and One Nights (*q.v.*) are full of popular tales, and popular tales are the staple of the medieval *Gesta Romanorum,* and of the collections of Straparola and other Italian conteurs. In all these and similar gatherings the story, long circulated from mouth to mouth among the people, is handled with conscious art, and little but the general outline of plot and character of incident can be regarded as original. In the *Histories ou Contes du Temps Passé* of Perrault (Elzevir, Amsterdam, 1697; the Parisian edition is of the same date) we have one of the earliest gatherings of tales which were taken down in their nursery shape as they were told by nurses to children. This at least seems probable, though Μ. Alfred Maury thinks Perrault drew from literary sources. Perrault attributed the composition to his son, P. Darmancour, at that time a child, and this pretext enabled him to give his stories in a simple and almost popular guise. It seems that popular talcs in many cases probably owe their origin to the desire of enforcing a moral or practical lesson. It appears that their irrational and “ infantile ” character— “ dépourvues de raison ”—is derived from their origin, if not actually among children, at least among childlike peoples, who have not arrived at “raison,” that is, at the scientific and modern conception of the world and of the nature of man.

The success of Perrault’s popular talcs brought the genre into literary fashion, and the Comtesse d’Aulnoy invented, or in some cases adapted, “ contes,” which still retain a great popularity. But the precise and scientific collection of tales from the lips of the people is not much earlier than our century. The chief impulse to the study was given by the brothers Grimm. The first edition of their *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen* was published in 1812. The English reader will find a very con­siderable bibliography of popular tales, as known to the Grimms, in Mrs Alfred Hunt’s translation, *Grimm’s Household Talcs, with Notes* (London, 1884). “How unique was our collection when it first appeared,” they exclaim, and now merely to enumerate the books of such traditions would occupy much space. In addition to the märchen of Indo-European peoples, the Grimms became acquainted with some Malay stories, some narratives of Bechuanas, Negroes, American Indians, and Finnish, Esthonian, and Magyar stories. Thus the Grimms’ knowledge of non-European märchen was extremely slight. It enabled them, however, to observe the increase of refinement " in proportion as gentler and more humane manners develop themselves,” the monstrosities of Finnish and Red-Indian fancy gradually fading in the narratives of Germans and Italians. The Grimms notice that the evolution of popular narrative resembles the evolution of the art of sculpture, from the South- Sea idol to the frieze of the Parthenon, “ from the strongly marked, thin, even ugly, but highly expressive forms of its earliest stages to those which possess external beauty of mould.” Since the Grimms’ time our knowledge of the popular tales of non-European races has been greatly enriched. We possess numbers of North-American, Brazilian, Zulu, Swahili, Eskimo, Samoan, Maori, Kaffir, Malagasy, Bushman, North African, Fiort, New Caledonian, and even Australian märchen, and can study them in comparison with the stories of Hesse, of the West Highlands of Scotland, of Scandinavia.

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, as by Lord Fountainhall (1670), but the fact was brought out most vividly by J. G. von Hahn *(Griechische und albanesische Märchen,* Leipzig, 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 arc 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 talcs 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, 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, “ à ceux qui n’en ont pas encore.” At the same time the tale will very probably enforce some moral or practical lesson, often the sanction of a taboo, 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 plots and incidents as they exist in the heroic epics and poetry of the cultivated races, such as the Homeric epics, 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, Oedipus, Sigurd, Wainamoïnen, 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* and Μ. Cosquin’s *Contes de Lorraine* (Paris, 1886). In opposition to the Aryan theory, and the theory of borrowing from India, the sytem 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, 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