ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

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THE SCIENCE OF FOLK-LORE

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TO

ARTHUR BERNARD COOK

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.J.Ph.	*The American Journal of Philology*
A.J.S.L.L.	*The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*
A.N.F.	*Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi*
A.S.N.S.L.	*Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*
A.R.	*Archivum Romanicum*
B.H.	*Bulletin Hispanique*
C.J.	*The Classical Journal*
E.St.	*Englische Studien*
F.F.C.	*Folklore Fellows Communications*
G.R.M.	*Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*
H.B.V.	*Hessische Blätter für Volkskunde*
J.A.F.	*The Journal of American Folk-Lore*
J.E.G.Ph.	*The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
K.H.M.	*Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*
Kl. Schr.	*Kleinere Schriften*
M.L.N.	*Modern Language Notes*
M.L.R.	*The Modern Language Review*
M.Ph.	*Modern Philology*
M.S.G.V.	*Mitteilungen der Schlesischen Gesells haft für Volkskunde*
N.M.	*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*
N.S.M.	*Nuovi Studi Medievali*
N.T.T.	*Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift*
P.M.L.A.	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*
R.C.	*Revue Celtique*
R.E.T.P.	*Revue d'Ethnographie et des traditions populaires*
R.H.	*Revue Hispanique*
Rh.M.	*Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*
R.L.C.	*Revue de Littérature comparée*
R.R.	*The Romanic Review*
R.T.P.	*Revue des Traditions populaires*
S.A.V.	*Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde*
S.S.N.	*Scandinavian Studies and Notes*
Z.D.A.	*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*
Z.D.Ph.	*Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*
Z.F.S.L.	*Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*
Z.N.V.	*Zeitschrift für niederdeutsche Volkskunde*
Z.R.Ph.	*Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*
Z.R.W.V.	*Zeitschrift für rheinische und westfälische Volkskunde*
Z.V.V.	*Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*

PREFACE

THIS book owes its inception to the days spent by the author in London, while attending the sessions of the Jubilee Congress of the British Folk-Lore Society.

Handbooks of and introductions to folk-lore are certainly not wanting. Yet one misses in English some dependable *ouvrage d'ensemble*, fairly comprehensive and methodically arranged, doing approximately the same service that has been rendered by the German *Handbücher der Volkskunde* published by Heims at Leipzig, a few years before the outbreak of the Great War.

Folk-lore is, in fact has been for a considerable number of years, an historical science, having its own methods of research and admitting of the same system of checks and verifications as any other. With its sister sciences it may combine, in various ways, to make up the cycle of our knowledge of man's past life. From this follows that it may assume the rank of an anxiliary science to any or all of them, and it has done so repeatedly, notably to the various philologies, history, ethnography, and the history of religion. The present writer would therefore be particularly happy if his book could prove useful to fellow-workers in such related fields, anxious to acquaint themselves with the fundamental facts and working-methods of folk-lore.

In the choice of the examples and illustrations I have throughout given preference to tales, rites, and beliefs of which I happen to have a first-hand knowledge. There is no value whatever, to my mind, in the composition of a thirteenth book out of the materials culled from twelve others. Where the results of other scholars have been utilized, I have convinced myself of their essential correctness, judged, of course, from the present state of our knowledge. Where a given problem has not yet yielded to a definite and generally accepted solution I have frankly stated that such is the case.

In the bibliographical parts I have limited myself to referring the reader to the latest authoritative treatise existing on the

subject, because that treatise will of course give further bibliographical data. The mere copying of bibliographies from the books of others, though extensively practised in certain countries and encouraged by certain *universities*, is not only a waste but a genuine piece of literary dishonesty.

In my polemics against the Anthropological School I hope I have not been more severe than Andrew Lang himself was in his day with the sun-mythological fancies of Max Müller. I only wish I could have been as witty! Throughout the present book I have been interested not so much in establishing a new dogma (of such we have already too many), as in laying down a general working method, essentially of the historical type. That this method itself is infallible in all points I neither claim nor even assume. On the contrary, I am certain that it will be modified and improved upon as time goes on. Yet I am no less certain that in its fundamental features it will stand as the soundest of all those hitherto devised, and I may say this the more freely because I can myself lay no claim to its invention.

In accordance with this method I shall be found, especially in the treatment of oral folk-lore, i.e. stories and songs of the popular type, to have adopted the purely literary view-point. That is, I conceive of folk-tales and folk-songs as purely literary manifestations of the popular genius, acting under the same impulses as the productive mind of literary men, scholars and artists. The two differ only in much the same things in which different literary schools are apt to be at variance, that is, in questions of taste and methods of technique. This being the case, I make bold to claim that productions of the popular mind demand and deserve the same standards of criticism. There is no value whatever in refusing to call platitudinous and trite what deserves to be called so and what would inevitably be called so were it a literary product in the general acceptation of the term. Nor need there be any fear lest folk-lore materials should suffer thereby. The critical standards of the eighteenth century are a thing of the past, fortunately, and many other things beside folk-lore which did not meet with the approval of Voltaire and Pope, are yet ranked as the very highest expressions of artistic feeling and inspiration.

