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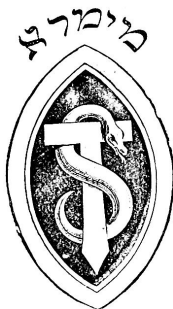
THE
BIRTH AND GROWTH OF MYTH,
AND ITS SURVIVAL IN
FOLK-LORE, LEGEND, AND DOGMA.

A Lecture

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THE
BIRTH AND GROWTH OF MYTH,
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THE birth-place of myth is in man's endeavour to interpret the meaning of his surroundings. He has adapted much, but created nothing. The rudest of his race built the fabric of his fancy out of pre-existing materials which earth and sky supplied, and for the greater works of imagination with which the poet and the painter have enriched us, they have drawn upon those materials and upon that experience of nature and life which has come down from the past as an intellectual inheritance. Whether it be the origin of a universe or the rhythmic setting of a great product of the human mind, the maxim—*ex nihilo nihil fit*—holds good through all space and time.

Man, in his first outlook on Nature, altogether ignorant of the character of the forces by which he was environed, ignorant of the unaltering relation between cause and effect—a relation which it needed the experience of ages and the generalisations therefrom to enable him to apprehend—regarded every moving thing as impelled by a force akin to that which impelled him, and differing only in degree. The only force of which he was conscious was what we call the force of will. His own voluntary movements were governed by his will; and so he argued that everything else which moved did so because it was endowed with will-force and directed by it. A personal life and will was therefore attributed to sun, moon, clouds, river, waterfall, ocean, and tree, and the varying phenomena of the sky at dawn or noonday, at grey eve or black-clouded night, was the product of the controlling life that dwelt in all.

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In a thousand different forms this conception was expressed. The clouds were cows with swelling udders to be milked by the winds of heaven; the thunder was the roar of a mighty beast; the lightning a serpent darting at its prey, an angry eye flashing, the storm-demon's outshot forked tongue; the rainbow a thirsty monster; the waterspout a long-tailed dragon. This was not imagery, but an explanation. Primitive man did not embody his concepts in pretty conceits, but meant exactly what he said. 'A thing is said to be explained when it is classified with other things with which we are already acquainted. We explain the origin, progress, and ending of a thunder-storm when we classify the phenomena presented by it along with other more familiar phenomena of vaporisation and condensation. But the primitive man explained the same thing to his own satisfaction when he had classified it along with the well-known phenomena of human volition,' by constructing a theory of a great black dragon pierced by the unerring arrows of a heavenly archer, who releases the treasures of light and rain which the monster had stolen.

The myth-making stage in human progress finds an analogy ready to hand in the child's nature. To him not only are all living creatures endowed with human intelligence, but everything is alive. He beats the chair against which he has knocked his head, and afterwards kisses it in token of renewed friendship; in his Kosmos wooden soldiers and wooden horses are actuated by the same sort of personal will as nursemaids and kittens. Even among full-grown civilised Europeans, as Mr. Grote remarks, "The force of momentary passion will often suffice to supersede the acquired habit, and even an intelligent man may be impelled in a moment of agonising pain to kick or beat the lifeless object from which he has suffered." Mr. Tylor tells us that "the wild native of Brazil would bite the stone he stumbled over, or the arrow that wounded him. Such a mental condition may be traced along the course of history, not merely in impulsive habit, but in formally enacted law.

The rude Kukis of Southern Asia were very scrupulous in carrying out their simple law of vengeance, life for life; if a tiger killed a Kuki, his family were in disgrace till they had retaliated by killing and eating this tiger or another; but, further, if a man was killed by a fall from a tree, his relations would take their revenge by cutting the tree down, and scattering it in chips. A modern king of Cochin-China, when one of his ships sailed badly, used to put it in the pillory as he would any other criminal." Mr. Grote adds "that a court of justice was held at the Prytaneum, in Athens, to try any inanimate object, such as an axe or a piece of wood or stone, which had caused the death of any one without proved human agency, and this wood or stone, if condemned, was in solemn form cast beyond the border. The spirit of this remarkable procedure reappears in the old English law (repealed in the present reign), whereby not only a beast that kills a man, but a cart-wheel that runs over him, or a tree that falls on him and kills him, is deodand, or given to God, *i.e.*, forfeited and sold for the poor." ('Primitive Culture,' I., 259). Among ancient legal proceedings in France we read of animals condemned to the gallows for the crime of murder, and of swarms of caterpillars which infested certain districts being admonished to take themselves off within a given number of days on pain of being declared accursed and excommunicated!

