities of Zeus and Phoibos, of Lêtô and Daphnê, of Artemis and Herakles. Hence, whatever in the Greek religious systems there was of direct anthropomorphism or of a fetish nature-worship would be the result of later thought and of attempts to arrive at philosophical abstractions, and not the maimed and distorted relics of a higher knowledge once possessed but now only not forgotten.

Theory of
Dr.
Döllinger
on the
origin of
Greek my-
thology.

If the theory which makes the growth of Greek mythology from the first a philosophical process can be established, then the results of Comparative Mythology must be abandoned as of no value, and we must be content to look on the points of resemblance between Greek, Teutonic, Scandinavian, and Eastern legends as a problem utterly beyond our powers to solve or even to grapple with. In any case it is a question of evidence; and the objections, which seem to be conclusive against the hypothesis of an original dogmatic revelation, of such a kind at least as that of which Mr. Gladstone speaks, have been considered already. But Dr. Döllinger's position¹ lies open to no charges of fanciful extravagance; it needs, therefore, to be the more carefully examined, as professing to be a legitimate deduction from the state of religion, or rather of religious *cultus*, among the Greeks in historical times. This state was, in the opinion of Dr. Döllinger, the result of an attempt to reduce a variety of conflicting systems and notions into one harmonious whole. In it were mingled the mysticism of Egypt and the orgiastic ritualism of the East, with the rude nature-worship of the older and less

¹ *The Gentile and the Jew in the Courts of the Temple of Christ*, book ii.



civilised ages; and his purpose is to trace the several ideas so amalgamated to their original sources. With this view he is obliged to assume that in his primæval innocence man was enabled 'to conceive of the Divinity as a pure, spiritual, supernatural, and infinite being, distinct from the world and exalted above it.' The loss of this conception, and the yearning for something in its place, led to the deification of material nature, which 'unfolded herself to man's nature as a boundless demesne, wherein was confined an unfathomable plenitude of powers, incommensurable and incalculable, and of energies not to be overcome.' With this was developed a sympathy for naturalism, 'and thus man, deeper and deeper in the spells of his enchantress, and drawn downwards by their weight, had his moral consciousness overcast in proportion, and gave the fuller rein to impulses which were merely physical.'¹ This deification of natural powers led, as Dr. Döllinger believes, first of all to the worship of the elements—of ether as the vault of heaven; of the earth as its opposite; of fire as the warming and nourishing, the consuming and destroying power; of water as the element of moisture separated from that of earth. To this succeeded astrolatry in the East, and geolatry in the West, where the idea of the earth as a susceptible and productive agent led to the distinction of male and female divinities. But the actual Greek religion of the heroic and later ages was a blending of the several notions derived from supplanted races—Leleges and Karians, Thrakians and Pelasgians—together with importations from Asia and Egypt.² Thus Gaia and Helios, Zeus and Hêrê, belong to the Pelasgic stock, while Poseidon was introduced by Karian and Phœnician visitors of the coasts of Hellas.³ Pallas Athênê was also Pelasgian, as a goddess of nature and the elements. Apollôn, likewise Pelasgian, 'has so many features in common with Athênê, that in many respects one might call him an Athênê of the male species.' Artemis was in continental Greece Pelasgian, while at Ephesos she exhibits an Asiatic character, and becomes 'a sort of Pantheistic deity.' From

¹ *The Gentile and the Jew in the Courts of the Temple of Christ*, vol. i. p. 66.

² *Ibid.* p. 68.

³ *Ibid.* p. 80.

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the Pêlasgians also came Hestia, Hermes, and Aphroditê; but Arês was the god of the Thrakian race, 'which, having penetrated into Bœotia and the Peloponnese, took his worship along with them.' Of the rest, Dêmêtêr was Pelasgie, Hephaistos came from the Thrakians of Lemnos, and Dionysos from the more distant East; while Hades was almost an afterthought, not much worshipped, and not greatly cared for by the people.¹

This theory starts on an assumption for which there is no evidence.

The picture drawn by Dr. Döllinger of the great Olympian deities may in all its particulars be strictly true. It is possible or probable that ideas utterly foreign to the Greek mind may have been imported from Phrygia, Phœnicia, or Egypt, and that the worship so developed may have embodied philosophical conceptions of nature and of the powers at work in it. But the question which calls for an answer cannot be determined by the most masterly portraiture of the great gods of Olympos: and Dr. Döllinger's hypothesis does not enable us to answer it. It starts on an assumption for which we have no evidence; and all the evidence furnished by the book of Genesis and still more all that is furnished by the study of language, militates against the idea that man started originally with a conception of God, 'as a pure, spiritual, supernatural, and infinite being, distinct from the world, and exalted above it.' How soon he might have risen to this conception, had his lot been different from what it has been, it is impossible to say: but if we are to argue simply from statements before us, we may affirm that men were from the first conscious of the existence of a Being more powerful than themselves, whom they were bound to obey, but we can scarcely maintain more. This sense of duty, and still more the sense of shame following on the violation of it, would show that the groundwork of that relation was the goodness and justice of the Being with whom they had to do. But in this conviction there was nothing to determine their ideas in the objects and phenomena of the natural world. Feeling a conscious life in himself, man would, until corrected by experience, attribute the same conscious life to everything he saw or felt. The sun and moon, the cloud and

¹ *The Gentile and the Jew in the Courts of the Temple of Christ*, 93.



the wind, would be living beings not less than himself; but he could not embody them in anthropomorphic forms so long as the names by which he spoke of them retained their real meaning. Still less could he start with a primary worship of the elements until he had learnt to regard as abstractions the objects or powers which, it would seem, he looked upon only as living beings. Three ways lay before him. He might, like Abraham in the old Arabian legend,¹ be led by the rising and setting of the sun and stars to the conviction that they were simply passive instruments in the hands of an almighty and righteous God; or he might, as he forgot his old language, invest with an anthropomorphic life the deities with which he peopled the whole visible creation; or, lastly, he might bow down crushed beneath the dead weight of nature, and yield himself a living slave to a loathsome and degrading fetishism. Of these three courses the first was chosen by the Hebrew people, and even by them feebly and fitfully;² the second was followed by the tribes of the Hellenic stock; the third has been rejected by every portion of the great Aryan family of nations. These, as they journeyed from their ancient home, carried with them the old language and the old morality; but the measure in which they forgot the meaning of proper names would determine the extent to which new gods would be called into existence. This development, as the result, primarily, of a corruption of language, would not be in the strictest sense, a religion, and the moral sense of the worshipper would not be darkened in proportion to the number of the gods whom he venerated. Dr. Döllinger's hypothesis, not less than the theory of Mr. Gladstone, would require a continually increasing degradation; but the history of language, apart from the growth of Aryan epic poetry, furnishes conclusive evidence against any such idea. There is no evidence that the Greeks of the seventh or sixth centuries before the Christian era had their 'moral

¹ Milman, *History of the Jews*, book i.

² In truth, when we speak of the monotheistic faith of the Jewish people, we speak of their faith of their teachers. All the evidence at our command seems to show that at least down to the time

of the Babylonish captivity the main body of the people was incurably polytheistic. 'The history even of the Jews,' says Professor Max Müller 'is made up of an almost uninterrupted series of relapses into polytheism.' 'Semitic Monotheism,' *Chips*, &c. i. 365.

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consciousness more overcast' than the Greeks of the tenth or twelfth; there is much to lead us to the contrary conclusion.

Historical
speculations of Dr.
Döllinger.

But Dr. Döllinger's theory requires him to deal with Karians, Leleges, and Pelasgians; and the chain of his argument becomes weakest where it should have the greatest strength. His speculations may be masterly, and his conclusions forcible; but we lack the means of determining their truth. Mr. Grote, in his *History of Greece*, hesitates to speak of any events as historical facts before the first recorded Olympiad, i.e. 776 B.C. Sir Cornewall Lewis regards the researches of scholars respecting the primitive history of the Hellenic or Italian tribes as 'not less unreal than the speculations concerning judicial astrology, or the discovery of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life.'¹ Dr. Döllinger must have evidence not accessible to either of these writers, to warrant the assertion that the chief seats of the Pelasgians were Arkadia, Argolis, and Perrhoibia, and that the immigration of the Doric and Aiolic races took place precisely in the year 1104 B.C.²

They leave
the real
difficulties
of Greek
mythology
unex-
plained.

His analysis thus leaves the Greek mythology, as he found it, a strange and perplexing riddle. It omits all notice of the marvellous likeness between Greek and Scandinavian legends; it does not even attempt to explain why each Greek god should have certain special attributes and not others. It does not tell us why Herakles, and Perseus, and Bellerophôn, and Apollôn should all be made to serve creatures meaner and weaker than themselves,—why Herakles and Zeus should have a thousand earthly loves, and Artemis and Athênê, according to some legends, have none. Still less does it explain why the character of Herakles and Hermes should sometimes assume a comic aspect, which is never allowed to weaken the serious majesty of Athênê, Dêmêtêr, or Apollôn.