One more caution. This book is not meant to be an encyclopædia of folk-lore. If it were, the arrangement would obviously be quite different and its size considerably larger. While I have striven for completeness, I have not for a moment thought of tiring the reader with a mass of loose details, particularly in the chapters dealing with Superstition, Plant and Animal Lore,

details which can be treated satisfactorily only in the form of a dictionary or an encyclopædia.

Although in this exposition of facts I shall be found to hold views not yet generally accepted among British folklorists, it would be futile to deny the great indebtedness under which I feel myself to British science and thought; that indebtedness will, I dare say, be evident on every page and perhaps most where I shall be found to differ from them most widely in my conclusions and inferences. Thanks are due in no small measure also to Dr. Robert Eisler, for helpful suggestions; to Fräulein Erika Buttke, of Berlin, who obligingly verified a number of references; and to my friends Professor Allison Peers (of the University of Liverpool) and Professor A. B. Botkin (of the University of Oklahoma), who went over the proofs. What I owe to the 'spirto gentile' whose books and essays were for a large part my mainstay and intellectual support during the ten long years of my exile, the dedication will sufficiently indicate.

A. H. K.

PARIS,
Whit-Sunday, 1929.

'A work of great interest might be compiled upon the origin of popular fiction, and the transmission of similar tales from age to age, and from country to country.'

—Sir Walter Scott

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INTRODUCTION

THE term *Folk-lore* was coined in 1846 by the English antiquarian William John Thoms, to take the place of the rather awkward expression *Popular Antiquities*. The word has since met with approval in practically all European countries and is now current in many languages other than English. The German *Volkskunde* can in no way be regarded as an equivalent of the English *folk-lore* since it has a far wider application, including, among other things, the study of peasant art and peasant craft. Folk-lore, on the other hand, limits itself to a study of the unrecorded traditions of the people as they appear in popular fiction, custom and belief, magic and ritual.[1] The objection frequently raised against the English term, that it has a twofold acceptation, designating both the material and the science which attempts to study that material, is of no particular force since it applies with equal cogency to other disciplines, the most obvious being, of course, history itself.

The scope of folk-lore, the preliminary tasks of collecting and classifying, both indispensable to any science, historical or natural, accomplished, may be expressed as follows: It is to reconstruct a spiritual history of Man, not as exemplified by the outstanding works of poets and thinkers, but as represented by the more or less inarticulate voices of the 'folk'.

Folk-lore is an historical science[2]: 'historical', because it attempts to throw light on man's past; a 'science', because it endeavours to attain this goal, not by speculation or deduction from some abstract principle agreed upon *a priori*, but by the inductive method which, in the last analysis, underlies all scientific research, whether historical or natural.

This last statement may call for a few additional observations. As is generally known, the historical sciences are distinguished from the natural ones in that the latter have at their disposal two different modes of procedure, observation and experiment, whilst to the former only observation, in the form of a study of the documents, is open. Historical study, there-

fore, involves a careful evaluation of the documents and their utilization with due regard for their chronology. That, after all, is the essence of the 'historical method' as evolved by Savigny and the Brothers Grimm at the beginning of the last century. It is from this view-point that folk-lore has been most generally subjected to the criticism of historians. For it is of course evident that the vast majority of the documentary materials collected and utilized by folklorists cannot claim great antiquity. To this objection the folklorist may submit the following considerations. The mere date of a given document is of little consequence, both in history and in folk-lore. For example, Saint Jerome somewhere in his writings makes the casual remark that the languages of the Galatians of Asia Minor and of the Treveri in Gaul are very much alike. From this statement professional historians have universally concluded that in the fourth century of our era the Celtic dialects were still spoken in Asia Minor and in Gaul. It so happens, however, that Saint Jerome was merely copying Varro's lost *Antiquitates* who in his turn had obtained the information in question from the work of Poseidonios, a writer of the first century B.C. Thus the true date of the document antedates by five centuries its formal date.[3] All historians of classical antiquity are of course familiar with this problem of which I have just given an example, though, as the illustration also shows, the practical application is apt to lag somewhat behind the golden principles of Theory. Folk-lore, however, acts on no other principles. It merely states that the modernity of a given document is not opposed to its utilization, provided it can be shown to be derived from a source considerably older.[4]

Thus far there exists no appreciable difference between the methods employed by careful historians and those in use among folklorists. There is, however, more to be said on the subject. History being a science of documents, its domain proper may be supposed to end where the documents give out. If this principle were acted upon, History would fall considerably short of its mission, which is, after all, to reconstruct the external or political vicissitudes of Man. History therefore feels empowered —and it undoubtedly is—in the absence of documents to draw various conclusions from linguistic and archæological data. The number of these inferential conclusions increases as we pass from political history to economic and social history, where the documents become scantier, since for one reason or another the attention of the professional chroniclers, the clerks of all ages, has always been absorbed chiefly, if not exclusively, by

the outward trappings and the display of this great stage. Folk-lore faces the same difficulty, but in order to overcome it, it does not have to step outside its own domain; it merely applies to its materials the 'comparative method'.