The wide-spread attribution of life and consequent personification of all things, which has just received illustration, is further seen in the attribution of sexual qualities which survives, frequently in most perplexing form, in gender. In some simple and early languages there are but two genders, masculine and feminine, the classification of certain things as *neutrius generis* "of neither gender," being of later origin. An inquiry into the origin of myths throws light upon the practice of attributing sex to lifeless objects, the personification of anything being followed by division into gender according to certain distinctive qualities, the major and independent being classed as male, the minor and dependent

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as female. Our language has happily got rid of the false distinctions which encumber some ancient and modern languages, and for the most part attributes sex only to living beings, while in German, for example, a spoon is masculine, a fork is feminine, and a knife is neuter, the mention of which, by way of illustration, indicates what an interesting field of inquiry into the particular causes which have determined the attribution of masculine gender to certain lifeless objects and of feminine gender to others, lies open to the student of the subject.

Were further illustration needed of the material source from whence all expression has come, we find it in our abstract terms, every one of which had originally a concrete meaning, "its present use being the result of a figurative transfer founded on the recognition of an analogy between a physical and a mental act or product. For example, 'abstract' is 'drawn off, dragged away;' 'concrete' is 'grown together,' comported into something 'substantial,' as we say, that is, something that 'stands beneath.' 'Apprehend' signifies literally 'to lay hold of,' and we still use it in that sense, as when we say that the officer 'apprehends' the felon; to 'possess' is 'to sit by, to beset.' When we employ the phrase, 'I propose to discuss an important subject,' we use words signifying originally something apprehensible by the senses. To 'propose' is 'to set in front' of us; to 'discuss' is 'to shake to pieces;' a 'subject' is a thing 'thrown under,' something brought under our notice; 'important' means 'carrying within'—that is, having a content, not empty or valueless."—(See Prof. Whitney's 'Lectures,' p. 112.)

Happily abundant evidence is at hand to establish the main position advanced as to the *origines* of myth. There are savage tribes still in the myth-making stage of human development, whose present condition represents that out of which the higher races have emerged, and the relation of whose mythology to that of those races it is needful to determine.

As a proof of the personification of the phenomena of

nature, let us take the dark patches on the face of the moon.

In the Samoan Islands these are said to be a woman, a child, and a mallet. A woman was once hammering out paper-cloth, and seeing the moon rise, looking like a great bread-fruit, she asked it to come down, and let her child eat a piece of it. But the moon was very angry at the idea of being eaten, and gobbled up woman, child, and mallet; and there they are to this day. In Ceylon, it is said that when Buddha was wandering hungry in the forest a pious hare offered itself to him to be killed and eaten, whereupon that holy man set it on high in the moon that all men might see it, and marvel at its self-sacrifice and piety. The Selish Indians of North-Western America say that the little wolf was in love with the toad, and pursued her one moonlight night till, as a last chance, she made a desperate spring on to the face of the moon, and there she is still.

Comparing these with familiar myths upon the same object, we have our own "Man in the Moon," who was put up there for picking sticks on a Sunday; the German version, which places him there, with a woman, for the crime of churning butter on Sunday; the Icelandic myth, in which the two children familiar to us, as Jack and Jill, have been kidnapped by the moon, and carried up to her, where they stand to this day with the bucket on the pole across their shoulders, falling away, one after the other, as the moon wanes—a phase embalmed in the couplet—

"Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after."

Take again the stars, to which personal life and action is attributed in savage mythology. The natives of Australia say the stars in Orion's belt and scabbard are young men dancing a corroboree; the Esquimaux speak of the stars in Orion's belt as seal-hunters who missed their way home; the Kasirs of Bengal declare that the stars were once men—they climbed to the top of a tree (of course, the great heaven-tree of so many myths, of the Jack and Beanstalk genus), but others below cut