¹ *Credibility of Early Roman History*, i. 297.

² *Jew and Gentile*, &c., vol. i. pp. 68, 74.



CHAPTER VIII.

DIFFUSION OF MYTHS.

If in the legends of any people we find a number of names which explain themselves, if further the exploits of the gods or heroes who bear these names are in strict accordance with those meanings, then at once we are warranted in conjecturing that other names in the same legends not yet interpreted may be of the same nature, while at the same time a basis is furnished for classifying the several stories. If further we find that in the traditions of different Aryan tribes, or even of the same tribe, the same characters reappear with no other difference than that of title and local colouring, the inference is justified that a search into the mythical stores of all the Aryan tribes would disclose the same phenomenon. If here too our conjectures are verified, it will be impossible to withstand the conclusion that these tribes must have started from a common centre, and that from their ancient home they must have carried away, if not the developed myth, yet the quickened germ from which might spring leaves and fruits varying in form and hue according to the soil to which it should be committed, and the climate under which the plant might reach maturity. These variations in the names, it may be, of all the actors, as well as in the minor details of their career, would prove, in exact proportion to the fidelity with which the essential type was preserved, that this germ was furnished by the every day speech of the people, or, in other words, by their way of regarding the phenomena of the outward world. If these facts are established, two important consequences follow: I. The hypothesis of any conscious borrowing or adaptation of myths on a large scale by one tribe from another after their separation

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VIII.

The common element in Aryan mythology.

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from the common home becomes untenable, unless we assume an amount of intercourse between them far in excess of any for which we have the evidence of history; and the clearest proof of direct importation in the case of any given story or fable which does not belong to the genuine mythology of a people fails to throw any suspicion on the latter. II. The process of analysis and comparison will have deprived these legends of all claim to the character of historical traditions; and even if it were maintained in the last resort that the myth as brought from the common home grew up from some historical fact or facts, still no such title can be made out for the same incidents when we find them repeated in the same order and with the same issue in different ages and different lands. If in the primæval home there was a war brought about by the carrying off of a beautiful woman, a strife between two chieftains, and a time of inaction for the hero of the story followed by his signal victory and his early death, then unquestionably these incidents, with a hundred others common to the background of these legends, did not repeat themselves at Ilion and Delphoi, in Ithaka and Norway, in Lykia and Iran.

The Greek mythology of itself explains the nature of this common element.

This is the goal to which we must be brought if the track be of this kind; and the matter may perhaps be soonest brought to an issue if we take the most complicated myths of the Hellenic tribes as our starting point. We can scarcely read the legends of Herakles and Dêmêtêr, of Theseus, Kadmos, Perseus, and a host of other mythical heroes, without feeling that a few simple phrases might well have supplied the germ for the most intricate of these traditions. Every incident in the myth of the Eleusinian Dêmêtêr may be accounted for, if only men once said (with the conviction that the things of which they spoke had a conscious life), 'The earth mourns for the dead summer. The summer lies shut up in the prison of Hades, the unseen'—or, as in the language of the Northman, 'She sleeps in the land of the Niflungs, the cold mists, guarded by the serpent Fafnir; and the dwarf Andvari keeps watch over her buried treasures.' The tale of Endymion seems to speak for itself; 'The moon comes to gaze on her beloved, the sun, as he lies



down to sleep in the evening.' In the story of Niobé, we seem to see the sun in his scorching power, consuming those who dare to face his dazzling brightness; in that of Orpheus, we seem to hear his lamentation for the beautiful evening which has been stung by the serpent of the night, and which he brings back to life only to lose her at the gates of day. In the myth of Eurôpê we have the journey of the sun from the far East to the Western land, until Téléphassa, the far-shining, sinks down wearied on the Thessalian plain. Still more transparent appear the tales of Kephalos and Daphnê. Prokris, even in the mouth of the Greek, is still the child of Hersê, the dew: Eôs is still the morning, Kephalos still the head of the bright sun. In Daphnê we seem to behold the dawn flying from her lover and shrinking before his splendour. In the Homeric Hymn, Lêtô, the night, dark and still as death, promises that Phoibos shall long abide in Delos, the bright land. Doubtless she made the same promise to Lykians, Argives, Arkadians, Athenians, and all others who called themselves the children of the light; but the sun cannot tarry, and in spite of her plighted word he hastens onward to slay the serpent of darkness. In Herakles we see the sun in other guise, loving and beloved wherever he goes, seeking to benefit the sons of men, yet sometimes harming them in the exuberance of his boisterous strength. In the tale of Althaia we read the sentence that the bright sun must die when the torch of day is burnt out. In Phaethon we seem to see the plague of drought which made men say 'Surely another, who cannot guide the horses, is driving the chariot of the sun.' The beautiful herds, which the bright and glistening daughters of early morning feed in the pastures of Thrinakia, seem to tell us of the violet-coloured clouds which the dawn spreads over the fields of the blue sky. In Bellerophon, as in Perseus, Theseus, Phoibos, and Herakles, we find again the burden laid on the sun, who must toil for others, although the forms of that toil may vary. Perseus goes to the dwelling of the Graiai, as men might have said, 'The sun has departed to the land of the pale gloaming.' When Perseus slays Medousa, the sun has killed the night in its solemn and death-like beauty,

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The Norse
mythology
points in
precisely
the same
direction.

while the wild pursuit of the immortal Gorgons seems to be the chase of Darkness after the bright Sun who, with his golden sandals, just escapes their grasp as he soars into the peaceful morning sky, the Hyperborean gardens, which sorrow, strife, and death can never enter. In the death of Akrisios we have the old tale which comes up in many another legend, where Oidipous and Theseus mourn that they have unwittingly slain their fathers.

If the Greek legends by themselves thus exhibit, or seem to exhibit, their ancient framework, the Norse tradition points with at the least equal clearness in the same direction. If any now can be found to assert that the one set of legends were copied from the other, he not only maintains a theory which, in Dr. Dasent's words, 'hangs on a single thread,'¹ but he displays a credulity which needs not to shrink from the avowal that the whole of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments is a genuine and veracious history. The wildest prejudice can scarcely shelter itself behind these treacherous and crumbling barriers, although it may urge that, whether in Teutonic or in Greek mythology, the dawn, the evening, and the night, the toiling and capricious sun, are already persons with human forms and a fixed local habitation. But even this position would be greatly strained. Mr. Grote himself allows that what he terms allegory is one of the constituent elements of Greek mythology.² But even if we admit the objection in its full force, we lack but a single link to complete the chain of evidence and turn an overwhelming probability into fact. Have we any records of that old time in which men spoke as Greek and Norse myths seem to tell us that they spoke? Have we any actual relics of that speech in which men talked of Daphnê as chased by Phoibos, even while Daphnê was still a common name of the dawn, and Phoibos meant simply the sun?

The missing link is supplied in the older Vedic poems.

The Vedic hymns of the Mantra period stand forth to give us the answer, but they do so only to exhibit a fresh marvel. While they show to us the speech which was afterwards petrified into the forms of Greek and Norse mythology, they

¹ *Popular Tales from the Norse*, introduction, p. xliii.

² *History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 2.



point to a still earlier time, of which no record has come down, and of which we can have no further evidence than that which is furnished by the laws which determine the growth of language. Even in the Mantra period, the earliest in all Sanskrit, and therefore (as exhibiting the earliest form of thought) the oldest in all human literature,¹ the whole grammar is definitely fixed, and religious belief has assumed the character of a creed. And if in them man has not lived long enough to trace analogies and arrive at some idea of an order of nature, he has grown into the strongest conviction that behind all the forms which come before his eyes there is a Being, unseen and all-powerful, whose bidding is done throughout the wide creation, and to whom men may draw nigh as children to a father.

When, therefore, in these hymns, Kephalos, Prokris, Hermes, Daphnê, Zeus, Ouranos, stand forth as simple names for the sun, the dew, the wind, the dawn, the heaven and the sky, each recognised as such, yet each endowed with the most perfect consciousness, we feel that the great riddle of mythology is solved, and that we no longer lack the key which shall disclose its most hidden treasures. When we hear the people saying, 'Our friend the sun is dead. Will he rise? Will the dawn come back again?' we see the death of Herakles, and the weary waiting while Lêtô struggles with the birth of Phoibos. When on the return of day we hear the cry—

The key to
all Aryan
mythology.

'Rise! our life, our spirit is come back, the darkness is gone, the light draws near!'

—we are carried at once to the Homeric hymn, and we hear the joyous shout of all the gods when Phoibos springs to life and light on Delos.² The tale of Urvasî and Purûravas³ (these are still the morning and the sun) is the tale of Orpheus and Eurydikê. Purûravas, in his dreary search,

¹ Max Müller, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 528, 557.

² ἐκ δ' ἔθορε πρὸ φάωσδε θεῶν δ' ὀλόλυξαν ἅπανται.

Hymn to Apollo, 119.