The term itself is apt to arouse serious misgivings, since it was used, though in an entirely different acceptation, by the various schools of solar and lunar mythologists so deservedly discredited at the time of this writing. Suffice it to say that the science of folk-lore has as much to do with those fancies as modern chemistry has with that pseudo-science the chief object of which was the discovery of the philosopher's stone. The 'comparative method' in the modern meaning of the expression [5] starts from the principle that ever since his first appearance on earth Man has undergone, in his spiritual make-up, a gradual though slow, evolution, newer and more complicated conceptions taking the place of older and more rudimentary ones. This principle, however opposed to orthodox Christianity, is in strict accordance, not only with the observed facts, but with the results attained by Darwinism in general. The opposite view, to wit, that modern savages have degenerated from a once higher stage of mental culture, is not borne out by any observed fact, although there have existed certain isolated examples, always limited to small social groups, showing a process of degeneracy due, in every case, to ascertainable historical facts. The best possible illustration for such a process is furnished by the fate of the Scandinavian colonies in Greenland in the later Middle Ages, unearthed in recent years. Yet even there it is certainly a noteworthy fact that the spiritual degeneracy of that group appears to have been of a far slower growth than their physical degeneracy. Man's intellectual power, however varying in degree, is yet essentially the same in kind. From this follows that his spiritual growth in different parts of the globe and under different climes has on the whole assumed very similar forms, however great the differences in pace. Thus a certain human tribe, in a certain spot of the globe, will at this time represent the stage of spiritual evolution left behind by another tribe, in a different spot, several hundred years ago. Thus a study of the former tribe will throw light on the past of the latter, a light highly welcome when there exist no documents, or very unsatisfactory documents, bearing on that past.

Nor need the two spots just mentioned be very far apart. In every modern country the rural populations are still addicted to beliefs and practices long since given up by the bulk of the city people. But the conclusion is certainly justified

that the ancestors of the present-day city-dwellers, who lived at a time when there were no large cities or who simply had not yet moved into the city, followed the same customs and held the same beliefs as the contemporary peasants. Again, therefore, we may say that the cultural stage held by one social group will throw light on the former social stage of some other group.

In the city proper, as is well known, the typical proletarian is the most traditionless creature imaginable. Yet even there certain exceptions are to be noted. Certain callings and professions, however humble, have a tendency to foster the retention of ancient customs and practices that have died out among the bulk of the population, and thus one social class may be said to represent a stage of mental development overcome by he others.[6]

Human society even in the form of some high civilization will thus be seen to show side by side the old and the new. On these very islands there are fast trains running beside, and sometimes even above, holy wells, and many a man may use the train, nay, may drive its engine, and yet believe in ghosts or the banshee. Nor does this imply a danger of constant friction. There is no country in which so much toleration has been shown to old forms in the midst of modern life as there has been in England, yet the number of serious clashes has been negligible, though in less than a century the State has passed through two crises which would have proved the undoing of most others. On the other hand, there are probably few lands now in existence in which the traditional element has been reduced so radically by a ruthless standardization as it has been in the United States; yet even recent occurrences will not give one an impression that such standardization has done away with open clashes between different groups and with an ill-concealed intolerance all around.

Two errors in the form of hasty conclusions from what has been said above must be carefully guarded against. The modern savage is no 'primitive', even where he has been least touched by Europeans and Americans anxious to bear the white man's burden. He was removed, by an immeasurably long development, from that stage which we are pleased to call by the illusive term 'primitive', as early as the time when the first white man set foot on the virgin soil of his native land.

Nor is it permissible to equate the modern peasant, even in the most backward regions of Europe, with the savage. Both are again separated by a vast stretch of human development during which the former, moreover, was repeatedly open to the

great civilizations, city-bred civilizations, certain to have influenced, be it ever so little, his spiritual make-up.