the trunk and left them up there in the branches. According to the ancient Aryan, they are the offspring of the first man, Tama, giving light from heaven to men below; and hence the superstitious peasant of our own land, for a reason he cannot tell, will teach his children that it is wicked to point at the stars. The names given to our constellations, and the grave belief of men like Origen and Kepler that the stars are animated, show what kindred explanations races in very different states of development give of similar phenomena. Along the line, too, wherever earthquakes are felt, there are myths of an animal underneath the earth. The Hindu notion of a great tortoise beneath the earth, which is thus kept from falling, at once occurs to us. That myth is developed there in many forms, but we are now more concerned with its form among barbarous races. In Celebes we hear of the world-supporting hog, who rubs himself against a tree, and thereby shakes the earth. The Caribs say that when there is an earthquake Mother Earth is dancing; the Thascalons that the tired world-supporting gods cause it by shifting their burden to a new relay; the Kamchadals tell of the earthquake-god who sledges below ground, and whose dog causes the earthquake when he shakes off fleas or snow; the Japanese think that earthquakes are caused by the huge whales creeping underground, having been probably led to this idea by finding the fossil bones, which seem to them the remains of subterranean monsters. From all this a short step leads us to the popular belief which, in ancient times, connected the eruptions of *Ætna* and *Stromboli* with the infernal regions, and credited the fiends below with the accompanying noises. I must not dwell any longer upon these nature-myths, which it is obvious are capable of very expanded comparison; but perhaps enough has been said to show that the mythology of the lower races gives us a basis for studying nature-myths in their historical development among higher races, and affords very strong evidence in favour of the thesis advanced at starting—namely, that the birth-place of myth is in

man's endeavour to interpret the meaning of his surroundings.

The larger number of investigators in the field of what is known as comparative mythology are of this opinion; but it is to be borne in mind that there are limits thereto, and it is to be regretted that some of our comparative mythologists have committed themselves to a theory which refers all the myths, both in outline and detail, of one great section of the human family, to the sun and dawn, basing such theory on the results of a comparison between classic and Vedic myths, to which I shall have occasion presently to refer.

Upon this theory not only are all Aryan myths in the last resort to be adequately explained by reference to the phenomena just named, but the great epic poems which sprang into existence in the ages which followed the dispersion of the tribes, and which exhibit an identical framework, are explained in like manner. Without at all abating what has been said in support of the nature-origin of myth, one may adhere to the general principle while rejecting its universal application, and it does seem hard to admit that the Trojan war is but the story of the contest waged in the East to recover the treasures of which the powers of darkness have robbed the day in the West; that Helen is the dawn, and Achilles a solar figment; that the heroes of the Volsungs and King Arthur and his Table Knights are but sunbeams and shadows; and that many of them have not "clustered round some historic basis." Upon this solar theory of myths Mr. Tylor appositely remarks:—"The close and deep analogies between the life of nature and the life of man have been for ages dwelt upon by poets and philosophers, who in simile or in argument have told of light and darkness, of calm and tempest, of birth, growth, change, decay, dissolution, renewal. But no one-sided interpretation can be permitted to absorb into a single theory such endless many-sided correspondences as these. Rash inferences which, on the strength of mere resemblance, derive episodes of myth from episodes of nature, must be regarded with utter mistrust, for the

student who has no more stringent criterion than this for his myths of sun and sky and dawn, will find them wherever it pleases him to seek them. Should he, for instance, demand as his property the nursery 'Song of Sixpence,' his claim would be easily established: obviously the four-and-twenty blackbirds are the four-and-twenty hours, and the pie that holds them is the underlying earth covered with the overarching sky; how true a touch of nature it is that when the pie is opened, *i.e.*, when day breaks, the birds begin to sing, the King is the Sun, and his counting out his money is pouring out the sunshine; the Queen is the Moon, and her transparent honey the moonlight; the Maid is the rosy-fingered Dawn who rises before the Sun, her master, and hangs out the clouds—his clothes—across the sky; the particular blackbird who so tragically ends the tale by snipping off her nose, is the hour of sunrise."

I will now pass from this good-humoured banter against the extreme application of a sound principle, to the evidence of a common mythology among the Indo-European peoples before their separation. Most of those present are doubtless aware that the languages spoken in Europe by the Celts, Teutons, Slaves, Greeks and Romans; and in Asia, by the Hindus, Persians, and some lesser peoples; are all proved to be descendants of a single mother-tongue, known as the Aryan, or, as better defining the races included thereunder, the Indo-European. From this fact, the inference that these peoples are blood-relations is beyond all question, although physical causes, such as climate, food, and intermixture with inferior races, have in the long course of time brought about certain marked divergences.

Language, the instrument which has been applied with such signal success in revealing this common origin of the Aryan nations, has also brought to light the fact that before the several tribes dispersed in slow succession, some westwards towards Europe, and the rest, at later intervals, southwards through the passes of the Hindu-Kush mountains into Hindustan, they had a common religion, the observance of whose rites had

not become the usurped functions of a priestly caste, and a common mythology, closely linked to that religion, which survives among European nations in departing beliefs and in legends which have been promoted into history, or mingled with it; in nursery tales, proverbs, superstitions, and all their kith and kin, so that the Hindu mother amuses her child with fairy tales which often correspond, even in minor incidents, with stories in Scottish or Scandinavian nurseries; and she tells them in words which are phonetically akin to words in Swedish and Gaelic.