³ In the essay on Comparative Mythology, Professor Max Müller has given not only the older forms of this myth,

but a minute analysis of the play of Kalidâsa on this subject. This poem is very instructive, as showing that the character of the Homeric Achilles adheres as closely to the original idea as do those of Urvasî and Purûravas in the later poetry of Kalidâsa.

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hears the voice of Urvasî saying 'I am gone like the first of the dawns; I am hard to be caught, like the wind.' Yet she will come back to him at the close of the night, and a son, bright and beaming, shall be born to them. Varuna is still the wide heaven, the god 'who can be seen by all;' the lord of the whole earth: but in him we recognise at once the Greek Ouranos, who looks lovingly on Gaia from his throne in the sky. Yet more, we read the praises of Indra, and his great exploit is that

'He has struck the daughter of Dyaus (Zeus), a woman difficult to vanquish—

'Yes, even the daughter of Dyaus, the magnified, the Dawn, thou, O Indra, a great hero hast ground to pieces.

'The Dawn rushed off from her crushed car, fearing that Indra, the bull, might strike her.

'This her car lay there, well ground to pieces: she went far away.'

The treatment is rude, but we have here not merely the whole story of Daphnê, but the germ of that of Eurôpê borne by the same bull across the sea. More commonly, however, the dawn is spoken of as bright, fair, and loving, the joy of all who behold her.

'She shines upon us like a young wife, rousing every living being to go to his work.

'She rose up, spreading far and wide (Euryganeia, Eurydikê), and moving towards every one. She grew in brightness, wearing her brilliant garment. The mother of the cows (the morning clouds, the Homeric herds of the sun), the leader of the days, she shone gold-coloured, lovely to behold.

'She, the fortunate, who brings the eye of the god (Kephalos, or the one-eyed Odin), who leads the white and lovely steed (of the sun), the Dawn was seen revealed by her rays; with brilliant treasures she follows every one.

'Shine for us with thy best rays, thou bright Dawn, thou who lengthenest our life, thou the love of all, who givest us food, who givest us wealth in cows, horses, and chariots.

'Thou, daughter of the sky (Dyaus, Zeus), thou high-born Dawn, give us riches high and wide.'

¹ Max Müller, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 551.



Still more remarkable, as exhibiting the germs of the ideas which find their embodiment in the Hellenic Athênê and the Latin Minerva, is the following hymn.

‘The wise priests celebrate with hymns the divine, bright-charioted expanded Dawn; worshipped with holy worship, purple-tinted, radiant, leading on the sun.

‘The lovely Dawn, arousing man, goes before the Sun, preparing practicable paths, riding in a spacious chariot; expanding everywhere she diffuses light at the commencement of the days.

‘Harnessing the purple oxen to her car, unwearied she renders riches perpetual; a goddess praised of many, and cherished by all, she shines manifesting the paths that lead to good.

‘Lucidly white is she, occupying the two (regions, the upper and middle firmament), and manifesting her person from the East: she traverses the path of the sun, as if knowing (his course), and harms not the quarters of the horizon.

‘Exhibiting her person like a well-attired female, she stands before our eyes (gracefully) inclining like (a woman who has been) bathing (Aphroditê Anadyomenê). Dispersing the hostile glooms, Ushas, the daughter of heaven, comes with radiance.

‘Ushas, the daughter of heaven, tending to the West, puts forth her beauty like a (well-dressed) woman; bestowing precious treasures on the offerer of adoration, she, ever youthful, brings back the light as of old.’¹

We can but wonder at the marvellous exuberance of language, almost every expression of which may manifestly serve as the germ of a mythical tale. We say, ‘The fire burns, the wood crackles and smokes.’ They said,

‘Neighing like a horse that is greedy for food, it steps out from the strong prison: then the wind blows after his blast: thy path, O Agni (Ignis), is dark at once.’

The Latin carried with him the name of the Hindu Fire-god to little purpose. In the hands of the Greek similar phrases on the searching breath of the wind grew up into

Germs of
mythical
tales.

Truthful-
ness of my-
thical de-
scription.

¹ H. H. Wilson, *Rig Veda Samhitâ*, vol. iii. p. 362.

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the legend of Hermes. Nor can it be said that the instinct of the Greek was less true than that of the old Vedic poet to the sights of the natural world. If we recur with feelings of undiminished pleasure to the touching truthfulness of the language which tells of the Dawn as the bright being whom age cannot touch, although she makes men old, who thinks on the dwellings of men and shines on the small and great, we feel also that the 'Homeric' poet, even while he spoke of a god in human form born in Delos, was not less true to the original character of the being of whom he sang. He thought of the sun rising in a cloudless heaven, and he told how the nymphs bathed the lord of the golden sword in pure water, and wrapped him in a spotless robe.¹ Still, although the stress of the hymn lies wholly on the promise of Leto that her child shall have his chief home in Delos, the poet feels that Delos alone can never be his home, and so he sang how Apollôn went from island to island, watching the ways and works of men; how he loved the tall sea-cliffs, and every jutting headland, and the rivers which hasten to the broad sea, even though he came back with ever fresh delight to his native Delos.²

Ground-
work of
Aryan my-
thology.

Thus the great mystery of Greek as of other mythology is dispelled like mist from the mountain-side at the rising of the sun. All that is beautiful in it is invested with a purer radiance, while much, if not all, that is gross and coarse in it is refined, or else its grossness is traced to an origin which reflects no disgrace on those who framed or handed down the tale. Thus, with the keynote ringing in our ears, we can catch at once every strain that belongs to the ancient harmony, although it may be heard amid the din of many discordant voices. The groundwork of Greek mythology was

¹ ἔνθα σε, ἦϊε Φοῖβε, θεὰ λούον ὕδατι
καλῷ
ἀγνῶς καὶ καθαρῶς· σπάρξαν δ' ἐν
φάρει λευκῷ
λεπτῷ νηγατέφ.

Hymn to Apollo, 120.

This is the white and glistening robe in which Cyrus and Arthur are wrapped, when they are carried away from the house in which they were born.

² Αὐτὸς δ' ἀργυρότοξε, ἀναξ, ἑκατηβόλ'
Ἀπολλων,

ἄλλοτε μὲν τ' ἐπὶ Κύνθου ἐβήσσο
παιπαλόεντος,
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ νήσους τε καὶ ἀνέρας
ἡλάσκαζες·

πᾶσαι δὲ σκοπιαί τε φίλαι καὶ
πρώονες ἄκροι
ὕψηλῶν ὀρέων, ποταμοὶ θ' ἄλαδε
προρέοντες·

ἀλλὰ σὺ Δῆλῳ, Φοῖβε, μάλιστα ἐπιτέρ-
πειαι ἦτορ.—*Hymn to Apollo, 140.*



the ordinary speech which told of the interchange of day and night, of summer and winter; but into the superstructure there may have been introduced any amount of local or personal detail, any number of ideas and notions imported from foreign philosophical or religious systems. The extent of such importations is probably far less than is generally imagined; but however this may be, the original matter may still be traced, even where it exists only in isolated fragments. The bull which bears Eurôpê away from Kadmos (Kedem, the East),¹ is the same from which the dawn flies in the Vedic hymn. The robe with which Medeia poisons the daughter of Kreôn was a gift from Helios, the burning sun, and is seen again as the poisoned robe which Deianeira sends to the absent Herakles, as the deadly arrow by which Philoktetes mortally wounds the Trojan Paris, as the golden fleece taken from the ram which bears away the children of (Nephelê) the mist, as the sword which Aigeus leaves under the stone for Theseus, the son of Aithra, the pure air; as the spear of Artemis which never misses its mark; as the sword of Perseus which slays all on whom it may fall; as the unerring weapons of Meleagros; as the fatal lance which Achilleus alone can wield. The serpents of night or of winter occur in almost every tale, under aspects friendly or unkind. The dragon sleeps coiled round Brynhild or Aslauga, as the snakes seek to strangle the infant Herakles or sting the beautiful Eurydikê. If the power of the sun's rays is set forth under such different forms, their beauty is signified by the golden locks of Phoibos, over which no razor has ever passed; ² by the flowing hair which streams from the head of Kephalos, and falls over the shoulders of Perseus and Bellerophon. They serve also sometimes as a sort of Palladion, and the shearing of the single golden lock which grew on the top of his head leaves Nisos, the Megarian

¹ Niebuhr, (in his *Lectures on Ancient History*, vol. i. p. 239) sees that the tale points to the East; but from the words Kadmos and Banna as occurring in the Boiotian dialect only he is perfectly convinced of the Phœnician origin of Thebes. The identity of the name Melikertes (in the myth of Inô) with

the Syrian Melkarth and Moloch, can scarcely be questioned.

² Φοῖβος ἀκροκόρυς (*Iliad*, xx. 39), a significant epithet, which of itself would suffice to give birth to such a legend as that of Nisos and Skylla. The shearing of the locks of the sun must be followed by darkness and ruin.