As a consequence of this connexion of our science with the social development of man, its study has always flourished only in the great city civilizations, that is, toward the end of each cycle of civilization. Among the Alexandrians there were assuredly folklorists, though their works have for the most part been lost, so that it is only from the compilers of imperial times that we can gather an idea of their activity, whilst its influence upon literature may be seen from such works as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In the Occident, folk-lore is a daughter of the Romantic Movement. Its founder was no other than Jacob Grimm, who, in his great work *Deutsche Mythologie*, laid the scientific foundations of our discipline. It is an odd but not altogether unprecedented fact that the immediate influence of this book on the scholarship of Grimm's own country was but small. There the solar and thunder mythologists all too soon frustrated the good effects it might have had, and the only truly great successor of Jacob Grimm, Wilhelm Mannhardt, could not obtain even a university chair. The charming poet and scholar Ludwig Uhland, though greatly influenced by Grimm's work, left no school behind him, and Karl Müllenhoff, excellent mythologist though he was, won his justly great reputation as a grammarian. Elard Hugo Meyer, the editor of the fourth and definitive edition of the *Deutsche Mythologie*, was little more than an industrious compiler, and it was only toward the end of the century, largely in consequence of Mannhardt's late appreciated books, that German folklorists decided to go back to the methods of Jacob Grimm. Suffice it to cite in this connexion the names of scholars such as Karl Weinhold, Wilhelm Hertz, and Friedrich von der Leyen.

Owing to the ascendancy of German scholarship in Great Britain a very close parallel development may be observed there. Grimm's and Uhland's work being largely inaccessible, except to those able to read the none too easy German prose of these scholars, their influence was on the whole negligible. On the other hand, the solar mythologists were represented in England by one of their most brilliant representatives, the late Max Müller. It is no wonder, therefore, that these fancies held great sway down to the end of the century. It was the Anthropological School, led by scholars such as E. B. Tylor and Andrew Lang, who did for the English public what Mannhardt had tried to do for the German, though with infinitely better success. It was, after all, good British common sense

which finally asserted itself and to which we owe, in the last analysis, the great productions of the Anthropological School, culminating in the *Golden Bough*, in comparison with which all other attempts to solve the riddle of the sphinx must appear dwarfish.

The Literary School of folklorists, though largely eclectic, being committed to no fixed dogma but merely to a definite method of procedure, owes its origin to Th. Benfey. Its great sponsors were Gaston Paris, Emmanuel Cosquin and Gédéon Huet in France and, in the present century, the Finnish and Scandinavian folklorists. It has had few adherents in Great Britain and may be said to be largely unknown there, which fact is, probably, the chief justification of the present book.

One word more, on a subject which cannot but attract interest in a time such as ours. The study of History is generally supposed to make for understanding and tolerance in human affairs, though certain of its more recent professors have not striven very hard to bear out the general truth of this assumption. Folk-lore certainly should inculcate those virtues as much as, if not more than, History. The following consideration will make this clear. When the first Mediterranean explorers reached these isles, their inhabitants were, there can be no doubt, on a general stage of civilization equalled by that of the Fiji Islanders toward the middle of the last century. A span of a little more than 2,000 years thus separates the white man from savagery. Now if it is borne in mind that our species is probably older than 200,000 years at least, we have very little reason, it would seem, to look down upon our less fortunate brother, and we probably should not do so were it not for man's well-known lack of all sense of proportion.

NOTES

[1] K. Krohn, *Die folkloristische Arbeitsmethode*, Oslo, 1926.

[2] The well-known work of Sir George Lawrence Gomme, *Folklore as an Historical Science*, London, 1908, is of no utility in this connexion, since the author sets out to prove that folkloristic material may serve to establish definite *historical* facts. This is nothing but the famous theory of the Brothers Grimm and of Gaston Paris (though in a somewhat modified form) which sees in the popular epic and ballad more or less distorted history. After the researches of M. Joseph Bédier and M. Ernest Tonnelat on the Old French epic and the German Nibelungen Cycle respectively this view is no longer tenable. Folk-lore can never help in the reconstruction of *political* history; it is solely and singly concerned with the history of human ideas and their utterance in words and gestures, that is, in tales, songs, and rites.

[3] *R.C.*, XLVI, 126–29.

[4] Incredible as it may seem, even professional folklorists have fallen into this common error. Thus the late E. H. Meyer, one of the *epigoni* who, in Germany, followed in the wake of the Brothers Grimm, made the discovery that the motive of the spring wort does not occur in texts older than the Renaissance period, and he promptly inferred the recent origin of the legend. Unfortunately, he had overlooked the fairly important fact that it is found in Pliny's *Natural History* (X. 18).

[5] Cf. Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*[3], London, 1891 ; I quote from the American edition of 1883. The best practical application of this method to problems of oral folk-lore will be found in the brilliant pages of Sir J. G. Frazer, especially in his *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*, London, 1918.

[6] Cf. Paul Sébillot, *Légendes et curiosités des métiers*, Paris, 1895.