The key which unlocked these interesting facts is the Sanskrit language, for, as in the history of the Indo-European languages, it served as the starting-point, because, although related to them not as ancestor, but as elder member of the same family, it has, more than any other member, preserved traces of the common parent from which they sprang, so in the history of Indo-European mythology it is in the ancient Vedic texts written in Sanskrit, and especially the Rig-Veda, that we find the materials for a comparative study, since therein are preserved the first, fresh meaning of Aryan myth. The investigation itself was prompted by the absence of any satisfactory canon of interpretation of the Greek myths. They had been degraded into dull chronicle by the method of Euhêmeros, which made Herakles a vulgar thief, carrying off a crop of oranges guarded by mastiffs, and Jove smiting the giants a king repressing sedition; they had been credited by Lord Bacon with an allegorical meaning which was precisely what the fancy of the expositor chose to make it, but which was at least an advance upon the coarse and revolting stories of which the Greeks regarded them as the vehicle. It did not seem likely that a people who have made the world more beautiful for all of us, whose works of art are alike the delight and unrealised ideal of our sculptors, and from whose wise ones the wise of our day gladly learn, had deliberately cultivated a mass of repulsive myths, degrading to their framers and acceptors; and no small credit is due to those comparative

mythologists who have recovered that hidden and purer meaning enshrined in classic myth, and which throws light upon the intellectual condition under which it was born.

This work was accomplished by comparing a large number of the Greek names of gods and heroes, whose meaning is obscure, with names allied to those in Sanskrit whose meaning is clear, the relationship between the two, hidden as it is by the substitution of one sound for another, which extends to all the Indo-European languages, being explained by the law which governs such changes, or "permutations of consonants," and known as "Grimm's law." In many cases the Sanskrit words were found to be common names for the sun, the sky, the dawn, and so on, the words in each case having plain physical meanings. As an illustration of the method and its successful application, let us take the familiar myth explaining the birth of Athênê. She is said to be the daughter of Zeus, and to have sprung from his brain or forehead. Now the Greek *Zeus*, like the Latin *Deus*, is the Sanskrit *Dyaus*, which means the *bright sky*, or *Heaven*—*Dyaus-pitar* being the same as *Zeupatêr*, and Lat. *Jupiter*. *Athênê* is probably the Sanskrit *Ahanâ*, which is one of the many Vedic names for the *dawn*. Thus the meaning of the Greek myth is obvious. The dawn springs from the forehead of the sky: the day-break appears rising from the East. But to the Greek, in whose language this physical meaning was lost, *Zeus* did not mean the *bright sky*, but the greatest of the Olympian deities, father of gods and men. Such a result might be naturally expected when the Aryan communities became more widely severed, the personal elements in each myth undergoing great changes accounted for by geographical reasons, changes which caused the divine of one mythology to be the demoniacal of another, which gave to the myths of the North their rugged grandeur, and to the myths of the South their stately grace.

The theory that the similarity between Aryan myths is caused by one nation having borrowed or adopted

those of another is not tenable, unless there was an intercourse between them after their separation far more active than history warrants ; and we shall presently see that the argument between the stories of India and Scandinavia makes it incredible that there has been any borrowing, and, still less, any independent fabrication, while there is just that unlikeness in certain detail which might be expected from the different geographical positions of the two nations, explaining how impossible it was that the elephant, the giant ape and gigantic turtle, which occur so frequently in the Brahmanic mythology, should find a place in the mythical legends of Northern Europe.

There is one class of myth which affords interesting evidence of descent from a common source, and of survival in an unlooked-for form.

All the Aryan nations, and some other nations which have had intercourse with them, have, among their legends, the story of a battle between a hero and a monster, in each case the hero becoming victor, and releasing treasures, or in some way rendering help to man. In Hindu myth this battle is fought between Indra and the dragon Vritra ; in Persian between Rustem and a huge wild ass ; in Roman between Hercules and the three-headed monster Cacus ; in Greek, among other like tales, between Apollo and the snake Python ; in Norse between Thor and Midgard and between Sigurd and Fafnir ; in Jewish between Satan and God ; in Christian between St. George and the Dragon.