BOOK
I.

king, powerless as the shorn Samson in the arms of the Philistines. In many of the legends these images are mingled together, or recur under modified forms. In the tale of Althaia there is not only the torch of day which measures the life of Meleagros, but the weapons of the chieftain which no enemy may withstand. In that of Bellerophôn there are the same invincible weapons, while the horrible Chimaira answers to the boar of Kalydon, or to that of Erymanthos which fell by the arm of Herakles.

Greek
dynastic
legends.

If the greater number of Greek legends have thus been reduced to their primitive elements, the touch of the same wand will lay open others which may seem to have been fashioned on quite another model. Even the dynastic legends of Thebes will not resist the method which has disclosed so many secrets. For most other tales the work is done. There is absolutely nothing left for further analysis in the stories of Orpheus and Eurydikê, of Kephalos and Prokris, of Selênê and Endymion, Niobê and Lêtô, Dêmêtêr and Persephonê, Kadmos and Eurôpê, Daphnê and Apollôn. Not an incident remains unexplained in the legends of Herakles, of Althaia and the burning brand, of Phaethôn, Memnôn, and Bellerophôn. If there are bypaths in the stories of Ariadnê, Medeia, Semelê, Prometheus, or of the cows of the Sun in the Odyssey, they have been followed up to the point from which they all diverge.

Growth of
popular
traditions.

If then in the vast mass of stories which make up the mythology of the Aryan nations there seems to be evidence showing that in some cases the legend has been brought by direct importation from the East to the West or from West to East, the presumption of conscious borrowing cannot with any fairness be extended to any tales for which such evidence is not forthcoming. The great epic poems of the Aryan race sprung into existence in the ages which followed the dispersion of the tribes, and during which all intercourse between them was an impossibility; yet these epic poems exhibit an identical framework, with resemblances in detail which even defy the influences of climate and scenery. But many of the actors in these great dramas reappear in the popular stories of the Aryan tribes, with subtle points of likeness and dif-



ference, which can be accounted for by conscious borrowing only on the supposition that the traditions of one country were as intimately known to the people of another country as the traditions of many, if not most, of the Aryan nations are now known to us through the long toil and vast researches of comparative mythologists, aided by the mighty machinery of the printing press. In truth, the more that we examine this hypothesis of importation as affecting the general stock of mythical tradition in any country, the more scanty and less conclusive will the evidence appear; and in the issue we shall find ourselves driven practically to reject it altogether, or to suppose that the impulse of borrowing amounted to a universal and irresistible mania. The dynastic legends of Thebes do but reproduce those of Argos; the legends of both alike do but repeat the career of Achilles or of Sigurd; and the great heroes of these tales reappear as the Boots and the disguised beggar of Teutonic and Hindu folklore. The supposition of any deliberate borrowing attributes to Greeks, Teutons, Scandinavians, and Hindus, a poverty of invention not less amazing than their skill in destroying the evidence of the theft, and wearing borrowed plumage as with an inborn grace. Unless we are prepared to say that the borrowing was wholesale, and to determine the source of this exhaustless store of wealth, it is more prudent and more philosophical to admit that in every country the myths which have their roots in phrases relating to physical phenomena have been kept alive by independent tradition from the times of the first dispersion.

But if the story of Achilles, as told in the *Iliad*, is only another form of the legend which relates the career of the Ithakan chief in the *Odyssey*; if this tale reappears in the *Saga of the Volsungs* and the *Nibelungen Lied*, in the epical cycles of Arthur and Charlemagne, in the lay of Beowulf and the *Shahnameh* of Firdusi, and if further all these streams of popular poetry can be traced back to a common source in phrases which described the sights and sounds of the outward world, the resemblances thus traced are nevertheless by no means so astonishing as the likeness which runs through a vast number of the popular tales of Germany and Scandinavia,

Aryan
folklore.

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I.

of Greece and Rome, of Persia and Hindustan. On the hypothesis of a form of thought which attributed conscious life to all physical objects, we must at once admit that the growth of a vast number of cognate legends was inevitable. Nor is there anything bewildering in the fact, that phrases which denoted at first the death of the dawn, or her desertion by the sun as he rose in the heavens, or the stealing away of the evening light by the powers of darkness, should give birth to the legends of Helen and Guenevere, of Brynhild and Gudrun, of Paris and of Lancelot, of Achilles and Sigurd. All that this theory involves is that certain races of mankind, or certain tribes of the same race, were separated from each other while their language still invested all sensible things with a personal life, and that when the meaning of the old words was either wholly or in part forgotten, the phenomena of the earth and the heavens reappeared as beings human or divine, and the Panî, or Night, which sought to lure Saramâ, the Dawn, into his dismal cave, became the Paris who beguiled Helen to Troy, and the Lancelot who corrupted the faith of the wife of Arthur.

Legends
not resolv-
able into
phrases re-
lating to
physical
pheno-
mena.

The wonder becomes greater when from the necessary outgrowth of certain conditions of thought and speech we turn to popular stories which cannot be brought within this class of epical legends, and which yet exhibit, in spite of differences of detail and local colouring, a closeness of resemblance which establishes their substantial identity. If, among the stories which Hindu, Persian, Greek, or Teutonic mothers recounted to their children, we find tales which turn on the same incidents, and in their most delicate touches betray the influence of precisely the same feelings, we must conclude either that these legends were passed from the one tribe or clan to the other, or that before these tribes separated from their common home they not only possessed in mythical phrases relating to physical phenomena the germs of the future epics of Europe and Asia, but had framed a number of stories which cannot be traced back to such phrases, which seem to point rather to a storehouse of moral proverbs, and which cannot be accounted for on any hypothesis of conscious borrowing by one distinct people from another. It would,



indeed, be safer to affirm of any given story that it has not been thus borrowed than to say that it cannot be traced back to the one source from which have sprung the great epic poems of the world. The story of the Master Thief is a case in point. It looks at first sight as though it had nothing to do with the legends of the great Norse or Hellenic heroes, and the resemblance of some of its incidents to those of a story told in the Hitopadesa suggests the conclusion that it found its way into Europe through the Arabic translation known as the Kalila and Dimna. Professor Max Müller plainly avowing this belief, says that 'the story of the Master Thief is told in the Hitopadesa.'¹ The Sanskrit tale is that of the Brahman who, on hearing from three thieves in succession that the goat which he carried on his back was a dog, throws the animal down and leaves it as a booty for the rogues who had hit upon this mode of cheating him. 'The gist of the story,' adds Professor Müller, 'is that a man will believe almost anything, if he is told the same by three different people.' But, while a far greater resemblance to the Egyptian tale is exhibited by the Hindu version of the Master Thief as told by Somadeva Bhatta, presently to be noticed, it may fairly be asked whether this is either the story or the moral of the European 'Master Thief.' In the Teutonic version we find no incidents resembling those of the Sanskrit tale. The Norse story exhibits some points of likeness, together with differences which rather force us to think that it cannot have been suggested by the Eastern fable. In the latter the Brahman is directly deceived by others; in the Norse legend the peasant deceives himself, and the moral seems to be, not that a man can be brought to believe anything if he hears it asserted by several seemingly independent witnesses, but that experience is thrown away on one who will put his hand into the fire after he has been burnt. In the Norse tale, the farmer intends to drive one of his three oxen to market, and the youth, who is a postulant for the novitiate in the worshipful order of thieves, is told that his desire shall be granted if he can steal this ox on the road, without the owner's knowledge and without doing him

The
Brahman
and the
goat.

The
Master
Thief.

¹ *Chips from a German Workshop*, ii. 229.

BOOK
I

any harm. The lad accordingly puts a silver-buckled shoe in the way. The man admires it, but passes on without picking it up, as an odd shoe would be of little use. Presently he sees before him the same shoe, which the thief, having run by another way, has again cast on the road, and tying up his ox hastens back to pick up the fellow, while the lad goes away with the beast. Determined to test him further, the fraternity tell the boy that he shall be as good as any one of them if, under the same conditions, he can steal the second ox, which the man was now driving to market. As he goes along, the peasant sees a lad hung under the armpits to a tree, but passes on with little concern until he sees as he supposes another lad in the same position on another tree. Still not caring to give any help, he plods onwards until the thief hangs himself up for the third time on his road. The man, thinking that he is bewitched, resolves to go back and see whether the other two still hang where he saw them, and the ox which he leaves tied up is the second sacrifice. The thieves now tell the youth that if he can steal the third ox he shall be their master. So he places himself in a thicket, and as the man draws near with his last beast, imitates the bellowing of cattle; and the peasant, his wits even more flustered than before, hurries away to catch the lost oxen, leaving his third animal a prey to the thief.¹ At this point the resemblance of the Norse to the Brahman story ceases; but the career of the Master Thief is as yet scarcely begun. He has yet to overreach the society over which he now presides. The thieves set out to see whether they cannot do something surpassing all that he had done; and the lad, taking advantage of their absence to drive the three oxen into the road to the great delight of their owner, who sees them return to the farm, carries off all the precious things which formed the common store of the robbers. Thus far the Norse story agrees in its main features with the Scottish tale of the Shifty Lad,² although even here the points of difference are so great as to preclude the idea that the one was derived from the other. The sequel of the Norse tale is

¹ Dasent, *Norse Tales*, 'The Master Thief,' 268.

² Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, vol. i. p. 320.



substantially the same as the Teutonic story of the Master Thief. This story has, therefore, really nothing to do with the fable of the Brahman and the goat, and it may fairly be doubted whether, on the supposition that the idea was gained from the Hitopadesa, 'nothing was easier than to invent the three variations which we find in the Norse Master Thief' and the Shifty Lad of Highland tradition. Professor Max Müller adds that 'the case would be different if the same story occurred in Herodotos.'

'At the time of Herodotos,' he continues, 'the translations of the Hitopadesa had not yet reached Europe, and we should be obliged to include the Master Thief within the most primitive stock of Aryan lore. But there is nothing in the story of the two sons of the architect who robbed the treasury of Rhampsinitos which turns on the trick of the Master Thief. There were thieves, more or less clever, in Egypt as well as in India, and some of their stratagems were possibly the same at all times. But there is a keen and well-defined humour in the story of the Brahman and his deference to public opinion. Of this there is no trace in the anecdote told by Herodotos. That anecdote deals with mere matter of fact, whether imaginary or historical. The story of Rhampsinitos did enter into the popular literature of Europe, but through a different channel. We find it in the 'Gesta Romanorum,' where Octavianus has taken the place of Rhampsinitos, and we can hardly doubt that there it came originally from Herodotos.'¹ But what are really the facts of the case? The evidence which proves that the Herodotean story was reproduced in the 'Gesta Romanorum' cannot be taken as of itself establishing the same origin for the Norse, the Teutonic, and the Irish legend. The incident of the Brahman and the goat may be left on one side, as only distantly resembling a very subordinate part of the Norse version; but the real story of the Master Thief's career is precisely the story of the architect's son in the legend of Rhampsinitos. The possible affinity of thievish stratagems in all countries can scarcely account for a series of extraor-

The legend
of Rham-
psinitos.

¹ *Chips from a German Workshop*, ii. 231.

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I.

dinary incidents and astounding tricks following each other in the same order, although utterly different in their outward garb and colouring. Strangely enough, the Highland version, which agrees with the Norse tale in making the young thief cheat his master, agrees most closely with the Egyptian myth.¹ In the latter, the younger of the two sons who have learnt from their father the secret of entering the treasure-house is caught in a trap placed there by the king, when he found his gold and jewels dwindling away. At his own request the elder brother cuts off his head, and the king, astounded at finding a headless body, bids his guards to impale it on a wall, with strict charge to bring before him anyone whom they might hear mourning for the dead man. The mother, seeing her son's body thus exposed, threatens to tell the king everything unless the body is brought safely home to her. Loading some asses with skins full of wine, the elder son, as he approaches the guard, loosens the string of two or three wine skins, and the soldiers, rushing up at the sight of wine trickling on the ground, try to soothe the seemingly distracted owner, while they solace themselves by the liquor which they catch in their cups, until at length, overcoming the young man's reluctance, they sit down with him, and drink themselves to sleep. The dead body is then taken away by the brother, who, hearing of the new device by which the king proposed to catch him, crowns his exploits by cheating the king's daughter, and leaving a dead man's hand in hers. His marriage with the princess follows, and he is held in

¹ The groundwork of the *Arabian Nights* story of the Forty Thieves is manifestly the same, but the likeness to the legend of Rhampsinitos is not nearly so close. Here, however, as in the Egyptian tale, we have two brothers, who become possessed of the secret of a treasure-house. The king is replaced by the forty thieves; but it may be noted that Herodotus speaks of the wealth of Rhampsinitos as amassed by extortion if not by direct robbery. Here also one of the brothers is unlucky; but although he is found alive in the cave, the thieves are none the wiser, as he is immediately killed. Here too the body is nailed up against the wall,

but it is within the cave; and it is taken away by the other brother, who is impelled to this task, not by the mother of the dead man, but by his wife. The thieves are not less perplexed than Rhampsinitos when they find that the body has been removed, and that thus some one else is possessed of their secret. The spell which opens the cave connects the Arabian story with the vast mass of legends turning on substances which have the power of splitting rocks, and which Mr. Gould has resolved into phrases descriptive of the action of lightning.—*Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, second series, 'Schamir.'



honour as the cleverest man of the cleverest people in the world.¹

CHAP.
VIII.

The story
of the Poor
Mason.

This story in some of its leading features agrees closely with the Adventure of the Mason, related by Washington Irving in his 'Tales of the Alhambra.' Probably Irving himself knew nothing of the story of Rhampsinitos, and certainly was unacquainted with the Tales of the Master Thief and his followers. Still a Spanish legend must be regarded with some suspicion. In this case it must at least be admitted that the traces of direct borrowing have been as skilfully hidden as if the changes in the story had been the work of Hermes or the Master Thief himself. Here the king is turned into a priest, who is so far wiser than Rhampsinitos that he guards against the knowledge of the mason by keeping him blindfolded from the time of his leaving home to his return, except while he is actually at work preparing the treasure-chamber. In this case, then, the mason knows the secret of the hidden wealth, but cannot tell in what house it is stored up. The priest dies: but not only have his riches vanished, but his ghost haunts the house, and no one will become its tenant till the landlord chances to betake himself to the poor mason, who declares that he is 'not to be frightened by the devil himself, even though he should come in the shape of a big bag of money.' When he is led to the house, he finds that it is the very one in which he had worked for the priest, and discreetly keeps the secret to himself, till, like the Egyptian architect, he reveals it on his deathbed to his son.

The Hindu version of the story of Rhampsinitos is less ingenious than this Spanish story, and is in every way inferior to the well-pointed legend of Herodotos. It is related by Somadeva Bhatta of Cashmir in his 'Ocean of the Streams of Narrative,' a professed abridgement of the still older collection called the Vrihat Kathâ. In this tale the elder of the two thieves simply makes a hole through the wall (which would at once betray their mode of entrance) in order to reach the chamber in which the king has placed not only his treasures but his daughter. He remains with her too long, and being

The story
of Karpari
and Gata.

¹ Herodotos, ii. 121, &c.; *Tales of Ancient Greece*, 385.

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I.

caught in the morning, is hanged, but not before he has by signs bidden his brother Gata to carry off and save the princess. Gata therefore on the next night enters the chamber of the princess, who readily agrees to fly with him. The body of Karpara is then exposed, in order to catch the surviving malefactor, who tricks them much after the fashion of the Egyptian story, the chief difference being that Gata burns the body of his brother Karpara, for whom he contrives to perform the necessary amount of mourning by dashing on the ground a karpara, or pot of rice, and then bewailing his loss by the words, 'Alas for my precious Karpara,'—words which the guards of course apply to the broken pipkin, and not to the dead thief. The story winds up with a proclamation from the king, promising half his realm to the magician who has done all this: but the princess bids him beware, and Gata goes away with her to another country.¹

The story
of Tro-
phonios
and Aga-
médès.

The mason's secret is much more closely reproduced in the story which Pausanias tells of Trophonios and Agamédès, the builders of the temple of Phoibos, after he had slain the dragon at Delphoi. These two builders also raise the treasury of Hyrieus, placing one of the stones so that they could remove it from the outside. Hyrieus, astonished at the lessening of his wealth, sets a snare, in which Agamédès is caught, and Trophonios cuts off his head to save him from torture and himself from discovery. The latter precaution seems unnecessary, since Pausanias adds that the earth opened and received Trophonios as in the myth of Amphiaraios.

The
Shifty Lad.