THE SCIENCE OF FOLK-LORE

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CHAPTER I

THE FAIRY TALE

WHEN toward the beginning of the last century the scientific, i.e. methodical, study of folk-lore was begun in Europe, essentially as a fruit of the Romantic Movement, the fairy tale was the first to attract general attention, and the *Household Tales* of the Brothers Grimm overshadowed all previous collections of fairy tales, while at the same time setting the collectors to work all over Europe.

By *fairy tale* we mean a continued narrative generally of a certain length, practically always in prose, serious on the whole, though humour is by no means excluded, centring in one hero or heroine, usually poor and destitute at the start, who, after a series of adventures in which the supernatural element plays a conspicuous part, attains his goal and lives happy ever after.

A fairy tale will thus be seen to be made up of a number of adventures or *motives*,* rather loosely, though not illogically, knit together, with the hero or the heroine as a central figure. The motives make up the plot of the tale or the *type*. Each type consists then of a varying number of motives in a given sequence.[1] Thus if we consider the well-known tale-type of *Nicht Nocht Naething*, we find the following motives:

(1) Child promised to a demon.
(2–4) Three tasks imposed upon the captive by the demon.
(5) Flight of captive with the demon's daughter.
(6–8) Three lifeless objects reply for the fugitives.

*Throughout this book I shall use the good English form *motive* rather than the pedantic *motif*, borrowed from the French, which in turn acquired the meaning it now has in French folk-lore under the influence of the German *Motiv*. There is no reason why the English *motive* should not be capable of the same extension of meaning as the French *motif*; for the French at all events did not think of importing into their language the German form.

(9) Pursuit by the demon.

(10–12) Three objects thrown out by fugitives to create magic obstacles.

(13) The curse of the demon's wife.

(14) The kiss causing the hero to forget his bride.

(15–17) Three adventures of the forsaken bride with importunate suitors.

(18) The undoing of the charm and the recognition.

A number of all known motives have this peculiarity that they occur only in a limited number of tale-types. Others, on the contrary, are quite ubiquitous, and their presence is not restricted to only a few types. Thus in the foregoing illustration (1) belongs to the latter category, whilst most of the others would be classed with the former.

The sum total of all motives is very considerable, exceeding, probably, 10,000.[2] Among them there are naturally certain ones sufficiently alike to exchange places with one another in a given tale. For example, in the type quoted above motives (10–12) may easily be, and often are, replaced by certain others (10a–12a), to wit, a threefold metamorphosis of the fugitives.

Thus it will appear that within certain limits certain motives may be replaced by others doing the same service in the logical sequence of the type. Yet this does not mean at all, as has at times been asserted, that motives are combined arbitrarily in a kaleidoscopic fashion. On the contrary, the cases of permutation represent a very small minority, and as a rule the motives are so definitely shaped, with nothing vague about them, and combine in a fashion so rigorously logical that the type must be considered as an artistic creation, an entity, definitely fixed, as much, or nearly so, as a poem of Tennyson or a novel of Thomas Hardy.

This being the case, it follows that a given type, composed as it is of a variety of motives in logical and fixed sequence, can have been composed only once, in a definite locality, in a definite time, the product of one individual mind. From that locality, which it is not always easy to determine, the type began its migration in all directions, being carried over vast distances, often over entire continents. This fact, again, leads us to a discussion of the variants and the geographical distribution of fairy tales.

The majority of tale-types are known to us by a large number of variants, i.e. oral versions collected from the mouth of the people some time during the nineteenth century. A few are older, some are more recent still, since the activity of the collectors has not, of course, ceased with the new century. The number

of all known variants [3] exceeds, for certain types, 100, hailing, as a general rule, from all over Europe (where for obvious reasons the collectors' activity has been most intense), from Asia, including Indonesia, from North and South Africa, and from the American colonies. Central Africa and native Australia are conspicuous only by their absence. Nor can this significant fact be laid down altogether to the want of collectors. On the contrary, this distribution of variants fully justifies us in considering the fairy tale as essentially an old-world product, taken to Indonesia by Hindoo and Mohammedan culture currents, to East Africa by the Arabs, to South Africa by the Dutch settlers, to the New World by the colonizing Europeans. At all events, the European provenance of the South African and American variants has been proved for all known types.[4]

It may, furthermore, be seriously questioned whether either Ethiopians or American Indians (exception being made for the ancient American civilizations and their remnants) are at all capable of the sustained interest required by the ordinary fairy tale with its string of various adventures. Certainly, the variants of old-world tales collected among the North American Indians give one an impression that their narrators were incapable even of preserving a good tale, to say nothing of inventing a new one.

