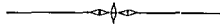


part of the evidence afforded by the New Testament—evidence which should be viewed, not so much in its separate items, as in its united combination. And we need have no hesitation in contending that it can never be made to fit in with any other assumption than that which avails to bind and hold all together in one harmonious whole—the assumption that the notion of vicarious penalty entered into the elementary ideas connected with the atonement of Christ in the view of the Christian Church in the time of the Apostles.

Another important question must wait for consideration in our next number. N. DIMOCK.



ART. V.—FOLK-TALES.

IN a volume just published¹ Mr. Wratislaw has penetrated into the obscure realm of Slavonic life and literature, and has presented to the English reader what cannot but prove to be a most welcome addition to his folk-lore library. Now that Mr. W. R. S. Ralston is no longer amongst us, we suppose there is no one more entitled to speak upon Slavonic subjects than Mr. Wratislaw, and it is pleasing to think that, just as we are mourning the severe and almost irretrievable loss of one great scholar in this branch of study, we have such good proof, as this book affords, that the breach is not likely to remain unfilled. "Le roi est mort; vive le roi!" is a motto true of others than political kings, and if it somewhat saddens the personal view of life, it is the only condition under which life could be carried on. Mr. Wratislaw will, we feel sure, understand how it is that we feel bound to preface our welcome of his book with these few allusions to such a man as Mr. Ralston, for those of us who knew him had learnt to admire him for more qualities than those of scholarship only.

The sixty folk-tales here collected and translated consist of seven Bohemian stories, two Moravian, four Hungarian-Slovenish, two upper and lower Lusatian, one Kashubian, and four Polish stories, as representative of the Western Slavonians; three White Russian stories, four Little Russian stories from Galicia, five Little Russian stories from South Russia, and two Great Russian stories, as representative of the Eastern Slavonians; five Bulgarian stories, five Serbian stories, two Serbian stories from Bosnia, five Serbian stories from Carniola, five Croatian stories, and four Illyrian-Slovenish stories, as repre-

¹ "Sixty Folk-Tales from exclusively Slavonic Sources." Translated; with brief introductions and notes, by A. H. Wratislaw. London: 1889, (Elliot Stock); 8vo., pp. xii., 315.

sentative of the Southern Slavonians. This very lucid grouping of the stories, according to their sources, follows upon Mr. Wratislaw's original object of taking up the book, viz., that of obtaining an acquaintance with the main features of all the Slavonic dialects; but it will be found of very considerable value to the student of folk-lore, because to notice the variants of incidents in the tales as they are told by different races of peasants is one of the branches of folk-lore study which runs almost parallel to that of philological study. Folk-lore and philology have had, and will continue to have, some pitched battles; but here they meet on common ground, and Mr. Wratislaw is doing good service in having preserved this information in his book.

Of course we meet our old friends in these tales; but we meet them in somewhat different guise. Taking, for instance, one of the most interesting groups—the Illyrian-Slovenish stories—we have a version of Cinderella, a version of The Clever Thief, and two local legends referring us back to a snake-cult, and to the primitive notion that names of persons are intimately connected with the well-being or otherwise of their owners. Now, it is to be noted that the two folk-tales proper—Cinderella and The Clever Thief—present features which, as a result of comparison with other variants, show unmistakable signs of a greater mingling together of the incidents of different stories than is to be found in the folk-tales of Western Europe. Take the following incident in the Cinderella story:

Maritza, the Cinderella heroine, has imposed upon her the task, by her wicked and jealous stepmother, of gathering ripe strawberries in sharp winter cold; and she was obliged to take her basket and go. "As she was going all in tears over the mountain, she met twelve young men, whom she saluted courteously. They received the salutation in a friendly manner, and asked her: 'Whither are you wading, dear girl, in the snow thus in tears?' She told them the whole story prettily. The young men said to her: 'We will help you if you will tell us which month of the whole year is the best.' Maritza said, in reply: 'They are all good; but the month of March is the best, for it brings us most hope.' They were pleased with her answer, and said: 'Go into the first glen on the sunny side; there you will get as many strawberries as you wish.'" Then, when after great success her step-sister tries to succeed as well, treats the young men scornfully, and tells them "'They are all bad, and the month of March is the worst,' the whole mountain clouded over in a jiffy, and a storm beat upon her so that she scarcely panted home alive. The young men were the twelve months."