In the Scottish story the Shifty Lad goes through his apprenticeship not among a company of thieves, but under the sole charge of the Black Rogue, of whom he rids himself by getting him to try the pleasant sensation of being hung by the neck. The trick answers to that of the Norse thief, but

¹ See Mr. Cowell's Paper 'On the Hindu Version of the Story of Rhampsinitos,' in the *Journal of Philology*, No. I. p. 66. The imprisonment of the king's daughter in the treasure-chamber can scarcely fail to remind us of Brynhild within her flaming walls; and thus the myth seems to exhibit an affinity to

the legends which tell of unsuccessful attempts to rescue the imprisoned maiden, who is finally won only by the peerless knight or irresistible warrior who can leap the hedge of spears or cross the fiery barrier. See also book ii. ch. viii. sect. 2.



the mode of effecting it differs widely. Having disposed of his master, he engages himself to a carpenter whom he persuades to break into the king's storehouse. The advice of the Seanagal whom the king consults is that a hogshead of soft pitch should be placed near the entrance. The wright, again making the venture, sinks into the pitch, and the Shifty Lad, stepping in on his shoulders, takes as much as he can carry, and then sweeping off his master's head, leaves the body in the hogshead. Again the Seanagal is consulted, and his answer is 'that they should set the trunk aloft on the points of the spears of the soldiers, to be carried from town to town, to see if they could find any one at all that would take sorrow for it.' As they pass by the wright's house, his wife screams, but the Shifty Lad cutting himself with an adze leads the captain of the guard to think that the cry was caused by sorrow at his own hurt. The body is then by the king's order hung on a tree, the guard being ordered to seize any one who should venture to take it down. The lad, driving before him a horse loaded with two kegs of whisky, approaches the soldiers as though he wished to pass them stealthily, and when they catch the horse's bridle, he runs off, leaving the men to drink themselves to sleep, and then returning takes away the wright's body. This exploit is followed by others which occur in no other version: but the final scene is a feast, at which, according to the Seanagal's prediction, the Shifty Lad asks the king's daughter to dance. The Seanagal upon this puts a black mark upon him, but the lad, like Morgiana, in the story of 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,' discovering the mark, puts another on the Seanagal, and on twenty other men besides him. The king is then advised to say that the man who had done every trick that had been done must be exceedingly clever, and that if he would come forward and give himself up, he should have the princess for his wife. All the marked men accordingly claim the prize; and the craft of the Shifty Lad is once more called into practice, to secure the maiden for himself.¹ Mr. Campbell, who relates

¹ The theft of treasure by a clever rogue occurs in the story of the Travels of Dumpling, who is Boots under another name. Compare also Grimm's stories of 'The Four Accomplished Brothers,' 'The Rogue and his Master,' and of the 'Young Giant.' In the latter tale Hermes takes more the form

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I.Point and
drift of
these
stories.

this story, gives full weight to the suggestion that the incidents in which it resembles the version of Herodotos may 'have been spread amongst the people by those members of their families who study the classics at the Scotch Universities,' but he adds with good reason, that if the resemblances to other stories not classical are to be accounted for in the same way, it must be supposed 'that these books have all been read at some time so widely in Scotland as to have become known to the labouring population who speak Gaelic, and so long ago as to have been forgotten by the instructed who speak English and study foreign languages.'¹

In the Norse and Teutonic versions it seems impossible not to see the most striking incident of the Egyptian tale in a connection and under forms which force on us the conclusion that they are not related to each other in any other way than by their growth from a common root. In these versions the king is represented by a goodhumoured squire who makes himself merry over the successful devices of the Master Thief, as he accomplishes the several tasks imposed upon him. These tasks taken separately are much the same in each, but the difference of order indicates that no one was regarded at the first as essentially more difficult than another. In none of them, however, does the humour of the story turn on the force of public opinion. The whole point lies in the utter inability of any one to guard against the thief, even when they know that they are going to be robbed and have themselves pointed out the object to be stolen. Here, as in the stories of Rhampsinitos and the Shifty Lad, the means for achieving one of the tasks is wine: but the thief has to take away not the dead body of a man, but a living horse, on which sits a groom, or, as in the Norse tale, twelve horses, each with a rider guarding them. The disguise assumed by the thief is the dress of a beggar-woman, and her wine, which in the German story is power-

of the Maruts, or Crushers; and the myth of the Molionids is re-enacted with singular exactness. The young giant brings up from the water a huge mill-stone which he places round his neck, and so keeps watch all night. He is assailed by evil demons, but he returns every blow with interest—a

description which reminds us of the Hesiodic narrative of the toil of Hermes the whole night through. The only reward which he asks is the pleasure of kicking his master, who is sent spinning into the air and is never more seen.

¹ *Tales of the West Highlands*, i. 352.



fully drugged, soon puts the guards to sleep as soundly as the soldiers of the Egyptian king. In this version the thief swings the rider, saddle and all, in the air by ropes tied to the rafters of the stable; in the Norse tale, the twelve grooms find themselves astride the beams in the morning. The theft of the sheet and ring from the persons of the squire and his wife is an incident not found in either the Egyptian or the Scottish stories; but the trick practised on the priest occurs again in the Hindu tale of the nautch-girl Champa Rancee, under a disguise which cannot hide the common source from which the stories have come down to us, while it leaves no room for the notion that the one version has been suggested by the other.

But in truth the supposition is in this case wholly uncalled for. The story of the Master Thief was told in Europe, probably ages before the Homeric poems were put together, certainly ages before Herodotos heard the story of the Egyptian treasure-house. In all the versions of the tale the thief is a young and slender youth, despised sometimes for his seeming weakness, never credited with his full craft and strength. No power can withhold him from doing aught on which he has set his mind: no human eye can trace the path by which he conveys away his booty. It is the story of the child Hermes, and even under the most uncouth disguise it has lost but little either of its truthfulness or its humour. Bolts and bars are no defence against him; yet the babe whom Phoibos can shake in his arms is the mighty marauder who has driven off all his oxen from Pieria. When his work is done, he looks not much like one who needs to be dreaded; and the soft whistling sound which closes his defence wakes a smile on the face of Phoibos, as the Teutonic squire laughs on finding himself tricked in the northern story. In each case the robber is exalted to the same high dignity.

‘Well, friend,’ said Apollôn with a smile, ‘thou wilt break into many a house, I see, and thy followers after thee;

The
Hellenic
Master
Thief.

This is precisely reproduced by Horace in his well-known ode, with an incident which is not mentioned in the Homeric hymn, but is in close agreement with the spirit of the Norse tale:

Te boves olim nisi reddidisses
Per dolum amotas, puerum minaci
Voce dum terget, viduus pharetra
Risit Apollo. *Carm. i. x.*

BOOK
I.

The origin
of the
story of
the Master
Thief.

and thy fancy for beef will set many a herdsman grieving. But come down from the cradle, or this sleep will be thy last. Only this honour can I promise thee, to be called the Master Thief for ever.¹

The thief in the northern stories marries the squire's daughter, as the architect's son marries the daughter of Rhampsinitos. The marriage represents the compact made between Phoibos the all-seeing and Hermes the sweet singer. In this peaceful alliance with the squire the Teutonic tale leaves him; but there are other sides to the character of the Master Thief, and each of these describes with singular fidelity the action and power of air in motion. He is the child breathing softly in the cradle, he is the giant rooting up trees in his fury. No living thing can resist the witchery of his harping. As he draws nigh, life is awakened where before he came there had been stillness as of the dead. With him comes joy or sorrow, health or the pestilence. His lyre is the harp of Orpheus, and it discourses the music of the Vedic Ribhus, or of the Finnic Wäinämöinen, the son of Ilmatar, the daughter of the Air,² whose singing draws the sun and moon from heaven. The beasts of the field come to hear him, like the clouds which gather in the sky when the wind blows; the trees move along his track when he comes in his sterner moods. Nothing can remain still when he pipes. The leaf must wave on the hill-side, the Jew must dance in the thorn-bush, while the music lasts.³ He is the

¹ τοῦτο γὰρ οὖν καὶ ἔπειτα μετ' ἀθανά-
τοις γέρας ἔξεις,

ΑΡΧΟΣ ΦΗΛΗΤΕΩΝ κεκλήσεται ἡματα
πάντα.—*Hymn to Hermes*, 292.

This may, I think, be considered demonstrable evidence that the story of the Master Thief belongs to the class of myths which Professor Max Müller calls organic, as being legends 'which were known to the primeval Aryan race, before it broke up into Hindus, Greeks, Romans, Germans, and Celts,' all stories imported in later times from one literature into another being secondary or inorganic. The number of stories belonging to the latter class is probably much smaller than is generally supposed.

² As Hermes is one of the fire-

making or fire-bringing gods, so Wäinämöinen catches the fish that has swallowed the fire, which, struck by Ukko, the lord of the air, from the new sun and moon, has fallen into the sea.

³ This story of 'The Jew among the Thorns,' in Grimm's *Household Tales*, is reproduced under a hundred forms; but in few or none of these can it be maintained with any show of reason that one has been deliberately adapted from another. The fiddle which makes the Jew dance is reproduced in the form of a stick in 'The Lad who went to the North Wind,' (Dasent, *Norse Tales*, 263). The stick is of course the gift of the wind, just as Hermes gives the harp to Phoibos. In the German story the Jew is made to yield up his purse to the



Erlking, whose mysterious harmony is heard by the child nestled in his father's arms.¹ He is the piper of Hameln,² who drives away the noisome rats, but who also draws the children of the town happy and joyous to the blue river, where they leave all griefs behind them, as gently as the Homeric Psychopompos guides the souls across the waters of Lethe. But in all his offices he retains his character of searching subtlety. The barred gates of the unseen land cannot stay the harping breeze, whether he comes as Orpheus or Wainämöinen: and his curious searching into every nook and cranny, his mocking laugh at those who come to see the mischief wrought by him, are reproduced under a strange disguise in Paul Pry and peeping Tom of Coventry. Nay, the Hindu deity Rudra, the 'bountiful,' the 'gracious,' the god 'with braided hair' (the streaming vapours), the 'thousand quivered,' appears sometimes in an aspect scarcely more dignified. Like Hermes and the Shifty Lad, he too is 'the lord of thieves, the robber, the cheater, the deceiver, the lord of pilferers and robbers.'³

Thus, then, in the story of the Master Thief, the idea of any lateral transmission becomes inadmissible. But as this tale in all its modifications can be traced back to phrases denoting physical phenomena, we have yet to see whether there are other tales which apparently cannot be resolved into such expressions, and for which the idea of any such borrowing is equally untenable or superfluous. If any such stories are forthcoming, we cannot avoid the conclusion that before the several branches of the Aryan race separated from their common home, they not only had in their language the germs of all future mythological systems, but carried with them as nursery tales a number of stories not evolved from

Limits to
the hypo-
thesis of
conscious
borrowing.

fiddler, who, when brought to trial, excuses himself by a quibble like that of Hermes. He had not robbed any one: the Jew gave the money of his own free will. Hermes is a very truthful person and knows not how to tell a lie.

