While the popular romances of races of all colours must be examined together, another element in this subject is not less important. It had probably been often observed before, but the fact was brought out most vividly by Von Hahn (*Griechische und albanesische Märchen,* Leipsic, 1864), that the popular tales of European races turn on the same incidents, and display the same succession of situations, the same characters, and the same plots, as are familiar in the ancient epic literature of Greece, India, Germany, and Scandinavia. The epics are either fully-developed märchen evolved by the literary genius of poets and saga-men, or the märchen are degenerate and broken-down memories of the epics and sagas, or perhaps there may be examples of both processes. The second view,—namely, that the popular tales are, so to speak, the scattered grains of gold of which the epic is the original " pocket ” or “ placer,”—the belief that the märchen are the detritus of the saga,—was for a long time prevalent. But a variety of arguments enforce the opposite conclusion, namely, that the märchen are essentially earlier in char­acter than the epic, which is the final form to which they have been wrought by the genius of Homer or of some other remote yet cultivated poet. If this view be accepted, the evolution of märchen and of certain myths has passed through the following stages :—

1. The popular tale, as current among the unculti­vated peoples, such as Iroquois, Zulus, Bushmen, Samoans, Eskimo, and Samoyedes. This tale will reflect the mental condition of rude peoples, and will be full of monstrous and miraculous events, with an absence of reason proper, as Perrault says, “ a ceux qui n’en ont pas encore.” At the same time the tale will very probably enforce some moral or practical lesson, and may even appear to have been invented with this very purpose, for man is everywhere impressed with the importance of *conduct.*
2. The same tale—or rather a series of incidents and a plot essentially the same—as it is discovered surviving in the oral traditions of the illiterate peasantry of European races. Among them the monstrous element, the ferocity of manners observed in the first stage, will be somewhat modified, but will be found most notable among the Slavonic tribes. Nowhere, even in German and Scottish märchen, is it extinct, cannibalism and cruel torture being favourite incidents.
3. The same plot and incidents as they exist in the heroic epics and poetry of the cultivated races, such as the Homeric books, the Greek tragedies, the Cyclic poets, the *Kalewala* of the Finns, certain hymns of the *Rigveda,* certain legends of the Brahmanas, the story of the Volsungs,—in these a local and almost historical character is given by the introduction of names of known places, and the adventures are attributed to national heroes,—Odys­seus, Œdipus, Sigurd, Wainamoinen, Jason, Pururavas, and others. The whole tone and manners are nobler and more refined in proportion as the literary workmanship is more elaborate.

This theory of the origin of popular tales in the fancy of peoples in the savage condition (see Mythology), of their survival as märchen among the peasantry of Indo- European and other civilized races, and of their transfigu­ration into epics, could only be worked out after the discovery that savage and civilized popular tales are full of close resemblances. These resemblances, when only known to exist among Indo-European peoples, were explained as part of a common Aryan inheritance, and as the result of a malady of language. This system, when applied to myths in general, has already been examined (see Mytho­logy). According to another view, märchen everywhere resemble each other because they all arose in India, and have thence been borrowed and transmitted. For this theory consult Benfey’s *Panchatantra* aud Μ. Cosquin’s *Contes de Lorraine* (Paris, 1886). In opposition to the Aryan theory, and the theory of borrowing from India, the system which is here advocated regards popular tales as kaleidoscopic arrangements of comparatively few situa­tions and incidents, which again are naturally devised by the early fancy. Among these incidents may be men­tioned, first, kinship and intermarriage between man and the lower animals and even inorganic phenomena. Thus a girl is wooed by a frog, pumpkin, goat, or bear, or elephant, in Zulu, Scotch, Walachian, Eskimo, Ojibway, and German märchen. This incident is based on the lack of a sense of difference between man and the things in the world which is prevalent among savages (see Mythology). Other incidents familiar in our nursery tales (such as “ Cinderella ” and “ Puss in Boots ”) turn on the early belief in metamorphosis, in magic, in friendly or protecting animals (totems or beast manitous). Others depend on the early prevalence of cannibalism (compare Grimm, 47, “ The Juniper Tree ”). This recurs in the mad song of Gretchen in *Faust,* concerning which a distinguished student writes, “ This ghost of a ballad or rhyme is my earliest remembrance, as crooned by an old East-Lothian nurse.” (Compare Chambers’s *Popular Rhymes of Scot­land,* 1870, p. 49.) The same legend occurs among the Bechuanas, and is published by Casalis. Yet another incident springs from the taboo on certain actions between husband and wife, producing the story of Cupid and Psyche (see Lang’s *Custom and Myth,* 1884, p. 64). Once more, the custom which makes the youngest child the heir is illus­trated in the märchen of the success, despite the jealousy of the elders, of Cinderella, of the Zulu prince (Callaway’s *Tales from the Amazulu,* pp. 64, 65), and in countless other märchen. In other cases, as in the world-wide märchen corresponding to the Jason epic, we seem in presence of an early romantic invention,—how diffused it is difficult to imagine. Moral lessons, again, are inculcated by the numerous tales which turn on the duty of kind­ness, or on the impossibility of evading fate as announced in prophecy. In opposition to the philological explanation of the story of Œdipus as a nature-myth, this theory of a collection of incidents illustrative of moral lessons is admirably set forth in Prof. Cauparetti’s *Edipo e la Mitologia Comparata* (Pisa, 1867).

On a general view, then, the stuff of popular tales is a certain number of incidents and a certain set of combina­tions of these incidents. Their strange and irrational character is due to their remote origin in the fancy of men in the savage condition ; and their wide distribution is caused, partly perhaps by oral transmission from people to people, but more by the tendency of the early imagination to run everywhere in the same grooves. The narratives, in the ages of heroic poetry, are elevated into epic song, and in the Middle Ages they were even embodied in legends of the saints. This view is maintained at greater length, and with numerous illustrations, in the introduction to Mrs Hunt’s translation of Grimm’s *Kinder- und Haus- Märchen,* and in *Custom and Myth,* already referred to.

A complete bibliography of the literature of popular tales would fill many pages. The reader who is curious about savage popular tales may turn to Theal's *Kaffir Folk Lore* (2d ed., London, 1886); Callaway’s *Nursery Talcs of the Amazulu* (London, 1868); Schoolcraft’s *Aigle Researches·,* Gill’s *Myths and Tales of the South Pacific;* Petitot’s *Traditions Indiennes* (1886); Shortland’s *Maori Religion and Mythology* (London, 1882) ; The *South African Folk Lore Record;* the *Folk Lore Record* (London, 1879-85, Malagasy stories) ; Rink’s *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo ;* Bleek’s *Hottentot Tales and Fables* (London, 1864) ; Castrén’s *Samoyedische Märchen* ; and Leland’s *Algonquin Legends* (London, 1884). For European tales, the bibliography in the translation of Grimm already referred to may be used, and the Maisonneuve collection, *Les Littératures populaires* may be recommended. The names of