To explain these, it is needful to turn for a moment to the civilization of the Aryan tribes. The efforts of that people were mainly directed to increasing the numbers of their herds and flocks. (The identification of these with wealth is familiar to us in the word "pecuniary," which is derived from Latin "pecus," cattle). The cow yielded milk for the Aryan and his household ; her dung fertilised the soil ; her young multiplied the wealth of the family at an ever-increasing rate, and she naturally became the symbol of fruitfulness and prosperity, and ultimately an object of veneration ; while for the functions

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which the bull performed he was the type of strength. The Aryan's enemy was he who stole or injured the cattle; the Aryan's friend was he who saved them from the robber's clutch.

That personification of phenomena to which reference has been made already being brought into play, the great heaven was to the Aryan a vast plain over which roamed animals of as varied a kind as the ever-shifting clouds indicated, the two most prominent animal figures in the mythical heaven being the cow and bull. The sun, giver of light, most welcome blessing, was the bull of majesty and strength; the white clouds were cows from whose full udders dropped the milk of heaven for the support of the children of earth, the blessed rain.

But there were dark clouds also, and these were the dwelling-place of the monster who conceals the herds of cattle, and withholds from earth both light and rain. Chiefest among the exploits of Indra in his battle with Vritra, the thief, serpent, wolf, wild boar (as he is variously called in the Rig-Veda), and his crushing defeat of that enemy, through which he releases the imprisoned cows; the hidden treasures bursting forth from the sky as the monster dies, killed by the darts of Indra.

This myth, of course, depicts that battle between light and darkness which is probably the most striking phenomenon in nature, and, in addition to its existence in this form, it is the main source of the endless tales of lovely ladies in durance vile, from which the chivalry and bravery of knights releases them; as is the wintry sleep of nature the parent of myths of spell-bound maidens and of heroes in repose.

Passing by any analysis of the myths of light and darkness among the Western Aryans, since they would yield the same results as that furnished by the Vedic myth, we have to note what a marvellous change has converted this myth of Indra and Vritra into a religion and a philosophy. Amid the conflicting powers of nature and the analogy presented to them by the cease-

less warfare between good and evil, there was developed in the Persian religion that dualism which has so mightily influenced for evil the beliefs which flourish among us to-day. The demon Vritra becomes the arch-fiend Ahriman, who struggles with Ormuzd, not like Indra, for the rescue of cattle, but for the citadel of Mansoul, the dominion over the universe. Ahriman mars the earth which Ormuzd has made. He quenches its light, keeps back the rain from its thirsty soil, and is the author of evil thought, evil words, and evil deeds. Like his physical ancestor, Vritra, he is represented as a serpent, and his name is the "Spirit of Darkness." It was with this dualism that the Jews came into association during their memorable exile in Babylon. There is no evidence that previous to their captivity they possessed the conception of a Devil as the author of all evil. In the earlier books of their Old Testament Jehovah is represented as dispensing with his own hand good and evil, and the notion of an arch-demon occurs only in those books composed after the close contact of the Semitic Jew with the Aryan Persian. The Jewish mind was ripe to receive this belief, because it was already familiar with the notion of a being who was a minister of God, and whose office it seems to have been to act as a sort of detective or public accuser, as well as seducer. This would cause him to be regarded as an object of dread, and at last to be credited with the authorship of evil, and hence the Persian Ahriman found a place in Jewish theology as the being familiar to us as the Devil; and his hierarchy of spirits as the swarm of demons upon whom every evil was charged. With goat-like body, horns and cloven hoofs borrowed from the sylvan god Pan; with red beard and pitchfork borrowed from the Norse god Thor; with person black and sooty as befitted his abode, we might smile at this Devil decked in the dress of different climes and ages, if the conception of him as stupid, gullible, and lame, which obtained in the Middle Ages was the only conception. But the legends of his pristine purity, of his failure to grasp supreme power, of his expulsion from heaven with

liberty to thenceforth torment mankind ; the ascription of all physical and moral evil to him and his agents ; the gross materialism which incarnated millions of demons, and credited them with sway over the elements of nature and the bodies and souls of men, giving rise to that belief in witchcraft through which it is computed nine millions of so-called witches were burned during its existence ; these repress the smile, for they have rested as a blighting curse upon the world, and are not yet bereft of all power to harm. But the world is waking from this hideous nightmare, which, like the Trolls of Norse mythology who burst at sunrise, will altogether disappear under the full light of the knowledge of our time.