¹ 'Hörest du nicht
Was Erlenkönig mir leise verspricht?'
Goethe.

² The magic pipe or lyre reappears in the legend of 'The Rose of the

Alhambra,' where it is applied with great humour to cure the mad freak of Philip V.—Irving's *Alhambra*.

³ Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, part iv. ch. iii. section vii. Slightly altered, the story of Godiva in Coventry is told again in the tale of Allah-ud-deen, who sees through a crevice the king's daughter on her way to the bath, when it is death for any one to be seen abroad or to be found looking on her.

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phrases descriptive of natural phenomena, the ideas of which were impressed on their minds not less firmly than the more strictly mythical words and phrases were impressed on their memories. These stories were, however, little more than outlines, for it cannot be too often repeated that even in the tales which exhibit the closest likeness in their most developed forms, the points of difference in detail and colouring are so striking as to leave no room for doubt that the Aryan tribes carried away with them for these stories no rigid types to which they were compelled to adhere with Egyptian slavishness, but living ideas which each tribe might from time to time clothe in a different garb. How these ideas were furnished is a question which it may be by no means as easy to answer as it is to resolve the life of Achilles and Meleagros into the daily course of the sun through the heavens. It becomes therefore of the utmost importance in such an inquiry as this, to bring together and compare the popular traditions of nations whose geographical positions show that their parting when they left the common home was for them a final separation. No one could have the hardihood to maintain that the countrymen of Herman had access to the pages of Pausanias, or that the soldiers of Varus had in their childhood listened to stories borrowed from the epic of Wäinämöinen. Yet the children's tales gathered during the last half-century have established the general affinity of the folk-lore of Greeks, Romans, Germans and Scandinavians, and a likeness not less astonishing runs through the popular tales of these races and those of the Hindu.¹ In India, as in Germany, old women, who doubtless thought themselves fit for nothing, have preserved to us a series of exquisite legends which pour a flood of light on the early history of the human mind. The Hindu child is still roused and soothed by the stories of the sweet Star-Lady and the lovely Queen of the Five Flowers, just as the young German and Norseman used to listen to the tale of

¹ *Old Deccan Days*, a series of tales taken down from the dictation of Anna Liberata de Souza, and translated by Miss Frere. The stories are of great importance; but their value is inde-

finitely enhanced if, as the translator assures us, they are given precisely as they came from the lips of the narrator, without additions or embellishments.



the beautiful Briar-rose sleeping in death-like stillness until the kiss of the pure Knight rouses her from her slumber. We are clearly debtors to the old women for the preservation of thousands of lovely and touching legends which have never found their way into epic poetry. Had it not been for the grandmothers of Hellas, we should in all likelihood never have heard of the grief of Dêmêtêr, as she sank down by the fountain in Eleusis, or of the woe of Telephassa, which ended as she sank to rest on the Thessalian plain in the evening. Schools in Athens, Thebes, or Argos, doubtless did their inevitable destructive work; but we can as little doubt that many an Athenian mother pointed on the slopes of Hymettos to the spot where the glistening form of Prokris first met the eye of Kephalos as he stepped forth on the shore, and the young Delian learnt to be proud of the rugged island, where the nymphs bathed the infant Phoibos in pure water and swathed him in broad golden bands. Clearly we have to thank old crones for the story of Narkissos who died for love of his own fair face, and of Selênê gazing on Endymion as he slept on the hill of Latmos.

Among these Hindu tales we find a large class of stories which have little or nothing in common with the epic poems of the Aryan nations, but which exhibit a series of incidents in striking parallelism with those of the corresponding Teutonic versions. These incidents are in themselves so strange, and the result is brought about by turns so unexpected, that the idea of their independent developement among separated tribes who had carried away with them nothing but some proverbial sayings as the groundwork of these stories becomes a wild extravagance. Whatever the consequences may be, the conclusion seems irresistible that these stories had been wrought out into some detail, while these tribes or nations still continued to form a single people; and if these tales can scarcely be resolved into phrases denoting physical phenomena, they are perhaps more wonderful even than the epic poems, the growth of which from common germs would be inevitable if the theory of comparative mythologists be regarded as established. The resemblances between these stories may perhaps bring down the

Frame-
work of
popular
stories.

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The story
of the Dog
and the
Sparrow.

time of separation to a comparatively late period ; but the geographical position of Hindu and German tribes must still throw that time back to an indefinitely distant past ; and close as the parallelism may be, the differences of detail and colouring are such that we cannot suppose these Aryan emigrants to have carried away with them to their new abodes more than the leading incidents grafted on the leading idea. The fidelity with which the Hindu and the German tales adhere to this framework is indeed astonishing.

One of the most remarkable of these coincidences is furnished by the story of the 'Dog and the Sparrow,' in Grimm's collection, as compared with an episode in the 'Wanderings of Vicram Maharajah.' In both a bird vows to bring about the ruin of a human being ; in both the bird is the helper and avenger of the innocent against wanton injury, and in both the destruction of the guilty is the result of their own voluntary acts. There are other points of likeness, the significance of which is heightened by points of singularly subtle difference. In the German story, the sparrow is offended because a carter, not heeding the warning which she had given him, drove his waggon over a dog which she had saved from starving.

'You have killed my brother, the dog,' she said, 'and that shall cost you your horses and your cart.'

'Horses and cart, indeed,' said the carrier. 'What harm can you do to me?' and he drove on.

But presently the sparrow contrived to force out the cork from the bung-hole of one of the casks in the waggon, and all the wine ran out on the ground. 'Ah me ! I am a poor man now,' cried the carter, when he saw it. 'Not poor enough yet,' said the sparrow, as she perched on the head of one of the horses, and picked out his eye. The carter in his rage took up his hatchet to kill the bird, but instead of it, he hit his horse, which fell down dead. So it fared with the second cask and the two remaining horses. Leaving his waggon on the road, the carter found his way home, and bemoaned to his wife the loss of his wine and his beasts.

'Ah my husband,' she replied, 'and what a wicked bird has come to this house ; she has brought with her all



the birds in the world, and there they sit among our corn, and are eating every ear of it.'

'Ah me, I am poorer than ever,' said the man, as he beheld the havoc. 'Still not poor enough, carrier; it shall cost you your life,' said the bird as she flew away. By and by the sparrow appeared at the window-sill, and uttered the same words, and the carrier, hurling his axe at it, broke the window-frame in two. Every other piece of furniture in the house was demolished as he vainly attempted to hit the bird. At length he caught her, and his wife asked if she should kill her.

'No,' said he, 'that were too merciful; she shall die much more horribly, for I will eat her alive.' So saying, he swallowed her whole; but she began to flutter about in his stomach, and presently came again into his mouth, and cried out, 'Carrier, it shall cost you your life.'

Thereupon the man handed the axe to his wife, saying, 'Kill me the wretch dead in my mouth.' His wife took it, and aimed a blow, but missing her mark struck her husband on the head and killed him. Then the sparrow flew away and was never seen there again.¹

In the Hindoo story the bird is a parrot, and the dog's place is taken by a poor woodcutter, from whom a dancing-girl attempts to extort a large sum of money by deliberate falsehood. The girl thus represents the carter, and at once the framework of the tale is provided; but the method by which the sparrow wreaks her vengeance on the man is thoroughly awkward and unartistic when compared with the simple scheme which brings about the ruin of the nautch-woman. She, like the carrier, is rich; but she cannot resist the temptation of making more money by charging the woodcutter with the dowry which she said that he had promised to pay on marrying her, the promise and the marriage being

The story
of the
Nautch-
girl and
the Parrot.

¹ This last incident is clearly the same as that which brings about the death of the bald carpenter, who being attacked by a mosquito called his son to drive it away. The son aiming a blow at the insect, splits his father's head with the axe. This story from the Pankatantra Professor Max Müller

(*Chips &c.* ii. 232) identifies with the fable in Phædrus, of the bald man who, trying to kill a gnat, gives himself a severe blow in the face, and he attributes it, therefore, to some old Aryan proverb. The German story of the carter has certainly all the appearance of a more independent growth.