Most types are not represented exclusively by the variants collected in modern times. It is of course true that the scientific interest taken in fairy tales is essentially a modern phenomenon and, as has been said above, largely due to the Romantic Movement. Yet long before the nineteenth century fairy tales have had an aesthetic appeal which in many cases made it possible for them to penetrate into the literature of a given country, being thus set down in writing sometimes centuries ago and preserved to us, often enough, in the form they must have had at that period. One may refer to these written versions, in contradistinction to the oral ones, as 'historical' variants. Without discussing here the question of the proper evaluation of those historical variants, a subject which will require our attention further on, we may say at once that the existence of such a variant in a given literature proves definitely that the type to which it belongs was current, or at least known, in the country in question. Certain tale types are thus shown, by their historical variants, to be thousands of years old.

For the most part these historical variants are found inserted in works of literature, epics, novels, chronicles, etc. No one then thought of collecting or publishing them as creations of value in themselves. In fact, the first work which may with a certain

justice be claimed as a collection of fairy tales, the *Piacevoli Notti* of the Italian Straparola of Caravaggio,[5] dates from the middle of the sixteenth century. Yet even there the genuine fairy tales form a minority, and it is to be suspected that if Straparola included them at all, the reason was that he felt he would run short of *novelle* and that after all he wanted to do more than merely copy Boccaccio. From the seventeenth century dates the *Pentamerone* of the Neapolitan Giambattista Basile, which is the first genuine collection of fairy tales.[6] At the end of the seventeenth century Perrault's famous *Contes de ma Mère l'Oye* was published in Paris. The eighteenth century saw the publication of other collections, of somewhat lesser interest, both in Italy and in France.[7] With the nineteenth century begins the methodical study of the whole subject.

It is characteristic, no doubt, of man's strange turn of mind that at the very beginning the new science should have put the question of the origin of the fairy tale and boldly attempted an answer. The linguistic unity of the Indo-European group having just been established by Franz Bopp, it was in a way natural that, with the Aryan variants in the majority and the non-Aryan ones almost entirely wanting as yet, the Brothers Grimm should have considered the fairy tale as a typically Aryan product. Another factor to be considered in this connexion is the endeavour of scholars at that period to reconstruct what they thought the primitive Aryan religion and their opinion that precisely the oldest stratum of that religion was represented by the myths of Greece and Ancient India. The antiquity of those myths thus taken for granted, it was an easy step to regard the fairy tale as a sort of offshoot as it were from the original myth. The *a priori* assumption of an Aryan origin of fairy tales had to be dropped the moment the non-Aryan variants made their appearance in the course of the nineteenth century. As for the second proposition, that fairy tales are the direct descendants of myths, there is of course nothing wrong with it on principle, provided the descendant shows a reasonable amount of resemblance to his ancestor or, to drop the metaphor, that a given fairy tale can be plausibly shown to be derived from a given myth. Unfortunately for the theory, such proof has been forthcoming only for a very small number of tales.

One of the few instances where the theory appears to hold true is the famous story of Blue-Beard, as pointed out by Dr. Paul Kretschmer.[8] The version familiar to all English readers through the text of Charles Perrault, is, in spite of its gruesome features, by no means among the oldest or most primitive. In a

certain group of variants, at home chiefly in South-eastern Europe, Blue-Beard requests his *fiancées* to devour a dead man's bone. Two of the sisters refuse and are promptly killed; the third gets away through a ruse. In a Greek text the monster is called τοῦ κάτω κόσμου ὁ ἀφέντης, i.e., The Lord of the Lower World, which means that he is Death himself. The underlying idea is familiar from the myth of the rape of Kore and from the common designation of girls who died before their marriage as brides of death. Death, featured as devouring the corpses of the dead throughout the ancient world, looks for a companion to share his horrible repasts, and the girls who refuse have to pay for it with their lives. Charos, the Greek demon of death, is still accompanied by his Charóndissa, and a Modern Greek folk-song relates how the two sup on the heads of babies, using the hands of fallen soldiers for their knives and forks.

A fairy tale undoubtedly derived from a myth is the ancient story of the sorceress Kirke of Homeric fame.[9] The variants, extending from the coast of Brittany to Mongolia, have for their centre the countries of the Near East, from which they spread in all directions at a period prior to the composition of the *Odyssey*. The metamorphosis of the heroes into animals is a well-known fairy tale paraphrase for death, and before the narrative became a fairy story the heroine simply slew her paramours when she grew tired of them. Now in the Old Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh the hero reproaches the goddess Ishtar who seeks his love, with precisely such crimes, and we know moreover the ritual origin of this myth. The final proof for our derivation of the Kirke episode from the Ishtar Myth is furnished by a Russian variant of the former in which the sorceress is called Marína and accompanied by doves. *Marina*, the Latin equivalent of *Pelagia*, was one of the cult names of the Semitic mother-goddess, the protectress of sailors, whose sacred bird *par excellence* was the dove.