In view of the few minutes remaining at disposal, I must now proceed by way of illustration, which, in this matter, is argument and evidence as well, to show that certain stories long accepted as veritable history have their source in legends common to many peoples. .

Every one is familiar with the story of William Tell ; how, in the year 1307, Gessler sat a hat on a pole as the symbol of Imperial power, and ordered every one who passed by to do obeisance towards it, and how a mountaineer named Tell, who hated Gessler and the tyranny which the symbol expressed, passed by without saluting it. Reputed to be an expert archer, he was ordered, by way of punishment, to shoot an apple off the head of his own son, and obeyed. The apple was placed on the boy's head, Tell bent his bow, the arrow sped, and both apple and arrow fell together to the ground. Gessler noticed that Tell, before shooting, had stuck a second arrow in his belt, and asked the reason. "It was for you," replied Tell ; "had I shot my child, it would have pierced your heart." The silence of contemporary historians concerning this tale of skill and bravery caused doubt to be thrown upon it in the sixteenth century ; but so strong was popular belief in the event, confirmed as it was by evidences of a kind quite conclusive to people both before and since, namely, the lime-tree in the market-place at Altdorf to which Tell's boy was bound, and the crossbow

itself preserved in Zurich arsenal, that one daring sceptic is said to have been condemned to be burnt for doubting the truth of the story, contending that it was of Danish origin. But the sceptic was right, for the old Danish historian, Saxo Grammaticus, tells of a certain Palnatoki, who, for some time among Harold's body-guard, had made his bravery odious to many of his comrades by his continual boasting. Talking one day with them when in his cups, he bragged that he could hit the smallest apple placed a long way off a wand at the first shot, which boast came to the hearing of the King, who commanded that, instead of a wand, the head of Palnatoki's own son should have the apple placed upon it, and that, failing to hit at the first flight of the arrow, Palnatoki should lose his head. "Yet," says the old chronicler, "did not his sterling courage, though caught in the snare of slander, suffer him to lay aside his firmness of heart; he warned the boy urgently, when he took his stand, to await the coming of the hurtling arrow with calm ears and unbent head, lest he might defeat the practised skill of the bowman." At the first shot the apple was pierced, and when Palnatoki was asked by the King why he had taken more arrows from the quiver, he made answer, "That I might avenge on the swerving of the first, lest, perchance, my innocence might have been punished, while your violence escaped scot-free." Saxo gives this as occurring in the year 950. But the story appears not only in Denmark, but in England, Norway, Finland, Russia, Persia, and Dr. Dasent says that a legend of the wild Samoyedes, who never heard of Tell, or saw a book in their lives, relate it, chapter and verse, of one of their marksmen.

And in all these stories we find an unerring archer who, at some tyrant's bidding, shoots from the head of some dear one a small object, and who provides himself with a second arrow, the purpose of which is to kill the tyrant if the archer's son be shot.

Whether Tell be, as Max Müller suggests, the last reflection of the Sun-god, be he called Indra, or Apollo, or Ulysses, who, with unerring light-shaft, or arrow of

lightning, hit the apple or any other point, and destroy their enemies with the same bow, matters not; we must, I think, ask the writers who wish to point their sentences with an historic reference, not to speak of Switzerland in future as "the land of Tell."

The same ruthless iconoclasm must sweep away that image of the faithful brute Gellert, whose sad fate in the story has dimmed many an eye; how, after killing the wolf which would have devoured Llewellyn's child, the prince came home, and finding the cradle upset and the dog's mouth blood-smeared, slew the faithful fellow before he could see from what a death the dog had saved his boy. Although to this day the tourist is shown the dog's grave at Beth-Gellert, the truth must out that the story occurs in the folk-lore of nearly every Aryan people. It exists in Russia and Germany; it was popular among the mediæval monks; it occurs in Persia, India, and among non-Aryan races, as the Egyptians and Chinese.

In the Egyptian story a Wali once smashed a pot full of herbs which a cook had prepared. The angry cook thrashed the offender within an inch of his life, and when he afterwards came to look at the broken pot, he found among the herbs a poisonous snake.