Now, this personification of the twelve months is to be met

with very frequently in Slavonic popular tradition, and always it is grafted on to some form of legend, which is most distinctly of very ancient origin. Here it is forced into the Cinderella narrative in a pretty and charming manner, and does duty for other forms of incident in the versions of Cinderella to be found in Western Europe. Now, have we not in this feature of the Slavonic folk-tale evidence of the accretion of strictly Slavonic thought upon groundwork other than Slavonic, and hence does it not go to prove that the essential groundwork of the Cinderella story is much older than the Slavonic era?

Indeed, the charm of all folk-tales lies in their immense antiquity. They have been so softened and welded into poetry during the long years of their traditional existence, that the probable rational origin for most of the incidents is too apt to be lost sight of. When, for instance, in the charming story of "The Vila," in this same section of the volume before us, we meet with the chivalrous treatment of the handsome youth of a sleeping beauty, and in reward therefor she asks him, "What do you want for this kindness?" and the young man replies merrily, "Allow me to behold your most beautiful countenance, and to take you to wife," we are thus far only being told over again one of the eternal truths of human life—told to us by all romancists and by all poets, of all lands and of all ages. But the distinctiveness of the Slavonic story is in what follows. "I am content to take you for my husband," said she; "but you must know that I am a Vila; you must never utter my name. If you speak of my name Vila I must quit you at once." This is not one of the eternal truths of human life, but it is a very ancient conception of the human mind during that long infancy before the development of scientific thought. It is the notion that the name of any being, whether human or superhuman, is an integral part of that being, and that to know it puts its owner, whether he be deity, ghost, or man, in the power of another, often involving destruction to the named. "It is a part of that general confusion between names and things," says Mr. Edward Clodd, "which is a universal feature of barbaric modes of thought—an ever-present note of uncultured intelligence; a confusion which attributes the qualities of living things to things not living, and which lies at the root of all fetichism and idolatry—of all witchcraft, shamanism, and other instruments which were as keys to the invisible kingdom of the feared and dreaded."¹ Now, what with the fact that in this beautiful Slavonic story we have in the first place the expression of a universal factor in human life, and in the second place the expression of a very prevalent, if not universally prevalent, conception of the human mind in its barbaric or savage

¹ *Folklore Journal*, vii, 154.

state, the story comes to us with a whole cluster of interesting problems attached to it. In the Cinderella story we have already noted that its construction shows the accretion of Slavonic mythic expression upon a much older framework; in the Vila story we come again upon evidence of a very ancient groundwork for the story. All the archæological evidence of this district teems with the conflict of races, and remains of the oldest race are still extant. Is it possible, then, that in these nursery tales of the modern peasant we have evidence parallel to the monumental remains which have defied time, and have thus revealed to the modern inquirer some chapters in the history of man's long-past? At present, we admit, it is not possible to pronounce very precise opinions, because the evidence wants sifting and examining most thoroughly first; but tales like these will help us in the work.

In the meantime Mr. Wratislaw gives us specimens of other tales to which he attaches a mythological meaning. Thus our own "Little Red Riding-hood" is found among the Lusatian stories in a version but slightly differing from that known to all English children. Mr. Wratislaw explains this as a lunar legend. "Red Hood is represented as wandering like Io, who is undoubtedly the moon, through trees—the clouds—and flowers—the stars—before she reaches the place where she is intercepted by the wolf. An eclipse to untutored minds would naturally suggest the notion that some evil beast was endeavouring to devour the moon, who is afterwards rescued by the sun—the archer of the heavens—whose bow and arrow are by a common anachronism represented in the story by a gun." But if untutored minds thus spoke of an eclipse, and thus set down the events which led up to it and proceeded from it, they were poets of an order that would have done honour to the best imagery of Shakespeare; and in the meantime, in their very midst, were going on day by day, or season after season, customs which would readily explain such a story as "Red Riding-hood." The only element of the marvellous in the story is the restoration of Red Hood and her granny from the maw of the devouring wolf, and this seems to us to be best explained by the very prevalent custom of "re-birth" which attends almost all savage initiation ceremonies which take place upon the entrance of boy and girl into manhood and womanhood. At these ceremonies the candidates are sometimes immured in the ground, sometimes shut up in huts; but always in the dark, from which they emerge into light; and it not unfrequently happens that they are actually passed through the skin of some animal to typify the re-birth. Then, if we add to this the well-known effects of long feasting, which all savage people indulge in, and note how the attempt to pin the wolf down by putting

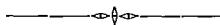
stones into his maw is paralleled exactly in New Guinea folk-tales; we seem to have in this story only another instance of the preservation of the primitive ideas of man derived from actual customs going on around him, instead of a highly poetical version of the doings of sun, moon, and stars. Men were accustomed to think and dream of beautiful women long before they thought and dreamt of the moon and its doings; and it is from this earlier stage of thought that the germ of such stories as Red Hood is derived.