By the middle of the nineteenth century it appeared to all folklorists that the Aryan theory in its general form was no longer tenable. For not only had a considerable number of non-Aryan variants become known in Europe, but also the fixity of the structure in most fairy tales had become clearer. When about that time the interest taken by European scholars in the literature of Ancient India began to shift from the Vedic songs to the narrative literature of the Sanskrit period, the immediate result was the discovery of a number of well-known European fairy tales in the Indian compilations. These facts led Th. Benfey to enunciate, in 1859, his famous theory of the Indian origin of fairy tales and their migration to Europe.[10] Benfey was not primarily

a folklorist, and he never thought of subjecting his Indian or the European variants to a close analysis. Had he thought of it, the probability is that he would not have had the time and the means for such an undertaking. He allowed himself therefore to be guided by the general impression of tale-types as represented by variants of the Grimm collection or by some of the historical variants quoted above. His thesis rested then rather on the results of his brilliant intuition than on strict scientific proofs. Neither can his mode of procedure be called bold. On the contrary, where his results have been shown, by more recent investigations, to rest on an insecure basis or to be in contradiction with the facts, the cause lies with the insufficiency of the materials at his disposal. In some cases he did not even go as far as his materials would have plainly justified, simply because he was not prepared to subject the stories to a searching analysis. The best example of this hesitancy is perhaps the Indian origin of the Greek story of the seer Teiresias.[11]

Teiresias, it will be recalled, according to one version was struck with blindness because he had seen a goddess naked. He was successively converted into a woman and again into a man for beholding a snake couple in the act of copulation, and he rendered a judgment to settle a dispute which had arisen between Zeus and Hera on the important question whether man or woman conceived the greater pleasure in conjugal intercourse. He had decided that it was woman, thus making Hera lose her wager, and she punished him by striking him with blindness. Zeus, however, indemnified him by making him a seer. Benfey recognized the striking resemblance of this tale with an episode of the great Indian epic, the *Mahâbhârata*. There a king is transformed into a woman by bathing in a river (quite a banal story incident in Indian fiction). He leaves his kingdom to his 100 sons and retires into the forest, where as a woman he gives birth to 100 more sons, whom he leads into his kingdom to share in the rule. But Indra sows discord between the two groups of sons, so that they kill one another. Assuming the shape of a Brahman, Indra approaches him and asks him which of the two groups of sons he desires most to have brought back to life. Unhesitatingly he chooses those whom he had given birth to as a woman, ' for a woman loves more than a man '. Asked whether he would like to regain his original sex, he prefers to remain a woman, ' for woman has greater pleasure in love than man '. Here the divinity evidently approaches the hero after his first metamorphosis (a point which the Greek texts leave in the dark), which is of course sufficient to give him the competency to answer such a delicate question. If a dependence of the Greek legend upon the Indian parallel be supposed, we may surmise that the re-transformation of Teiresias into a man was originally the punishment inflicted upon him by Hera, who thus wanted, in accordance with his

own pronouncement, to reduce the ratio of his enjoyment. The quarrel of the divine couple and the malicious vengeance of the angry goddess would then be an addition to the Eastern tale made in post-Homeric Greece. This does not solve the question of Teiresias' first metamorphosis into a woman. The solution is furnished by the motive given to explain his blindness (a fact which needed no motivation since most seers were blind), the beholding a goddess in *négligé*, for which we have another Indian parallel not thought of by Benfey in this connexion. King Ila surprises the god Śiva with the daughter of a mountain giant on a meadow in a *tête-à-tête* highly objectionable to all Puritans. For his indiscretion he is cursed by the angry goddess to be henceforth a woman. Lastly, it is pertinent to ask, where did the episode of the copulating snakes come in in the original version of the Teiresias legend? The answer is given by a third Indian story occurring in the *Munipaticaritram*, a Prakrit work known to Benfey but not recognized by him as capable of furnishing the most important clue to the Greek legend. King Brahmadatta surprises a female snake in an act of adultery and strikes it with his whip. He is slandered by the revengeful female to her husband, who promptly seeks to kill the monarch. Fortunately, he overhears the latter relating the incident to his queen. So the grateful male snake rewards him instead with the gift of understanding the language of animals, i.e., he makes him a seer. Thus the Hellenic Teiresias legend is undoubtedly an Indian tale, badly garbled, which originally read as follows: Witnessing the adultery of a female snake, he punished it by wounding it and was rewarded by the grateful male with the power to understand the language of animals and the sounds of nature. Coming upon a goddess, as she was bathing, he was transformed into a woman. Called in to settle a dispute between Zeus and Hera, he gave the well-known answer and was retransformed into a man by the angry and spiteful goddess.