In the Panchatantra, a Hindu collection of fables made many centuries ago, the story takes this form:—An infirm child is left by its mother while she goes to fetch water, and she charges the father, who is a Brahman, to watch over it. But he leaves to collect alms, and soon after a snake crawls towards the child. In the house was an ichneumon, a creature often cherished as a family friend, who sprang at the snake and killed it. When the mother came back, the ichneumon went gladly to meet her, his jaws and face smeared with blood. The poor mother, thinking it had killed her child, threw the water-jug at it and killed it; then seeing her child safe, and the body of the venomous snake torn to pieces, she beat her breast and face with grief, and scolded her husband for leaving the house. The class of stories of which the foregoing are a type, is

not likely to have arisen spontaneously in each land. Tales of bravery and faithfulness have, happily, everywhere a residuum of fact, but it does not usually extend to likeness in minute detail, and they are not to be confused with inferences which, cast into forms of myth and tradition, are drawn from wide-spread facts suggesting to the mind of man a common explanation. For example, the discovery of huge bones may give rise to a belief in an age of giants; the tradition of a diminutive race, as of the Lapps, in Europe, to a belief in dwarfs; certain marks on the solid rock to myths of footprints of the gods; the finding of bones of mammoths at some depth below the surface to the myth of a huge burrowing creature that lives underground; the observation of marine shells on very high mountains to legends of a great Deluge; but no such reasoning can apply to the myths of Tell and Gellert. Of course, further research will show that many of our popular tales are neither survivals of legends common to the undivided Aryan tribes nor indigenous products, but foreign importations conveyed into Europe by the pilgrims, students, merchants, and warriors who travelled from West to East and East to West in the Middle Ages; but the application of the comparative method gives the clue to the source of each. It is no small gain that the science of comparative mythology has rescued the folk-lore, popular legends, and nursery tales of many lands from the neglect which was fast consigning them to oblivion, and discovered in them a valuable aid to our knowledge of the past. The collection of stories which are now accessible, and which have been taken down from the lips of narrators in the Highlands and the Dekhan, in Iceland and Ceylon, in South Africa and New Zealand, in Japan and Serbia, are not only interesting in themselves as products of the story-tellers' art, but valuable in the materials which they furnish for comparison and classification. They indicate composition out of but few materials originally: their variations being the result of admixtures of local colouring, historical fact, popular belief and superstition, all largely affected by the skill of

the professional story-teller. Under many disguises the same fairy prince or princess, the same wicked magician and clever Boots peeps through, disclosing the near relationship of Hindu nursery tales to the familiar tales of our childhood.

As illustration let us take the familiar story of Cinderella, for the original of which we travel to the East, finding it in that most venerable sacred book of the Brahmans, the Rig-Veda.

Cinderella is the aurora, the swift one without feet; as the first of those who appear every day in the eastern sky, as the first to know the break of day, the aurora is naturally represented as one of the swiftest among those who are the guests of the sun-prince (Mitra) during the night; and, like her cows, which do not cover themselves with dust, she, in her onward flight, leaves no footsteps behind her. The word used ("apâd," *without feet*) may, indeed, mean not only she who has no feet, but also she who has no slippers, the aurora having, as it appears, lost them; for the Prince Mitra, while following the beautiful young girl, finds a slipper, which shows her footless, the measure of her foot,—a foot so small that no other woman has a foot like it,—and thus we have herein the point round which the interest of the well-known story gathers. It is, as is clear, a myth of the sun chasing the dawn, and just as Cinderella is brilliant and beautiful only while in the ball-room, so the dawn is rosy only when the sun is near. (Cf. 'Angelo de Gubernati's Zool. Myth.,' I., 31).

In the charming Hindu fairy tales collected by Miss Frere, under the title of 'Old Deccan Days,' the story is told of a Rajah who gave his only daughter a pair of slippers made of gold and jewels. She always wore them when walking, and one day, while picking wild flowers on a mountain-side, one of the slippers fell off and was lost in the jungle below. Not long after it was found by a prince when hunting, and taken home by him to his mother, who urged him to seek for the woman to whose foot it belonged, that he might wed her. Then they sent to every town in the kingdom, but in vain;

at last, hearing through travellers of a princess who had lost a jewelled slipper, the prince set off for the court of her parents to take the missing treasure, and ask for the princess as his wife, to which both she and her parents consented. The rest of the story is beautifully touching, but I cannot dwell further upon it. The same incidents of search, discovery, and marriage occur in the German version, 'Aschenputtel,' the Serbian story of 'Papalluga,' and others; while in the Greek it is the slipper of Rhodôpis, which an eagle steals while she is bathing. Flying with it to Memphis, the bird drops it into the lap of the Egyptian king as he sits on his seat of judgment, with, of course, the same result—search after, discovery, and marriage of its owner.