In the Kashubian story, entitled "Cudgel, bestir yourself," Mr. Wratislaw points out that its close parallel to one of Grimm's well-known stories gave rise to bitter complaint by Slavonic literati, that their folk-tales have been appropriated by the Germans. But this question of appropriation by one nation or people of stories told also by another nation or people is a larger matter than that suggested by the Slavonic literati. The story of "Cudgel, bestir thyself" is wider spread than Germany. Like all folk-tales, it has its variants in many lands. This Kashubian story has an incident in it which once more shows the deep influence of late Slavonic thought upon an older groundwork, for the opening of it is imbued with that teaching of Christ, "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." "A cobbler," runs the story, "was busying himself on Saturday with mending old shoes, that he might be able to go to church on Sunday. He worked till late in the evening, and having finished work, early in the morning dressed himself and took his book to service. In church he heard the doctrine that, if anyone dedicates his property to the Church, God will recompense him a hundredfold in another form. And as he was poor, he therefore determined to sell his cottage and goods, and take the whole price to the priest at the church. He went home and told his wife of his intentions, and in a few days the money was in the hands of the parson. But day passed after day, and nothing was to be seen of a recompense. At last, when hunger sorely tried the cobbler, he dressed himself like an old beggar, and went to seek for the Lord God." It is self-evident here that the folk-tale of the people has been grafted on to the teaching of the priesthood to serve a moral purpose, and it is remarkable that throughout nearly all Slavonic popular literature the influence of the Church and Christianity is very strongly marked—so strongly, indeed, as to be the true cause of that remarkable doctrine of Dr. Gaster, that folk-tales generally are derived from the apocryphal literature which arose in the East under the Greeko-Slavonic Church. We ourselves give no sort of credence to this theory, learnedly as it is upheld by its principal exponent; but we should have much liked to have had the opinion of Mr. Wratislaw upon this point. Indeed, in

the matter of exposition and explanation of these tales we must express ourselves as disappointed with Mr. Wratislaw. He has confined himself to the mythological theories of Sir George Cox and Mr. Max Müller, as if no such opposing theories as those of Dr. Gaster on the one hand, and Mr. Andrew Lang on the other, had ever occupied the attention of folk-lorists; and yet Mr. Lang's magnificent introduction to the latest and best translation of Grimm supplies a key to that school of folk-lorists who think that in the tales we have an expression of savage or barbaric fancy surviving in the traditions of a people long after the era of savage or barbaric thought and custom had passed wholly away.

There is another aspect of Mr. Wratislaw's work which must be touched upon. He supplies another story-book for the young, and one that many of our special readers will more than usually welcome. Nursery-tales, the delight of all children, are here very often, as we have already noted, appended to the teaching of Christian doctrine, and almost throughout there is a strong substratum of religious fervour and influences. This is not hurtful to the student of folk-tales. On the contrary, it allows him to understand one of the means by which, in the turmoils of racial and national conflicts, these old-world stories could have been preserved. And it is highly useful to those who wish to instruct children in religious principles while delighting them with the tales that have delighted generations of children. Alas! the time for true folk-tales has now almost wholly passed away. Nurses do not now tell tales with dramatic force, with nervous instinct which comes from the memories of their own childhood. They read them from books that are now constantly being issued from the press, and we feel assured that Mr. Wratislaw's volume will find its way into the hands of many who care nothing for the theories as to the origin and transmission of folk-tales, but who care very thoroughly for the tales themselves—those marvellous products of the human mind which in this nineteenth century delight the children of the nursery and the schoolroom and the student of early man and his ways.

G. L. GOMME.



ART. VI.—THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

THE following epitome of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with the notes, was made during a reading of the Epistle in the original Greek with a clerical society. As to the epitome or abstract, doubtless better may be found in print; but the most helpful to a student is that which he makes for himself during