Benfey's theory of the Indian origin of European fairy (and merry) tales was universally accepted and applied to types which he himself had had no occasion to treat, by successors who did not, as a rule, improve upon his methods. It was for this insufficiency of scientific method that the whole theory was attacked, in 1893, by Joseph Bédier,[12] in his well-known work *Les Fabliaux*. Bédier proved (1) that the intuitive method of Benfey and his successors fell considerably short of the ideals of scholarly accuracy and (2) that merry tales in particular have as a rule such a simple plot that even scientific analysis and a careful comparison of a considerable number of variants will lead to no satisfactory result. He even admitted, for certain types, the possibility of polygenesis, that is, that the same type may have originated independently in different parts of the globe. Inasmuch as Bédier's observations apply to merry tales, they will

be dealt with in a subsequent chapter. For most fairy tale types his scepticism goes decidedly too far, as will be shown presently.

In the meantime a new school had arisen in Great Britain, led by Andrew Lang,[13] Sir George Lawrence Gomme [14] and Dr. J. A. MacCulloch.[15] These scholars pointed out that a large number of the motives as well as certain conditions of a political, social and economic nature commonly met with in fairy tales could have been set down only in a society totally different not only from our own but different even from mediaeval and ancient society as depicted by the chroniclers. In other words, fairy tales will have about them a flavour of primitiveness and savagery which would give them a truly venerable age. The question of story migration was rather neglected by this school, and Andrew Lang in particular went so far as to claim polygenesis for a certain number of, if not for all, fairy tales.

This theory is indeed open to very grave objections. Inasmuch as it still appears to have a certain hold on the British public I may be pardoned for taking up this subject at some length. The doctrine of polygenesis, so far as fairy tales are concerned, is probably the most untenable. For it is unthinkable that stories with a plot as complicated as that of *Nicht Nocht Naething* (outlined above) should have arisen independently. In the second place, granting that a given motive could have arisen only in savagery, this fact would prove nothing for the type which may well have incorporated the motives in question in the shape of survivals. But granting also that the type originated in savagery, it can have originated only in the savagery of the particular country where it was first put together. From there it may have migrated (theoretically at least) to countries far removed from that stage of savagery, so that in no case does it prove anything for the past of the people among whom it is now current. Lastly, the so-called primitiveness of certain conditions obtaining in fairy tales has been vastly exaggerated. A few examples to show this may be in place.

In a number of fairy tales kings and princesses are described, in spite of the splendour of their courts, as opening the gates themselves, dispensing, evidently, with footmen and porters. From this it has been concluded that the original 'courts' of fairy tales were of a rather primitive sort and that the trappings represent later accretions. To this it may be pertinent to observe that in the *Lives of the Caesars* of Suetonius and the *Annals* of Tacitus, Claudius and Nero are made to do things which they would certainly never have dreamt of doing, and matters are not much different in the historical novel of a famous Polish

writer covering the same period. Should one conclude from this that the court of Rome's first dynasty was 'primitive'? The obvious explanation is that Suetonius and Tacitus repeated the scandals of the barber-shops, and the writers of historical novels imitate Suetonius and Tacitus. It is difficult for ordinary folk to envisage the complicated life of a monarch, and, apart from the houses of gold and stairs of marble, they will inevitably picture to themselves court life in Buckingham Palace in much the same fashion as ordinary life everywhere.

Again, from the fact that almost every hero of fairy tales marries a princess and in due time inherits the kingdom of his father-in-law, the Anthropological School has concluded that at the time when the tales arose, kingdoms passed not to the eldest son but to the daughter or daughters. However, in the average American dime novel the hero, always of thoroughly democratic origin, proves himself to be an incarnation of the ideal and in the end marries the daughter of a millionaire, inheriting in due time, we may suppose, his father-in-law's millions. Should one conclude from that peculiarity that American millionaires are in the habit of transmitting their money to their daughters only, excluding their sons?

Much has been made of the small size of fairy tale kingdoms which always enable the hero to reach the border line in a short time and without the aid of a passenger train. But it is not even necessary to go back to the time of the Heptarchy to reach such a condition. Goethe, it will be recalled, was the minister of a principality which was even smaller.

From the fact that the suitor of the princess is always an outsider the existence of the exogamous marriage system has been inferred. But unless I am very much mistaken this very 'exogamous' marriage system still exists practically intact among the European royal families.

The well-known types of the *Animal Bridegroom* and the *Animal Bride* have been connected with the totemic system. Unfortunately, the only common feature is the occurrence of an animal, and by this logic it should be possible to link La Fontaine's fables with totemism. In short, the more one tests the anthropological theory the more unsatisfactory it becomes. What can safely be said is simply that a limited number of motives is current among savages, though usually not combined into tale-types; that certain others present an outlook which is not ordinarily met with in highly civilized societies and institutions (e.g. barbarous modes of punishment) which have, in Europe at least, become obsolete since the French Revolution and the reforms