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alike purely imaginary. The rajah, being called to give judgement in the case, determines to abide by the decision of a parrot famed for his wisdom, and belonging to a merchant in the town. When the woodcutter had given his version of the matter, the parrot bade Champa Ranee, the nautch-girl, tell her story. After hearing it, he asked where the house was to which her husband had taken her. 'Far away in the jungles,' was the reply. 'And how long ago?' The day was named, and twenty witnesses proved that Champa was at the time in the city. The parrot then gave judgement for the woodcutter against the nautch-girl, as the sparrow had befriended the dog against the carter. Great was the praise bestowed on the wise parrot, but the incensed nautch-girl said, 'Be assured I will get you in my power, and when I do, I will bite off your head.'

Then follows the vow of the parrot, answering to the oath of the sparrow; but he has no need to repeat it.

'Try your worst, madam,' said he, 'but in return I tell you this; I will live to make you a beggar. Your house shall be by your own orders laid even with the ground, and you for grief and rage shall kill yourself.'

Time goes on, and the nautch-girl, summoned to the merchant's house, dances so well that he asks her to name her own reward; and the price which she demands is the parrot. Taking the bird home, she ordered her servants to cook it for her supper, first cutting off its head and bringing it to be grilled, that she might eat it before tasting any other dish. The parrot is accordingly plucked, but while the servant goes to fetch water wherein to boil him, the bird, who had pretended to be dead and thus escaped having his neck wrung, slipped into a hole let into the wall for carrying off the kitchen sewage. In this dilemma the maid grilled a chicken's head, and placed it before Champa Ranee, who, as she eat it, said,

'Ah! pretty Polly, so here is the end of you. This is the brain that thought so cunningly and devised my overthrow; this the tongue that spoke against me; this is the throat through which came the threatening words. Ha! ha! who is right now, I wonder?'



With some little fear the parrot heard her words, for the loss of his wing feathers had left him unable to fly; but at length he contrived to find his way to a neighbouring temple, and to perch behind the idol. It was the favourite god of Champa Ranee, who, in her abject fear of death, had long besought him to translate her to heaven without the process of dying. So when she next came to offer her wonted supplication, the parrot spoke, and the nautch-girl at once took its words for the utterances of the god.

‘Champa Ranee, nautch-girl, your prayer is heard, this is what you must do; sell all you possess, and give the money to the poor, and you must also give money to all your servants and dismiss them. Level also your house to the ground, that you may be wholly separated from earth. Then you will be fit for heaven, and you may come, having done all I command you, on this day week to this place, and you shall be transported thither body and soul.’¹

The infatuated woman does as she is bidden, and after destroying her house and giving away all her goods, she returns to the temple, attended by a vast train of men and

¹ This incident recurs in the Norse version of the Master Thief. Here, however, there is no real bird, but only the thief disguised as a bird, nor are the victims of the trick actually killed, but they are grievously mauled, and are robbed as effectually as the nautch-girl. What is more to the point is, that the property is in each case abandoned by an act of their own free will. Having undertaken to cheat the priest and his clerk, the thief ‘dressed himself up like a bird, threw a great white sheet over his body, took the wings of a goose and tied them to his back, and so climbed up into a great maple which stood in the priest’s garden, and when the priest came home in the evening the youth began to bawl out, ‘Father Lawrence, father Lawrence,’—for that was the priest’s name, ‘Who is that calling me,’ said the priest. ‘I am an angel,’ said the Master Thief, ‘sent from God to let you know that you shall be taken up alive into heaven for your piety’s sake. Next Monday night you must hold yourself ready for the journey, for I shall come then to fetch

you in a sack; and all your gold and your silver and all that you have of this world’s goods you must lay together in a heap in your dining-room.’ Well, Father Lawrence fell on his knees before the angel and thanked him; and the very next day he preached a farewell sermon and gave it out how there had come down an angel unto the big maple in his garden, who had told him that he was to be taken up alive into heaven for his piety’s sake, and he preached and made such a touching discourse that all who were at church wept, both young and old.—Dasent, *Norse Tales*, ‘Master Thief.’ Here, as in the Hindu story, the time is fixed, and the farewell sermon answers to the invitations sent out by Champa Ranee to all her friends that they should come and witness her ascension. Another priest is deceived in the admirable Gaelic story of the ‘Son of the Scottish Yeoman who stole the Bishop’s Horse and Daughter, and the Bishop Himself.’ See also Mr. Campbell’s excellent remarks on this story, *Tales of the West Highlands*, ii. 263.

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women whom she had invited to be witnesses of her glorification.

As they waited, a fluttering of little wings was heard, and a parrot flew over Champa Raneé's head, calling out, 'Nautch-girl, nautch-girl, what have you done?' Champa Raneé recognised the voice as Vicram's: he went on, 'Will you go body and soul to heaven? Have you forgotten Polly's words?'

Champa Raneé rushed into the temple, and falling on her knees before the idol, cried out, 'Gracious Power, I have done all as you commanded; let your words come true; save me, take me to heaven.'

But the parrot above her cried, 'Good bye, Champa Raneé, good bye; you ate a chicken's head, not mine. Where is your house now? Where are your servants and all your possessions? Have my words come true, think you, or yours?'

Then the woman saw all, and in her rage and despair, cursing her own folly, she fell violently down on the floor of the temple, and, dashing her head against the stone, killed herself.¹

Origin
and growth
of these
stories.

It is impossible to question the real identity of these two stories, and incredible that the one could have been invented apart from the other, or that the German and the Hindu tale are respectively developements merely from the same leading idea. This idea is that beings of no repute may be avengers of successful wrongdoers, or to put it in the language of St. Paul, that the weak things of the earth may be chosen to confound the strong, and foolish things to confound the wise. But it was impossible that this leading idea should of itself suggest to a Hindu and a Teuton that the avenger should be a bird, that the wrongdoer should punish himself, and should seal his doom by swallowing his persecutor or by at least thinking that he was devouring him. There is no room here for the argument which Professor Max Müller characterises as sneaking when applied even to fables which are common to all the members of the Aryan

¹ Frere, *Old Deccan Days*, p. 127.



family.¹ A series of incidents such as these could never have been thought out by two brains working apart from each other; and we are driven to admit that at least the machinery by which the result was to be brought about had been devised before the separation, or to maintain that the story has in the one case or in the other been imported bodily. Probably no instance could be adduced in which a borrowed story differs so widely from the original. In all cases of adaptation the borrower either improves upon the idea or weakens it. Here both the stories exhibit equally clear tokens of vigorous and independent growth.²

[CHAP.
VIII.]

But the story of the nautch-girl is only one incident in a larger drama. The bird of the German tale is a common sparrow; the parrot which brings about the death of Champa Rancee is nothing less than the Maharajah Vicram, who has

The stories
of Vicram
and Her-
motimos.

¹ *Chips from a German Workshop*, ii. 233.

² It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that there is scarcely one important feature of the Hindu popular stories which are not to be found in those of Germany and Scandinavia, and which are not repeated in Celtic traditions. In each case the story is the same, yet not the same, and the main question becomes one rather of historical than of philological evidence. The substantial identity of the tales is indisputable; and if the fact be that these stories were in the possession of Germans and Norwegians, Irishmen and Scottish Highlanders, long before any systematic attempt was made to commit to writing and publish the folklore of Europe, the further conclusion is also involved that these stories do not owe their diffusion to book-learning; and assuredly the commercial intercourse which would account for them implies an amount and a frequency of communication beyond that of the most stirring and enterprising nations of the present day. Mr. Campbell, in his invaluable collection of *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, dismisses the hypothesis as wholly untenable. Of the notion that these Highland traditions may have sprung up since the publication of Grimm's and Dasent's collections of German and Norse tales, he asserts that a manuscript lent to him by the translator proves that the stories were

known in Scotland before these translations were made public (vol. i. p. xlvi), and adds, reasonably enough, that 'when all the narrators agree in saying that they have known these stories all their lives, and when the variation is so marked, the resemblance is rather to be attributed to common origin than to books' (*ib.* xlviii). More definitely he asserts, 'After working for a year and weighing all the evidence that has come in my way, I have come to agree with those who hold that popular tales are generally pure traditions' (*ib.* 227). The care with which he has examined the large body of Celtic traditions, gives his judgement the greatest weight, and fully justifies his conclusion that 'popular tales are woven together in a network which seems to pervade the world, and to be fastened to everything in it. Tradition, books, history, and mythology hang together; no sooner has the net been freed from one snag, and a mesh gained, than another mesh is discovered; and so, unless many hands combine, the net and the contents will never be brought to shore' (*ib.* 229). It is not a little startling to find that the so-called classical mythology of the Greeks, in which the myth of Psyché was supposed to be almost the only popular tale accidentally preserved to us, contains the germs, and more than the germs, of nearly every story in the popular traditions of Germany, Norway, India, and Scotland.