The same marked correspondences are exhibited in the wide-spread tale of Beauty and the Beast. In its Greek form of Psyche and Love; its German form, "the Soaring Lark;" its Norse form, "East of the Sun and West of the Moon;" its Gaelic form, the "Daughter of the Skies;" it is a bear, or lion, or dog, or loathly monster of some kind, who, being under the spell of a sorceress, is a splendid man at night, but has to resume his hideous form by day, and who will vanish from his bride if the light fall upon him. "In the Panchatantra there is the story of a king who asked his pet monkey to watch over him while he was asleep. A bee settled on the royal head, the monkey could not drive her away, so he took his sword, killed the bee, but in killing her killed the king." A similar parable is put into the mouth of Buddha; while in the fables of Phædros a bold man gives himself a severe blow on the face in trying to kill a gnat. In Dasent's 'Tales from the Norse,' a man saw a goody hard at work banging her husband across the head with a beetle, and over his head she had drawn a shirt without any slit for the neck. 'Why, goody,' he asked, 'will you beat your husband to death?' 'No,' she said, 'I only must have a hole in this shirt for his neck to come through.'

These illustrations of correspondence could be multiplied indefinitely, while a mere list of stories common to

the different branches of the Aryan stock, and which are older than the dispersion of the Aryan race, would easily transform this lecture into a catalogue occupying some time in detailing.

With the exception of allusion to the change effected in Jewish theology by the importation therein of the Persian Ahriman, no reference has been made to the myths of the Semitic family. The complicated mythology of the Aryan races is absent from the Semitic, which may be explained, in a large degree, by the permanence of the radical elements in Semitic words. For example, whereas in the Aryan, the Sans. "Dyaus" appears in Greek, not as "Zeus" "the sky," but as the "god" Zeus, in the Semitic no such alteration would occur. It had a name for the sky and the dawn, but these names were so distinctly felt as appellatives, that they did not become proper names for the gods. There is, however, none the less a large body of Semitic myth awaiting that scientific criticism which has been applied with such signal success to Aryan myth, and when the restraint imposed by artificial notions concerning the exceptional character of the writings embodied in the Old Testament are removed, the mythology of the Jews and of kindred races will contribute its share of evidence in support of the similar conditions under which it is held that myth has its birth and growth. Already the identity of some Semitic myths with Aryan myths is apparent, such as those relating to the Creation, the Deluge, the building of Babel, the passage of the Red Sea, the translation of Elijah, and the stories of Abraham and Isaac, of Joseph, and of Job; while Delilah has her representatives in Hindu and Norse legends; the strength of Samson challenges comparison with that of Hercules; and the story of Jonah's fish is related to a group of legends with which the Greek myth of Herakles and Hêsionê, and the nursery tales of Tom Thumb swallowed by the cow, and Little Red Riding Hood by the wolf, are intimately associated. As a concluding illustration, the originals of the familiar "house that Jack built," and of the "old woman who couldn't get her pig over

the stile," appear to exist in a poem regarded by some Jews as a parable concerning the past and future of the Holy Land. It begins, "A kid, a kid, my father bought for two pieces of money;" and it goes on to tell how a cat came and ate the kid, and a dog came and bit the cat, and so on to the end. "Then came the Holy One, blessed be He! and slew the angel of death, who slew the butcher, who killed the ox, that drank the water, that quenched the fire, that burnt the stick, that beat the dog, that bit the cat, that ate the kid, that my father bought for two pieces of money, a kid, a kid." This composition is in the "Septer Haggadah," and is printed at the end of the Jews' book of Passover services in Hebrew and English. (See 'Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes,' pp. 112-17; 'Tylor's Prim. Cult.' I. 78.)

I am very conscious how inadequate the treatment of this important subject has been; but I hope that enough has been said to indicate its importance in its intimate relation to our present intellectual condition. Of its survival in custom, traditional phrases, forgotten etymology of familiar words, occult sciences, &c., I have had no time to speak, and all that must now be said by way of final word is that Mythology, so far as it has been investigated, points to conclusions concerning man's primitive state identical with those indicated by pre-historic Archæology—namely, that the savage races of to-day represent, not the degradation to which it is asserted man has sunk, but the condition out of which all races above the savage have emerged.

The advocates of the development-theory do not overlook the fact that civilization has been checked occasionally and locally, for both hemispheres witness to that; neither do they forget that knowledge has been here and there used as an instrument hurtful to culture, nor that civilization intensifies vice as well as virtue; but these do not militate against the general result—a progress in which, marked as it is to-day, none of us see, or, if healthily constituted, desire to see, finality.